

**HAPPY MEAT AS A PASSIVE REVOLUTION:
A GRAMSCIAN ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL MEAT**

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Abstract

This thesis starts from the proposition that the ethical meat discourse — that is, the discourse recognizing that factory farming is unacceptable while maintaining that it is possible to produce meat in an acceptable way — has not been thoroughly analyzed. Indeed, both the partisans of this idea and the animal rights literature provide oversimplified analyses of this relatively new phenomenon. Considering its explosion in popularity since Michael Pollan published the essay “An Animal's Place” in *The New York Times Magazine* in 2002, this lack of research is particularly problematic for the animal rights movement as this new discourse directly counters its objectives. As such, this thesis uses Gramsci's concept of passive revolution to develop a richer analysis of the apparent marginalizing effect that this discourse has on the animal rights movement. More precisely, the thesis addresses the question: “If the emergence of the ethical meat discourse is understood as part of a passive revolution, what can the specific process of passive revolution tell us about the impacts of the ethical meat discourse on the animal rights movement?” It argues that the passive revolution operates on two levels: (1) it depoliticizes the issue of meat consumption by presenting it as irrelevant and reducing it to technical details and (2) it absorbs the moderate elements of the animal rights movement by proposing an attractive alternative. Both of these processes lead to the marginalization of the few animal advocacy organizations still criticizing ethical meat. The analysis is divided in three parts. The first and second analyze respectively the content of the discourse and internal dynamics of the coalition formed around it using Maarten Hajer's concept of discourse-coalition. Building on this comprehensive understanding of the ethical meat discourse, the actual process of passive revolution is analyzed by looking at the way the meat industry, environmental organizations and animal advocacy organizations engage with it.

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I like to think that this thesis is original, not based on its content, but for the fact that from the start, it has been a personal project more than a professional one. Considering this distinctive characteristic, I did not have the all-important motivating factor of needing a piece of paper with “Ph.D.” written on it to become a professor or a researcher. Looking back, this was both a blessing and a curse. A blessing since because I did not need to write this thesis, I had to find good reasons to want to do it. All along, the most important reasons were a fascinating subject and a strong desire to do my part to help the animals. The fact that I was lucky enough to get scholarships from both the governments of Quebec and of Ontario also made this much easier. This situation was also a curse because in hard times, I could not tell myself that I “needed” this piece of paper for a clear and distinct objective. For these moments, I was very lucky to be surrounded by supportive and caring people.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Factory farming¹ is an abomination. There is no gentle way to put it. It is not just vegans—people who reject all forms of animal² exploitation—that say so. Even people that still support certain forms of animal exploitation are quick to recognize this reality. For example, author Jonathan Safran Foer writes: “More than any set of practices, factory farming is a mind-set: reduce production costs to the absolute minimum and systematically ignore or ‘externalize’ such costs as environmental degradation, human disease, and animal suffering. For thousands of years, farmers took their cues from natural processes. Factory farming considers nature an obstacle to be overcome.” (2010, 34) In the same vein author and food activist Michael Pollan notes that “More than any other institution, the American industrial animal farm offers a nightmarish glimpse of what capitalism can look like in the absence of moral or regulatory constraint.” (2002b)

Considering the general disgust provoked by images and graphic descriptions of the horrors happening day and night in these factories, it is not surprising that the animal rights movement³ has been using this reality as its main argument against

- 1 David Fraser presents factory farming in technical terms: “Until about 1950, farm animals in industrialized countries were raised by fairly traditional methods that relied on labour for routine tasks such as feeding and removal of manure and that generally involved keeping animals outdoors, at least part of the time, After the Second World War, there emerged a new generation of ‘confinement’ systems that generally kept animals in specialized indoor environments and used hardware and automation instead of labour for many routine tasks.” (2005, 2)
- 2 The word “animal” will be used to describe “nonhuman sentient beings”, except when it is important to highlight the fact that humans are also animals. For these specific cases, the expression “nonhuman animal” will be used. Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka clearly explain that “sentience” is the characteristic that “has a distinct moral significance because it enables a subjective experience of the world.” (2011, 24)
- 3 In the literature and in the media, a wide variety of expressions are used to describe what is commonly understood as the “animal rights movement.” For example, the expressions “animal liberation movement,” “animal protection movement,” and “animal advocacy movement” are often used in contradictory ways. Indeed, since there are intense debates within/between these

animal exploitation for decades. Indeed, as Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka put it, the movement “has worked tirelessly to expose” how “intensive farming has reduced animals to widgets, their brief and brutal lives utterly mechanized, standardized, and commodified.” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 76) In its simplest form, the ethical argument against individual meat consumption boils down to this: if you eat meat (this word being used to encompass both actual meat and animal by-products like milk), you are supporting the abomination that is factory farming.

Considering the implications of this argument, the obvious reaction of the meat industry has been to either hide the cruelty or to pretend that the animals were not really suffering (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014, 21–23). With the development of the Internet and the multiplication of undercover investigations by animal rights groups, it, however, became harder and harder to hide what was happening in these massive operations. In the United States, the last resort of the meat industry has been to turn to state legislatures to adopt so-called “Ag-gag” laws to render these investigations criminal acts (Wrock 2016). Such a secretive attitude has played right into the animal rights movement argument: the meat industry really does have something to hide.

1. The Rise of Ethical Meat

Faced with this reality, how is it possible keep eating meat? In his essay “An Animal’s Place”, published in *The New York Times Magazine* in 2002, Pollan

movements, it can be difficult to refer to only some or to all of them. This labelling issue has led some authors, like Andrew Woodhall and Gabriel Garmendia da Trindade, to simply use the expression “the movement” to refer to the “loose meaning of those who consider nonhuman animals in order to aid them” (2017b, 1). Even if it is not an accurate use of the expression, for this thesis, “animal rights movement” will be used since in the public debate, it remains “an umbrella term that covers any and all forms of advocacy for better treatment of animals.” (Kymlicka and Donaldson 2018) In chapter 3, some of the nuances within the movement will be explored.

provides the answer that would serve as the basis for a new way to consider meat consumption. After describing the horror of factory farming, he writes, “But before you swear off meat entirely, let me describe a very different sort of animal farm” (Pollan 2002b). He then goes on to describe a farm where, according to him, the farmer makes sure the animals are happy and consequently produce a different type of meat, that is, ethical meat.⁴ According to Hank Rothgerber, this article constitutes the foundation of the “ethical meat eating movement” (2015, 196). He notes that “Pollan’s argument is significant” because it “is the first to offer an alternative between absolute vegetarianism (likely unappealing to many) and unrepentant omnivorism (condoning the disturbing treatment of animals)” (2015, 196). In other words, Pollan was proposing a third way out of the moral dilemma that the animal rights movement had been trying to impose for years.

Pollan was not the first to propose such an approach to justify meat eating. Already in 1977, as a response to Peter Singer and Tom Regan, two animal ethics pioneers, another philosopher named Jan Narveson argued that faced with the “discomfort and pain” inflicted on animals, “there are two relevant kinds of alternatives”: “one is treating the animals better before we eat them” and “the other is taking up vegetarianism” (1977, 173). He then concluded that there is “a strong case for Humane Slaughter, and humane treatment prior to slaughter” (1977, 174). In other words, providing better treatment to animals could render the consumption of meat morally acceptable. Moreover, in the 1970s, there were already farms claiming to provide better meat. The most famous example is Niman Ranch, initially founded as Niman Schell. Bill Niman was a rancher, and Orville Schell was a journalist who published in 1984 a book criticizing factory farming titled *Modern Meat: Antibiotics, Hormones and the Pharmaceutical Farm* (1984). In contrast to what he describes in the book, on their ranch, they “raised

⁴ This is not the name used by Pollan. The question of naming this phenomenon will be explored in the next chapter.

their animals humanely, with care taken to have livestock lead stress-free lives” (Brown 2000, 404).

What Pollan did, however, was to put in an attractive package a convincing argumentation that not only took the time to discuss and refute many animal rights arguments, but also included environmental and human health considerations. On top of that, his essay was published in a prestigious publication, *The New York Times Magazine* (2002b). This is why Rothgerber talks about the “foundation” of ethical meat movement. The importance of his text can also be seen by the fact that it was integrated in Pollan’s bestseller *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* in 2006 which continues to be a reference for most authors discussing ethical meat (2006).

The most important aspect of his article is the idea that ethical meat “puts the whole moral question of animal agriculture in a different light.” As such, it can be understood as putting in doubt the relevance of the animal rights movement: why is it necessary to stop eating meat when it can be obtained from good farmers who love their animals? Put differently: with ethical meat, people can both have their meat and remain coherent with their intuition that animals deserve to be cared for. Considering this threat to the movement, this project is an attempt to provide deeper understanding of the idea of ethical meat itself and of the impacts its emergence has on the animal rights movement.

2. Research Question

Put succinctly, the question at the centre of this research is “How has ethical meat operated to neutralize the political potential of the animal rights movement?” In other words, this thesis assumes that ethical meat neutralizes the main arguments of the animal rights movement and focuses on the analysis of the process itself. It

seeks to develop a nuanced account of the phenomenon of ethical meat and understand the way in which it has interacted with the existing debates surrounding meat consumption.

More precisely, this project situates itself in reaction to two key findings in the literature. First, as will be seen in chapter 2, by looking at both the ethical meat literature and the animal rights literature, it is clear that no detailed account of the phenomenon of ethical meat has been developed. In the former literature, it is usually presented in vague terms and defined mostly in relation to what it is not, that is, factory farming and veganism. In the latter literature, there is a tendency to restrict the analysis to the terms of the preexisting internal debates between welfarism and abolitionism, a debate which will be presented in chapter 2. Moreover, the phenomenon is also often considered from a moral philosophy perspective to argue how ethical meat is not really ethical. Despite this there are numerous hints, especially from Critical Animal Studies (which for the current purpose can be considered a subfield of the animal rights literature), that the ethical meat phenomenon could be better understood from a political perspective, particularly through the work of John Sanbonmatsu (2011c).

Second, from this conclusion and after an investigation of the broader literature considering issues related to food, animals and meat from a political perspective, it appears that, indeed, a political analysis of ethical meat is just waiting to be conducted. As will be detailed in chapter 2, this conclusion comes from insights from two more specific bodies of research. First, from the food politics literature, with the work of Johnston and Baumann (2015) as well as Guthman (2004, 2007) comes the idea that the “grocery shopping list” logic (i.e. only focusing on whether food is “good” or “bad”) limits the analytical potential of many studies. A much more promising avenue is to focus on the political implications of food

representations, that is, of how food is socially constructed. Second, from a deeper analysis of Critical Animal Studies literature, it is confirmed that ethical meat appears to have a disrupting effect in the debate about meat consumption and that this effect can best be understood from a political perspective. Despite this, as will be seen in chapter 2, the authors that describe this political dynamic do not fully explore it.

With these insights it would thus seem natural to conclude that with a political perspective, it would be possible to develop a deeper understanding of the ethical meat phenomenon and to analyze the impact it is having in general and particularly on the animal rights movement. For this political analysis, the idea of food representation is key since as was seen above, ethical meat appears to be changing the way meat consumption is considered. Using this concept, the political dynamic becomes one of competing food representations, or put differently, of competing ideologies each proposing a particular way of conceiving meat consumption. To understand this competition and the way in which ethical meat is having a neutralizing effect on the animal rights movement, a Gramscian theoretical framework seems appropriate.

3. Gramsci: Ethical Meat as a Passive Revolution

The choice of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's (1891–1937) theoretical framework can appear surprising since the issue of meat consumption certainly was not a critical one in his time. However, as will be presented in detail in chapter 3, his theoretical framework is perfect to analyze the dynamic of competing ideologies that was presented above. This will be shown by presenting (1) his theoretical framework and (2) the way in which his concepts can be used to analyze ethical meat.

First, unlike most Marxists of his time, Gramsci noted that to understand the dominant position of the bourgeoisie in capitalist societies, it was essential to go beyond the analysis of material forces and, as such, also include the influence of ideologies. He argued that one of the reasons capitalist societies did not crumble as predicted by Marxist economic determinism was because the bourgeoisie had put in place an ideological hegemony which made the working class identify its own interests with the ones of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, the struggle against the capitalist hegemony had to go on the ideological field with the formation of a counter-hegemonic movement pushing its own working-class ideology. To understand this hegemonic struggle, Gramsci developed a series of concepts, the most important for this research being the concept of “passive revolution.”

One of the strengths of Gramsci’s work is to avoid conceptualizing the hegemonic class as passive. Indeed, he assumed that the bourgeoisie could react to the actions of the working-class. He conceptualized the whole process of competition between the hegemony and the counter-hegemony as a “war of position.” However, when faced with an “organic crisis,” that is an existential crisis to the power of the hegemony that happens when its structural contradictions are revealed, a “passive revolution” is the characteristic response. It consists in an extensive reorganization of its hegemony to disorganize the counter-hegemony. For example, Roger Simon writes that Gramsci had “detected an element of passive revolution in Roosevelt’s New Deal, consisting of the great expansion in state intervention to help overcome the profound economic crisis of the 1930s” (2015, 49)

Second, at the most basic level, when modified, these concepts can be operationalized to understand the relation between the animal industry and the animal rights movement. Indeed, their struggle can be conceptualized as an

ideological struggle over the legitimacy of animal exploitation and of meat consumption. Considering the fact that currently, this consumption is widely accepted, it is reasonable to deduce that this “meat-eating ideology” is hegemonic. Correspondingly, the animal rights movement fighting to replace this ideology with its own can be understood as counter-hegemonic. It is important to note here that the concept of hegemony must be understood as only representing a dominant position in relation to the issue of animal exploitation.

Going further, Gramsci’s concept can also be used to understand the first two sections of this chapter. Indeed, the exposing of the cruelty of factory farming can be understood as representing an organic crisis for the hegemony of meat-eating and the subsequent emergence of ethical meat as a passive revolution to neutralize the threat posed by the animal rights movement. Put differently, the role of ethical meat is to preserve the legitimacy of meat eating. While this suggests promising research avenues, the fact remains that from a methodological perspective, Gramsci’s concepts are difficult to operationalize, especially since the issue at hand is far from his own preoccupations. This is precisely why Maarten Hajer’s concept of discourse-coalition will be used as a middle-range theory to fill this gap.

4. Hajer: Ethical Meat as a Discourse-Coalition

One of the reasons why Gramsci is difficult to directly use for this research is that his key concepts remain too general to serve as the foundation for a concrete research. As such, the idea of discourse-coalition will be used to conceptualize the ethical meat phenomenon, both to understand its inner working and the origin of its political power. As will be detailed in chapter 3, this concept was developed by Hajer to analyze the case of sustainable development in environmental politics, and more specifically to describe it as a form of unconventional political coalition.

Such coalitions, instead of being centred around formal institutions and an explicit political agenda, informally come together around a storyline, that is, a central metaphor. As will become clear in chapters 4 and 5, this concept effectively captures the essence of the ethical meat phenomenon.

One key element of Hajer's theory is that it "conceives of politics as a struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality" (1995, 65) which perfectly captures the dynamic that was presented above. More concretely, as will be seen in greater detail in chapter 3, it is possible through his approach to use the concept of discourse as the methodological penchant of the theoretical concept of ideology. In other words, by analyzing discourses (and more particularly what from now on will be called the ethical meat discourse), it is believed that an understanding of the underlying ideology and of the process of passive revolution can be developed.

Thus with Gramsci and Hajer's concepts, the research question can be reformulated in the following way: "If the emergence of the ethical meat discourse is understood as part of a passive revolution, what can the specific process of passive revolution tell us about the impacts of the ethical meat discourse on the animal rights movement?" With this question, as was said earlier, it is assumed that there is indeed a process of passive revolution and that this process has a neutralizing effect on the political potential of the animal rights movement. As such, the objective is not to argue that there is a passive revolution, but to explore how this concept can help to better understand the process of neutralization that ethical meat has on the animal rights movement. That being said, with the help of Hajer's ideas, it is now possible to develop a methodology to answer this question.

5. Methodology

One important advantage of integrating Hajer's concepts in the theoretical framework of this research is that the author also provides guidelines on how to use them. More precisely, he details how they can be operationalized in research. As such, it is possible to develop a methodological approach based on his methodology. Obviously, it is mostly based on discourse analysis, but as will be seen, he proposes key ideas to comprehensively understand the struggle for discursive hegemony.

Two elements are particularly important about his methodology. First is the fact that he believes that arguments must be understood from a socio-cognitive perspective, that is, not only based on their philosophical validity, but also on how they are understood and received. This idea is consistent with what was said above about the need to focus on food representations and not only on arguments for and against ethical meat. To understand the social aspects of argumentation, he proposes three key factors: credibility, acceptability and trust. These will be detailed in chapter 3. Second, he writes that the discourse analysis must focus on the moment of reproduction and interruption of discourses. More precisely, on how the hegemonic discourse maintains its dominant position and on how certain discursive practices can destabilize this position. As such, it should be easy to see how this can be used to understand the concept of passive revolution.

That being said, since no comprehensive account of ethical meat could be found in the literature, before the process of passive revolution can be analyzed, such an understanding must be developed. Considering that, this research will consist of three steps each building on one another, the first two being focused on understanding the ethical meat coalition and the third on analyzing the process of passive revolution.

The first step in understanding the ethical meat phenomenon is to figure out what exactly it consists of. As will be explained in chapter 4, this will be done by analyzing its arguments since it is mostly through its argumentation that ethical meat defines itself. To be coherent with Hajer's theory, the objective of the review is not to criticize them, but understand how they fit together and if a common thread can be identified. From this, it is hoped that the storyline at the heart of the ethical meat discourse-coalition can be identified. This analysis will be based directly on the ethical meat literature where all arguments used by its proponents can be found.

From the analysis of the first step, the second aim is to analyze the inner workings of the ethical meat discourse-coalition. More precisely, in chapter 5, a typology of specific discourses based on the ethical meat storyline will be developed to achieve this. The four discourses are: the humane meat discourse, the urban homesteading discourse, the agrarian populist discourse, and the permaculture livestock economy discourse. To define them, the same corpus of texts from the ethical meat literature will be used, but in addition, more texts will be used to provide the context and ideological foundation of each discourse. With this typology, it is hoped that it will be possible to identify how they interact with one another to see how their interrelations might impact the way the coalition operates.

Finally, using the above typology as an analytical framework, this last step will focus on the actual process of passive revolution. To do so, as will be explained in chapter 6, it is believed that an analysis of the way key actors engage with the ethical meat discourse is sufficient. This is why the first part of this analysis will detail the case of three types of organizations: the meat industry itself, animal

advocacy organizations, and environmental organizations. In each case, primary sources will be used by looking at their publications (e.g. annual reports, reports, websites...) to see how they position themselves in relation to ethical meat. The details of this analysis will be presented in chapter 3. Using the findings of this analysis, the second part will provide an answer to the research question.

6. Thesis

From the resulting understanding of the ethical meat discourse and analysis of the process of passive revolution, this project argues that the passive revolution operates on two levels: depoliticization and absorption. One consequence of these is obviously to preserve the legitimacy of meat eating, which remains the primary objective of the passive revolution. Most importantly for the scope of this thesis, it is with these processes of depoliticization and of absorption that the way ethical meat contributes to the marginalization of the animal rights movement can be understood.

First, the process of depoliticization can most easily be seen by the fact the it is especially through the humane meat discourse that the ethical meat discourse is engaged. Succinctly, this discourse is based on the idea of political consumerism: that the meat industry can be transformed by rallying the latent power of consumers to buy better meat and especially, certified ethical meat. The logic is that with credible meat certification based on rigorous standards, people can pressure the industry to improve its practice by “voting with their wallets.” One consequence of this is to alter a debate about whether meat eating is a legitimate practice to one about what specific standards are required to render meat ethical. In other words, not only is the focus of the issue shifted, but a political question is reduced to technical considerations.

Second, the process of absorption can be understood by looking at how various animal advocacy organizations reacted to the emergence of ethical meat. As will be explored in great detail in chapter 6, the ethical meat discourse shifted the terms of the internal debate between welfarism and abolitionism that had been more or less fixed since the 1990s. While it is not surprising that the most moderate organizations, the welfarists, would welcome ethical meat and that the abolitionist organizations would remain opposed to any form of animal exploitation, the consequence of the new discursive terrain is to push the organization that claimed to keep a balanced position, the new welfarists, towards the moderate ones. This push stems from the fact that ethical meat made the delicate and ambiguous position at the heart of these organizations—believing that abolition can be reached through welfare reforms—untenable. As will be seen, the result is a partial integration of animal advocacy organizations by the ethical meat coalition and as such, a further marginalization of the few organizations that remain firmly opposed to it.

7. Contribution and Normativity

This thesis aims to make three sorts of contribution. The first is to add the animal rights literature and help the animal rights movement by providing a better understanding of the threat posed by the ethical meat phenomenon. The second, more broadly, is to develop a nuanced empirical analysis of that phenomenon. The third is to contribute to the body of secondary literature on Gramsci by providing an example of the way his theory can be used and adapted to analyze contemporary issues.

To understand the first contribution of this thesis, it is essential to talk about its normativity and about the position of its author. Indeed, it is assumed that since the animal rights issue is a highly divisive and controversial one, it is not possible

to discuss it objectively. As such, to be transparent, it is essential to note that the primary motivation of this project is a militant one. The author being vegan and an animal rights activist, this thesis is critical in the sense that it presents an explicit normative stance against animal exploitation. It is also critical in the sense that this project is emancipatory, that is, that it aims to contribute to the liberation of animals. In that sense, it does not only offer a scientific contribution to the animal rights literature, but also a contribution to the movement's activism. It is hoped that by providing a better understanding of the ethical meat phenomenon, the animal rights movement can be in a better position to respond to it.

It is also believed that with its analysis of the phenomenon of ethical meat, this project will constitute a contribution that goes beyond the animal rights literature. This is particularly the case for the elaboration of the typology of discourses that compose the ethical meat coalition. Indeed, despite what was said in the previous paragraph about this thesis being critical, it should be noted that the analysis itself will not be critical. On the contrary, as will be argued in chapter 2, to develop a nuanced understanding of ethical meat, it has to be analyzed on its own terms, and not only with the objective of criticizing it. As such, the resulting analysis can also be considered a contribution to the ethical meat literature and to the food politics literature more broadly. Regarding the former, as will be seen in chapter 2, ethical meat proponents still, for the most part, lack self-reflexivity and as such, this research could help them understand themselves.

In the same vein, this research can also be understood as going beyond the issue of animal exploitation. Indeed, if animal exploitation is considered as one more form of oppression⁵, this project offers a unique opportunity to explore how, from

⁵ While from an animal ethics perspective it is easy to understand how animal exploitation is indeed a form of oppression, it is also important to note that it has also been related to other

a political perspective, a critical movement is being neutralized by those who benefit from the status quo. In Gramscian terms, if the animal rights movement can be considered counter-hegemonic, analyzing ethical meat as a passive revolution offers a unique opportunity to understand the reaction of the hegemony when it feels menaced. This contribution, however, only makes sense if the objectives of the animal rights movement are considered relevant. One consequence of the critical stance of this project is that it is assumed that the struggle of the animal rights movement is both relevant and necessary. As such, it will not go over the premises of animal rights. Plenty of publications already do this very convincingly (notably, Zoopolis offers a comprehensive overview of animal rights theory (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011)).

That being said, even without considering animal liberation as a form of oppression, this project is also relevant in offering an example of operationalization of Gramsci's theoretical framework to analyze a contemporary issue. As will be seen in the chapter 3, there are important debates in the literature on Gramsci about the usability of his work to analyze issues that did not exist in his own time. Obviously, this project adopts the position that Gramsci's theoretical framework offers invaluable tools to analyze contemporary issues like animal exploitation. In that sense, this thesis intends to offer a contribution to the existing secondary literature on Gramsci.

8. Plan

In chapter 2, this project will be situated in relation to the existing literature. It is mainly concerned with the two key findings that were briefly presented above.

systems of oppression. For Carol J. Adams, patriarchy and speciesism reinforce one another (1990). David Nibert argues that "transcending capitalism [...] is a necessary precondition" to end animal exploitation (2013). However, anti-oppression movements are not always compatible. A. Breeze Harper highlights the way many animal rights organizations and activists reinforce sexism and racism (2009).

The first is that the existing literature, for and against, does not provide a comprehensive treatment of the phenomenon of ethical meat. From this review, it will be suggested that a political analysis of the phenomenon would be an effective way to do so. Second, it will be confirmed with the Critical Animal Studies literature that since many political implications are imputed to ethical meat, especially for the animal rights movement, such an analysis is valid and necessary. Moreover, with the food politics literature, it will be suggested that a promising avenue to do so would be to consider ethical meat through an analysis of the political implications of food representations.

Chapter 3 will then delineate the theoretical framework and methodology used in this research. It will be divided into three parts. In the first part, the pertinence of using Gramsci's writing to analyze ethical meat will be explored and Gramsci's theoretical toolbox will be presented. Most importantly, it will be seen that the concept of passive revolution appears key to analyze ethical meat. In the second part, Hajer's theory of discourse-coalition will be presented as a middle-range theory needed to operationalize Gramsci's theory. The compatibility of the two theories as well as the methodological implications of the latter will also be detailed. In the third part, the exact way these two theories will be put together and operationalized to analyze the ethical meat discourse will be presented. Lastly, this project's methodology, based on Hajer, will be detailed.

Chapter 4 will involve a detailed description of the ethical meat discourse. Such a description will be organized around the arguments used by proponents of this discourse. As will be seen, since ethical meat is constructed as an alternative to veganism, the former's arguments can be divided according to the three pillars of the latter, that is, animal ethics, the environment, and human health. From this description, it will be concluded that since the arguments present ethical meat as

a win-win scenario and its proponents often try to have it both ways in their positioning relative to factory farming and veganism, the end result is a set of apparently contradictory ideas. Despite this, it will be argued that a storyline centred around the metaphor of the ideal small farm can be identified as the common thread keeping it all together.

Chapter 5 will use the storyline that was defined in chapter 4 to develop an analysis of the inner workings of the coalition. To make sense of the apparent contradictions within the discourse, it will be suggested that it should not be considered as monolithic but rather, as the concept of discourse-coalition suggests, as a coalition of various discourses. To that end, a typology of four discourses will be proposed: the humane meat discourse, the urban homesteading discourse, the agrarian populist discourse, and the permaculture livestock economy discourse. Through this, and from the analysis of the dynamic between the various discourses, it will be concluded that the internal divisions of the coalitions are not a weakness, but one of its greatest strengths since they allow the discourse to easily be adapted to various situations and diffuse criticism.

It is in chapter 6, using the typology of chapter 5, that the actual process of passive revolution will be analyzed. It will be divided into two parts. First, the way three types of organizations engage with ethical meat will be analyzed. As will be explained, it is believed that by focusing on the meat industry itself, animal advocacy organizations, and environmental organizations, important insights can be obtained about the process of passive revolution. Second, using the findings of the first part, the actual thesis of this project will be argued, that is, the idea that two key mechanisms of passive revolution can be observed: the depoliticization of the issue of meat consumption and the absorption of most of the animal advocacy organization. As is assumed by the research question, it will be shown that the

consequence of both of these is the marginalization of the remaining animal rights organizations still opposed to any form of animal exploitation.

Finally, after going back over the main arguments of this thesis, chapter 7 will conclude the project by considering its implications and its limits. In addition, it will discuss the consequences of this research on the animal rights movement. One of the main points will be that the ethical meat discourse must be taken more seriously by the movement since it is much more threatening to the objective of ending all forms of animal exploitation than it appears.

CHAPTER TWO: Ethical Meat, Animal Rights and Politics: Surveying the Literature

“What is ethical meat?” This question might appear trivial or simplistic, but a quick look at the literature tells a different story. Surprisingly, there is no simple answer. This can be explained by the fact that the idea of ethical meat is highly divisive and as such, it is difficult to talk about it without taking a position. Put differently, since it is usually presented in the context of an argumentation, a definition can rarely be extracted. Considering that, when answering the above question, it seems inevitable to answer it in two ways, that is, how its proponents define it and how its opponents present it. This is what will be done in the first part of this literature review.

More precisely, this part of the review will focus on the ethical meat literature and the animal rights literature. From the first one, it will become clear that most authors do not feel the need to define the idea of ethical meat. There are, however, two recurrent themes: presenting ethical meat as a better choice between factory farming and veganism as well as regular references to the ideal of the small farm. From the second literature, it will become apparent that ethical meat is usually understood in simplistic terms, according to its preexisting internal debates, but that one part of the animal rights literature, Critical Animal Studies, hints that this issue could better be understood from a political perspective.

This is why the second part of this literature review will explore what can be learned about ethical meat through such a perspective. More specifically, three questions will be examined: What can be learned about animals and meat in the

food politics literature? How has politics previously been used in the animal rights literature? What is Critical Animal Studies' political take on ethical meat? This section will end with the conclusion that while many authors have suggested that an important political dynamic is at play, a comprehensive political analysis of the ethical meat phenomenon remains to be carried out. Consequently, a research question will be proposed to fill this research gap in the literature.

1. What is Ethical Meat?

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to find a definition that is not engaged in the debate about whether ethical meat is right or wrong. There are a few publications that use the concept with a certain distance, such as that of Rothgerber (2015) referred to in chapter 1, but ethical meat is not their research object. In that sense, a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon itself does not yet exist. For the most part, the texts that take an explicit position for or against it remain the ones that develop the most detailed description of the idea of ethical meat. Considering that, it appears natural to divide the literature review along these lines. Regarding the proponents of ethical meat, this can easily be done, but it is not quite as simple when talking about its opponents.

As might be expected, most of the criticism is located within the animal rights literature which is itself divided along the lines of important internal debates. It is, thus, impossible to talk about them as a single group. Considering that, it seems more logical to divide that literature into subgroups and explore what each of them think about ethical meat. This is why animal rights authors that are not opposed to ethical meat have been included in that part of the review. Indeed, even if it could be argued that they belong with the proponents of ethical meat, it appears preferable to talk about them with the rest of the animal rights literature since their position can be better understood when presented in the context of

debates specific to that literature. This is particularly the case since the other proponents of ethical meat are clearly situated outside the animal rights literature, as they rarely engage with it.

Before going further, it is important to explain why the expression “ethical meat” is used. Even if it is not often used, there is still a good reason to propose it. As will become much clearer in chapter 4 when ethical meat arguments are unpacked, the problem with the expressions that are currently used is that they usually refer to only some aspects of ethical meat. Most notably, there is “humane meat” that refers animal ethics, “green meat” that refers to its environmental benefits, and “grass-fed meat” that can refer to any of those and even to human health arguments. Considering that, “ethical meat” presents itself as a more general alternative since the ethical aspect of meat can refer to the way it addresses the multiple issues related to factory farming. It is also essential to repeat that throughout this thesis, the word “meat” will include both actual meat and animal by-products. The reason is simply that in the context of a discussion about ethical meat there is no significant difference between the two; they are both products of animal agriculture.

In light of this, in this first part of the literature review, the way the proponents of ethical meat define and situate this phenomenon will be presented. After that, the main subdivisions of the animal rights literature will be presented followed by their respective conceptions of ethical meat. Before starting, it is important to note that while the arguments for and against it will have to be partially discussed since, as was said above, they are usually related to their understanding of ethical meat, the objective of this review is not to analyze the arguments. For the proponents of ethical meat, this will be done in chapter 4.

1.1 The Ethical Meat Literature

Before proceeding, two things must be made clear. First, not all of the texts presented in this section are from academics. They have nonetheless been included since there are many essays and journalistic publications about ethical meat that are influential in the debate, the most obvious example being Pollan's work. Second, as was just said, the expression "ethical meat" is rarely used in the texts. While they are using different expressions, they are mainly describing what is understood to be ethical meat and/or the people consuming it.

The objective of this section is not to be exhaustive, but to offer an overview of how the various concepts related to ethical meat are presented and defined. For ethical meat, the question of finding a proper expression to represent the idea has been central. Indeed, even Pollan, in his first publication about ethical meat, could not find a proper name. In *An Animal's Place*, he says: "I'm tempted to think that we need a new dietary category, to go with the vegan and lactovegetarian and piscatorian. I don't have a catchy name for it yet (humanocarnivore?), but this is the only sort of meat eating I feel comfortable with these days" (2002b). This difficulty in finding a proper term will become apparent in this review.

The philosopher Richard M. Hare proposed one of the few pre-2000 labels to describe a person that would consume ethical meat, without actually using the term. In 1993, he published a chapter called *Why I am only a Demi-vegetarian*. In it, after saying that the expression "demi-vegetarian" was used before him by market researchers, he defines the term in the following way: "It means someone who, while not being a full vegetarian, let alone vegan, eats little meat, and is careful what kinds of meat he (or she) eats" (Hare 1993, 224–25). More precisely, in a comparison with vegetarianism, he notes that "more could perhaps be done if a much greater number of people could be converted to demi-vegetarianism, and

if they had more easily available the information they need in order to select those animal products that are produced by methods which minimize suffering to animals” (Hare 1993, 234). In other words, there are two relevant elements here to the concept of demi-vegetarianism: (1) the reduction of meat consumption and (2) the minimization of suffering for the animal that is to be eaten.

Post-Pollan, one of the first to propose expressions to describe, not the kind of meat itself, but the people that produce and/or consume it is Roger Scruton, a British philosopher, writer and defender of meat eating. He talks both about “the conscientious farmer” (Scruton 2004, 88), “virtuous carnivore” (Scruton 2006, 61) and “conscientious carnivores” (Scruton 2006, 62). While he does not provide formal definitions, his argumentation clearly indicates what he is talking about. He first notes that “Although I do not think that there is a compelling moral argument against meat-eating, I do believe that the onus lies on the carnivore to show that there is a way of incorporating meat into a life that respects the moral and spiritual realities” (Scruton 2004, 83). Indeed, he notes that there is an important moral difference between “battery pig farming” and “traditional English beef farmers,” implying that the latter can be acceptable whereas the former is not (Scruton 2004, 87). According to him, “We should not abandon our meat-eating habits, but remoralize them” (Scruton 2004, 90). In other words, he does not provide many details, but presents as obvious the idea that it is possible to both respect animals and eat them using traditional farming as proof.

In a 2005 article that criticizes the logic of the larder argument (which will be detailed in the chapter 4), Gaverick Matheny and Kai M. A. Chan use the expression “conscientious omnivory.” This practice describes consumers who “consume only animals with lives they believe are worth living” (2005, 584). The details of what “a life worth living” actually is will be discussed in chapter 4, but

for now, two elements are worth mentioning about “conscientious omnivory.” First, they note that while “most intensively-produced animal products” do not respect that condition, “it would not require dramatic improvements in farm conditions to give most of these animals lives worth living” (Matheny and Chan 2005, 584). Second, they also use the terms “humanely-raised” and “humanely-produced” meat/animals to refer to these animals (Matheny and Chan 2005, 590). In sum, they seem to think that the difference between the treatment given to factory farmed animals and 'ethically-raised' animals is slight, which appears to contradict what was said by previous authors.

Responding to Scruton, Singer and Jim Mason pointed out in 2006 that the expression “conscientious carnivore” is not an accurate description “because no one is suggesting a diet consisting only of meat”. That is why they suggest the term “conscientious omnivore” to “describe someone who eats meat or fish, but only when it satisfies certain ethical standards” (Singer and Mason 2006, 91). It should be noted here that there is a debate about whether or not Singer is in favour of ethical meat, but this is not relevant for now since in the book, with Mason, *The Ethics of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*, they propose a defence of ethical meat from the point of view of one of its proponents. Singer’s ideas will be explored in more detail in chapter 4.

Catherine Friend, an author and farmer, does not agree with this argument: “I don’t feel guilty eating a carrot. What concerns me is the meat, or animal, part of my diet, which is why I use the word carnivore to describe myself”. While she insists on only using the term “carnivore,” she prefers the expression “compassionate carnivore” instead of “conscientious carnivore.” She does not provide an explicit reason for doing so, but she writes that she disagrees with her vegetarian acquaintance who says that the “only way to show compassion for an

animal it not to eat it". The objective of her book, *The Compassionate Carnivore*, is precisely to demonstrate that "it's possible to show compassion for animals yet still eat them" (Friend 2008, 15).

Kathy Rudy has an entirely different take on ethical meat. She calls it "local meat" since she considers it part of a broader locavore movement. She argues that:

The question of meat is perhaps the most contested aspect of local eating for several reasons; while there is very little debate about the politics or morality of local fruits or vegetables, local meat has a variety of critics from several different angles, most notably vegans on the one side (who argue that we do not need meat in our diet at all) and industrial apologists on the other (who argue that cheap industrialized meat is necessary to meet consumer demand). Thus, the argument moves in two different directions at the same time. (Rudy 2012, 26)

She argues that "What counts as local eating is not just a matter of food miles; rather the term is signaling a mindset about shared commitments to various forms of environmental sustainability, community revitalization, human health, and animal welfare" (Rudy 2012, 28). She, however, does not provide much detail about what constitutes "animal welfare." There is an implicit assumption throughout the text that if a farm is small and local, then animal welfare is not an issue. A similar implicit assumption is apparent when she talks about home slaughtering, "foodies are taking local, sustainable agriculture to its extreme by controlling not only what an animal is fed and how well he is exercised, but how he is slaughtered as well" (Rudy 2012, 28). In other words, if people kill their own animal, it will necessarily be done "correctly".

Terence Cuneo contributed a chapter named "Conscientious Omnivore" to the book *Philosophy Comes to Dinner: Arguments About the Ethics of Eating* (Chignell, Cuneo, and Halteman 2016). Like most authors in this literature, he starts by asserting that "factory farming is an essentially cruel practice" (Cuneo 2016, 26). Consequently, "you ought not to be a consumer of such meat," but only consume it

“when there are viable alternatives” (Cuneo 2016, 27). He then notes that for “denizens of the affluent Western world,” there are two such alternatives: “One could consume only ‘family farmed’ meat, for example—meat that is produced by small farms in which animals live good, if shorter than normal, lives. Or one could be a vegetarian or vegan, eating primarily (or only) plant-based food” (Cuneo 2016, 27). What is a family farm? The author offers a definition, but only in an endnote:

I realize that not all animals raised on small family farms are treated well. When I speak of family farmed meat, then, I will have an idealization in mind. Family farmed meat is the meat of animals that have been free to graze, form bonds of kinship, fed antibiotics only when necessary, and so forth. (Cuneo 2016, 38n7)

In the text, and not in an endnote, he later adds that for a conscientious omnivore, the practice of family farming aims at “providing animals with good lives—lives that are typically, on the whole, much better than those they would have were they to live in the wild” (Cuneo 2016, 33–34). He further notes that “these farms represent an attempt to provide a viable alternative to factory farms, which treat farm animals with considerable cruelty.” (Cuneo 2016, 34) He also provides an ethical analysis of both alternatives which will be discussed in chapter 4, but for now, two points are relevant: (1) he recognizes that the way he uses the concept of family farming is based on an idealization, and (2) most certainly because of this idealization, he only provides very broad and vague details about what constitutes such a farm.

Lastly, Meredith Leigh, who presents herself as a writer, butcher, farmer, and cook, published *The Ethical Meat Handbook: Complete Home Butchery, Charcuterie and Cooking for the Conscious Omnivore* in 2015 (2015). Despite its title, this book is worth mentioning because it tries to give clear a definition of ethical meat, the only one to use that label. She identifies four characteristics: ethical meat (1) comes from an animal that has enjoyed a good life, (2) comes from an animal that

was afforded a good death, (3) is butchered properly, and (4) is cooked or preserved properly. Regarding the treatment of the animal, she gives the example of an animal acting “out its natural tendencies,” that “was cared for and not neglected,” that “endured little stress,” that “did not suffer long,” and that was “humanely relieved of its blood”. Regarding the environment, she mentions farming that does “not over-deplete resources,” and that contributed “to healthy natural cycles”. She also notes that the responsibilities of the ethical meat eater continue after the death of the animal since it is necessary to make “full use of the carcass out of thriftiness, efficiency and respect for the life that was given as food.” (Leigh 2015, 1) When she later talks about “buying differently”, she immediately starts to refer to “small farms” as though it was the obvious implication of the above conditions (Leigh 2015, 4–5). In sum, she presents a picture that is for the most part vague and then transitions to a discussion about small farmers.

Thus it would seem that proponents of ethical meat generally either assume that what they are talking about is obvious and therefore don’t provide many details, or, when they do, they remain vague. That being said, a few elements are worth highlighting. First, even if the various authors have different opinions about vegetarianism, veganism and factory farming, they usually situate their version of “ethical meat” as a better alternative than these options and constantly provide arguments to prove it. That is to say, ethical meat is usually defined by what it is not, rather than what it is. Second, there are recurrent references to an idealized “small farm” or “family farm” as Cuneo recognized in his own analysis. Third, even if most qualifications of ethical meat are vague, some disagreement is apparent. The most obvious one is about the difference between factory farming and small farms. Some authors present them as being worlds apart while others think that “it would not require dramatic improvement in farm conditions” to

make factory farming ethical (Matheny and Chan 2005, 584). The issue here, however, is that, it is only relevant to talk about a disagreement if they are actually talking about the same thing. They might have an entirely different conception of ethical meat, but it is difficult to determine as there does not seem to be a shared understanding of this phenomenon. This is probably in part due to a lack of reflexivity, which shows the necessity of having a more nuanced and comprehensive understand of ethical meat.

1.2 The Animal Rights Literature and Ethical Meat

As was said above, unlike the ethical meat literature, the animal rights literature is much older, has many internal debates, and, thus, has more clear definitions and divisions. Considering that, it is important to avoid presenting its position on the issue of ethical meat as monolithic. In fact, as will be seen in this section, there are actually many positions. More precisely, even if there are various issues with this division (see Josse 2013), three positions will be presented: (1) the new welfarist position, (2) the vegan abolitionist one, and (3) the critical animal studies point of view. Note that welfarism is not considered here for the simple reason that it rejects the idea that animal exploitation should be ended. For each subdivision, the relevant literature will be briefly presented followed by a description of its position about ethical meat.

1.2.1 New Welfarism

The expression “new welfarism” was first coined by Gary Francione (1996, 3) as a derogatory way to describe the strategy proposed most notably by “Robert Garner [who] presented [its] most sophisticated defence” (1996, 111). Francione referred to the first edition of Garner’s *Animals, Politics, and Morality* (1993). This expression was created to differentiate welfarism, for which increasing the welfare of animals is an end in itself, from new welfarism, for which “welfare

regulation will, at some point in the future, lead to the abolition of animal exploitation” (Francione 2010, 48). In that sense, new welfarism can be understood as abolitionist while welfarism isn’t⁶. Some authors like Lori Gruen prefer the expression “pragmatist” and note that they “are generally committed to ending the use of animals and want to minimize their suffering while that long-term goal is being sought.” (2011, 196) The next section will explore why Francione criticizes new welfarism, but for now, new welfarism will be described. As was just said, in the academic literature, this approach is mainly defended by Garner. It is interesting to note that he was the first and still one of the few political scientists to work on the animal rights issue. Since, according to Francione, it is the dominant perspective in “most of the large animal advocacy organizations” (2010, 48), it has also been defended by militants including most notably Ingrid Newkirk, co-founder of *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* (PETA) (1996). While others like Erik Marcus (2005) and Gruen (2011) also share these ideas, the section will mostly be based on Garner’s publications since he proposes the most comprehensive definition.

For Garner, “it is crucial to note that in the political arena it tends to be interests rather than ideas that are the main determinant of public policy outcomes” (2010, 154). Such a position only makes sense if interests are relatively fixed. Indeed, Garner considers that humans have interests in continuing animal exploitation (2005, 165). He admits that these particular interests may be the result of an ideological manipulation, but refuses to consider the impact of ideas because it is impossible to know what the “real” interests of individuals are (Garner 2004, 256). He later admitted in a discussion with Francione that “political action can itself change the moral climate” (Garner 2010, 254), which can be interpreted as a way

6 Melvin Josse opposes the use of the expression “new welfarism” because of its pejorative origin. According to him, it gives the impression that new welfarism is not abolitionist. That is why, he prefers to label this approach “reformist abolitionism” (Josse 2013, 79–80). “New welfarism” will, however, still be used in the current project.

to change the dominant interests. The point, however, remains that for Garner, interests are given and almost fixed. This view is contested by many authors. For example, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that “it is widely accepted now that ideas and interests are not discrete and watertight categories, since people identify their self-interest in part based on their sense of who they are, and what sort of relationships they value in the world.” (2011, 254)

Garner’s focus on interests has a major impact on his conception of politics. Indeed, he adopts a pluralist approach, which argues “that in liberal democracies the outputs of government are a reflection of the distribution of influence amongst groups” (Garner 2004, 250). He, thus, conceives that the animal rights movement is a pressure group like any other that tries to influence the government, which is assumed to be a neutral actor. He admits that groups that represent powerful economic interests like the “industries that rely on the exploitation of animals” (Garner 2004, 255) can have more influence on the government, but he does not see any structural influence. On the contrary, he considers that the influence of animal industries reflects the “fairly widespread desire for the economic benefits derived from the utilization of animals” (Garner 2004, 255). In that sense, this approach can be classified as individualistic: society is conceived as a mass of individuals that regroup in different pressure groups to defend their own perceived interests.

Given this pluralist approach, Garner considers that the animal rights movement must be ready to make compromises, mostly to be considered respectable in the eyes of the government to move to a position where it could influence it, that is, to have “insider status” (2004, 220, 2005, 156–57). Making compromises implies that the abolition of animal exploitation cannot be accomplished overnight. That is why he considers that the movement must demand gradual reforms to increase

animal welfare (Garner 2010, 121), which implies that the current system of animal exploitation can be reformed. The end point of this gradual process is not always clear⁷ but, for Garner, any reform represents a step in the right direction. The new welfarist logic is that as these reforms accumulate, animal exploitation will eventually be abolished.

Given this understanding of new welfarism, its position about ethical meat should be obvious. For Garner, the rationale that should guide the “animal protection movement [...] is encapsulated in the principle of unnecessary suffering”. He continues by saying that the focus of the movement has

been on showing not that the use of animals is morally wrong irrespective of the benefits to humans, but rather that most, if not all, of the ways in which animals are currently treated are unnecessary in the sense that they do not produce human benefits or that such benefits can be achieved in other ways. (Garner 2010, 141)

He notes that Francione proposes a similar idea: the “humane treatment principle, which prohibits the infliction of unnecessary suffering on animals”. The key difference between the two is in the application of these principles. For Francione, “all uses of animals are unacceptable according to this principle” while Garner notes that many people would disagree. (Garner 2010, 141)

Despite the fact that he recognizes that it is important to understand what is meant by “humane,” it does not appear necessary for him to propose a clear definition. He only says that it “ought to be stretching the definition of ‘cruelty-free’ to the point where the conditions of farm, and other, animals are significantly improved” (Garner 2010, 223). Following that logic, the above principles are to be evaluated from a pragmatic perspective, that is, they only

⁷ It is not clear because even if Francione says that Garner is a new welfarist, the latter is not explicitly abolitionist. His position remains vague. This ambiguity is not, however, important because the internal consistency of his theory does not depend whether he is an abolitionist or not.

make sense as long as they can help improve the lives of animals. Consequently, “what is regarded as unnecessary is not static nor is it objective” (Garner 2010, 141). The underlying logic of new welfarism is that the adoption of welfare reforms contributes to the evolution of these principles and, as such, they put in place a virtuous cycle of improvements by constantly redefining what is deemed unnecessary suffering. Now clearly, the idea of ethical meat fits in that logic in the sense that it provides guidelines to improve the lives of animals. Furthermore, as was seen in the previous section, most definitions of ethical meat directly or indirectly refer to some conception of what is considered an acceptable treatment for animals.

In sum, ethical meat appears compatible with new welfarism. As was mentioned above, the endpoint of the process of improving the treatment of animals is not always clear, but for Garner, that does not appear problematic as long as there are improvements in the lives of the animals. For others new welfarists, like Marcus who is clearly in favour of the end of animal agriculture, it makes perfect sense to be both in favour of abolition and of welfare reforms (2005). Such a position implies that the two objectives are compatible and this is precisely the point on which Francione disagrees and that motivated his critique of new welfarism.

1.2.2 Vegan Abolitionism

The expression “vegan abolitionism” is used by Steven Best to describe a form of abolitionism that is based on “a vegan lifestyle”⁸ (2014, 42). This approach was

8 A few authors explored the political implications of the adoption of a lifestyle by individuals. Both Ross Haefliger et al. that write about “lifestyle movement” (2012) and Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle (2011) that write about “lifestyle politics” discuss how a lifestyle can be “political”. Steven Best also criticizes Gary Francione because of his “rigid focus on consumer demand” (2014, 42). This focus on consumers can be related to the literature on political consumerism which will be discussed in further detail in chapter 5 (Micheletti 2003; Stolle and Micheletti 2013).

first developed in Francione's *Rain without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement* (Francione 1996; Wrenn 2011, 11). According to Best, Francione "has managed to monopolize the meaning of 'abolitionism'" (2014, 47). To highlight the fact that Francione is not the only one to have developed a conception of abolitionism, it is essential to be more specific and as such, his position will be described using the expression "vegan abolitionism" since it is more descriptive of his political strategy. Since 1996, other authors have shared his vegan abolitionist approach, but Francione remains the reference, so it is mainly his work that will be presented in this section.

His *Rain without Thunder* (1996) sent shockwaves through the animal rights movement because for the first time, the common sense idea according to which the adoption of any welfare reform constituted progress towards abolition was challenged (1996, 111). Later, he explicitly said that these reforms are even counterproductive for two reasons: (1) "welfare reform generally increases production efficiency" and (2) it "makes the public feel more comfortable about using animal products" (2010, 26). This conclusion made him develop a completely different strategy.

Since the objective of the animal rights movement is the abolition of animal exploitation, it should reject reforms that represent compromises towards that goal. Francione rejects the criticism according to which this represents an all-or-nothing strategy by arguing that it is possible to adopt abolitionism incrementally⁹ (1996, 190, 2010, 64). Whether or not it is an all-or-nothing strategy, it remains that, according to him, a "moral paradigm shift" is a precondition to having the

⁹ Josse points out that Francione's position on abolitionist reforms changed radically (2013, 83). In 1996, he argued that such reforms could be considered acceptable (1996, 190), as with the abolition of a particular practice like hunting (1996, 213), but in 2010, he argues that partial abolition "runs the risk of conveying the impression that certain forms of exploitation are worse than other" (2010, 76) and, thus, proposes the gradual increase number of vegans as an incremental strategy (2010, 64-65).

possibility to change legislation (2010, 65), mostly because of the economic influence that “animal exploiters” can exert on the government (1996, 169). So Francione sees the same influence as Garner, but concludes the opposite: the State is not neutral. That is why he proposes an “outsider” strategy (1996, 219).

His outsider strategy consists principally of vegan education because it provides “practical and incremental strategies both in terms of reducing animal suffering now and in terms of building a movement in the future” (2010, 64). More precisely, he proposes to engage in “education campaigns,” writing “editorials and essays,” “organizing lawful boycotts”... (2010, 66). As an outsider strategy, Francione insists, vegan education does not require “a large organization”; on the contrary, “the sort of pervasive social change that is necessary requires a strong grassroots movement” (2010, 66). The logic here is that the “increased number of vegans would [...] help to build a political and economic base required for the social change that is a necessary predicate for legal change” (2010, 65). It should be noted that since Francione insists so much on the importance of veganism, “[e]thical veganism must be the unequivocal moral baseline” for the animal rights movement (2010, 62). This requirement for coherence or moral purity has since been repeated by many authors (Torres 2007, 133; Wrenn 2011, 20).

That being said, here as well, his idea of ethical meat should be fairly obvious. Two points, one ethical and one strategic, are important to understand his position. First, as was said above, for Francione, the exploitation of animals remains morally unacceptable however animals are treated: “There is no rational justification for our continuing to deny [the right not to be treated as property] to sentient nonhumans, however ‘humanely’ we treat them” (2010, 22). A similar idea is proposed by Torres: “There are no ‘humane’ forms of exploitation that make it acceptable to use animals instrumentally, as means to our ends” (2007,

26). Second, just like any welfare reforms, the promotion of ethical meat is counterproductive. In other words, ethical meat is just another name for new welfarism.

He recognizes that “It is easier to tell people that they can be morally conscientious omnivores than it is to take the position that veganism is a moral baseline. That, however, is precisely the problem. No one disagrees with the principle that it is wrong to inflict ‘unnecessary’ suffering and that we ought to treat animals ‘humanely’” (Francione 2010, 64). But according to him, this easy route does not really help animals in the short or long run. As such, even if new welfarists pretend to share the abolitionist objective, what they actually propose is not that different from what welfarists promote and should be opposed.

In other words, unlike new welfarism, vegan abolitionism argues that ethical meat and abolition are fundamentally incompatible. What was presented as a continuum of animal treatment with a possibility for progress is simplified as binary: one can be in favour of meat, including ethical meat, or of abolition, not both. For Francione, the choice is clear and the best way to reach this goal is through vegan education. However, for some authors who share the abolitionist objective, Francione’s focus on individual preferences remains problematic because, as Best argues, vegan education “is hopeless in the face of such formidable [speciesist institutional] forces” (2014, 45). As will be seen in the next section, critical approaches, on the contrary, focus on structures and not individuals.

1.2.3 Critical Approaches

The expression “critical approaches” is used to describe the variety of approaches that mostly belong to the relatively new¹⁰ interdisciplinary field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS). It was developed as a critique of “(1) Animal Studies (AS), rooted in vivisection and animal testing in the hard sciences and (2) [Human-Animal Studies] (HAS), which reinforces the socially constituted human-animal binary” (Nocella et al. 2014, xxiii). Most importantly, they were considered too “non-normative, and apolitical” (Steve Best 2009, 23) because they “do not explicitly challenge the exploitation of other animals” (Nocella et al. 2014, xxiii). More precisely about the issue of animal exploitation, John Sorenson argues that rather than seeing it “as only a cultural or ethical problem, we must understand it in a broader political context and as part of capitalist structures that commodify all forms of life” (2014, xiv). This quote highlights two important characteristics of CAS’s understanding of animal exploitation: (1) it has structural causes and (2) it is intersectional. Before presenting these two characteristics, it is important to note that CAS is a vast and diversified field and, thus, only relevant texts are considered here.

First, while criticizing the focus on veganism in the animal rights movement, Brian Luke notes that a “vegetarian conclusion can too abruptly shift the focus to individual dietary choices that are not the root of the problem but are a function

10 Critical Animal Studies can be considered old or new depending on the point of view. Nik Taylor and Richard Twine point out that “[a]lthough an explicit statement of self-consciously critical animal studies did not emerge until the beginning of this century, reflexivity toward the human exploitation of other animals, and an emergent politicisation of the violence this entailed, began to appear alongside second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s” (2014, 4). That is why Dawne McCance says that it “first emerged some forty years ago” (2013, 4) while Nik Taylor and Richard Twine write that its institutional roots can be traced to 2001 with the “launching of the Centre for Animal Liberation Affairs, which later became the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) in 2007” (2014, 1). According to Anthony Nocella et al, the Institute “was founded post-September 11, 2001, to obtain creditability for animal and Earth liberation activists stigmatized as terrorists” (2014, xii–xxiii).

of the system itself.” (2007, 202) Following the same logic, David Nibert argues that “it is not enough to try to change socially acquired prejudice or to focus only on moral change. The structure of the oppressive system itself must be challenged and changed.” (2013, 275n16) What both these quotes point out is that it is not enough to change individuals, the system itself must be transformed. CAS authors speak of “system” because they conceptualize animal exploitation as a form of oppression that has “historical and social structural causes.” (Nibert 2002, 4)

To understand animal exploitation structurally, the concept of animal industrial complex (AIC) was developed. The term was first coined by Barbara Noske in 1989 (1997), but was later expanded by Richard Twine (2012). He defines it as

a partly opaque and multiple set of networks and relationships between the corporate sector, governments, and public and private science. With economic, cultural, social and affective dimensions it encompasses an extensive range of practices, technologies, images, identities and markets. (Twine 2012, 23)

With this conception, it becomes possible to contest Garner’s reification of the human interests in animal exploitation by arguing that “public acceptance of the profitable oppression of other animals has been socially engineered” (Nibert 2013, 5). Luke, without using the AIC concept, also argues that “[a]gribusiness produces both meat and demand for meat” (2007, 202). What they are trying to demonstrate is that the human interest in animal exploitation is a social construction (Nibert 2002, 196; Sorenson 2014, xiii).

Second, since animal exploitation is considered a form of structural oppression, the intersectionality of oppression can be evaluated. Sorenson argues that CAS considers the “intersectionality of oppression and suggests that speciesism¹¹—the

11 The term “speciesism” as first coined by Richard Ryder in 1971 (1971). It is, however, Peter Singer that popularized it in 1975 as “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species.” (2009, p. 6) This definition was later criticized because it “when we [...] individualize the notion of speciesism

oppression of animals—constitutes a basic form of oppression that provides a structure for the oppression of other humans” (Sorenson 2014, xv). For example, the feminist Carol J. Adams explored the relationship between patriarchy and meat eating in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990) while the “patriarchal character of speciesism” has been explored by other authors (Sorenson 2014, xxi). Another example is to argue that animal exploitation “cannot be addressed outside of a critique of capitalism.” (Sorenson 2014, xxi) Nibert explicitly writes that “[t]ranscending capitalism will not automatically bring about a just world and the end of animal [exploitation], but it is a necessary precondition” (2013, 266). This intersectionality implies that the issue of animal exploitation cannot be addressed separately from other forms of structural oppression.

That being said, it should be clear that CAS authors have a more complex understanding of ethical meat. However, many authors still focus on arguing why it is wrong, but their richer theoretical perspective proposes different arguments. Indeed, some argue that the production of humanely raised animals cannot be scaled up, that is, “[i]t is physically impossible to raise an additional 55 billion animals on open and expansive pasture land” (Stănescu 2014, 221). Moreover, since the quantity of “‘free range’ meat” that can be produced is physically limited, it “can never represent more than a novelty item for privileged consumers” (Stănescu 2014, 221). Nibert proposes an even more critical class analysis by saying humane meat “reflects the historical pattern of elites consuming most of the ‘meat’—only now, the more affluent consume most of the chemical-free, ‘humanely’ produced ‘meat,’ while the vast majority consume the cheapest fare that the [AIC] profitably can produce” (2013, 260). There are also

and understand it as merely an individual prejudice, we lose the notion that certain social, economic, and legal logics are set in place that perpetuate animal exploitation at a deeper level within the social order.” (Torres 2007, 71)

some that focus on criticizing the environmental arguments in favour of ethical meat (Cole 2010).

Some authors' analyses go much further in the sense that they go beyond the arguments against ethical meat. These will be presented in the second part of this literature review. For now, it is mostly important to note that critical authors add a structural perspective to the animal rights literature. This has the advantage of going beyond a simplistic rejection of ethical meat and proposing deeper analysis.

1.3 Towards a Political Analysis of Ethical Meat

Following this presentation of the positions within the animal rights literature towards ethical meat, it is not surprising to see how, for the most part, each group has integrated this new idea into their previous understanding of animal rights. This is particularly striking for new welfarists and vegan abolitionists. Indeed, the notion of ethical meat appears to be just one more point of discord in the old debate between the two.

For critical animal studies, the situation is more complex. Indeed, by considering the acceptability of animal exploitation as a social construction, a political dynamic mostly ignored by new welfarists and vegan abolitionists becomes apparent. That is to say, by focusing mainly on whether ethical meat is right or wrong, it is difficult to see if there is more going on. Indeed, while this is certainly not what he had in mind, one consequence of this can be highlighted using a quote by Garner: "More often than not, as with the emphasis on the vegan education campaign, there is an assumption that all we have to do is publicize the reality of animal exploitation, and once fellow humans come to see the rational case for animal rights, they will adopt it without question" (2010, 126). What this

underlines is the idea that people are not passive when being exposed to animal rights arguments.

If reality was as such, one can only wonder why everyone is not vegan already. This is where the concept of animal-industrial complex comes in. Indeed, if the animal rights movement is actively working to promote its own agenda, clearly the animal industry does its best to propagate the opposite message. From that perspective, the issue of meat consumption becomes political. What is meant here by political is that to understand this issue, it is essential to go beyond an evaluation of the arguments and consider the question of power. Following David Held and Adrian Leftwich's definition, politics is understood as being "about power; about the forces which influence and reflect its distribution and use; and about the effect of this on resources use and distribution; it is about the 'transformatory capacity' of social agents, agencies and institutions" (1984, 144). One obvious example of this is how, as noted by Best above, it is hard to ignore the difference of resources and influences between the two protagonists. In other words, political perspectives offer an original understanding of the issue of animal rights.

This political dynamic appears to be particularly important in the case of ethical meat. Indeed, as will be seen later, many authors from Critical Animal Studies attribute political potential to this phenomenon. However, before this is discussed, it appears necessary to take a step back and expand this literature review to include texts talking about politics, food, animals, and meat more generally.

2. Politics and Ethical Meat

This second part of the literature review stems from the conclusion that there could be a specific political dynamics surrounding ethical meat. To explore this idea, it is first necessary to take a step back and have a look at what the broader literature on food and politics has to offer. As such, the first part of this second literature review will explore the publications that are loosely classified as belonging to food politics. It will be seen that they do not have much to contribute specifically about ethical meat, but that they propose ways to analyze issues like the one at hand. To push the issue further, considering the lack of analysis about ethical meat, it is essential to return to the animal rights literature. Looking at it, it quickly becomes apparent that despite the fact that the concept of “political” is often used, it is rarely used in a way that can be useful to this research. Considering that, before looking at the texts that can actually be used, it appears important to briefly go over what exists and why it is not relevant. After that, the few publications that do propose political analysis of ethical meat will be explored and as it happens, they can for the most part be classified as belonging to the critical animal studies.

2.1 Politics of Food/Food as Politics

The first place to look is at the literature considering the politics of food to see if their general analysis is relevant to the issue of ethical meat. In other words, the objective here is not to see if they talk about ethical meat, these will be explored later, but to see if what is said about food in general can help understand this particular issue. This literature can loosely be labelled food politics, but this review will not be restricted to publications that label themselves as such. In this section, it will be seen that while this literature can be useful to understand the politics of animals and meat, it is not relevant to the current research. There is

however one exception to this general conclusion: the texts analyzing the representations of food do provide valuable insights.

The obvious starting point for this review are the authors that consider the politics of food in its most traditional conception. For example, Robert Paarlberg restricts the “politics” of food politics to the state. That is, he considers food politics as the “struggle over how the losses and gains from state action are allocated in the food and farming sector” (Paarlberg 2013, 2). A good example of this kind of research is Marion Nestle’s *Food Politics How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition, and Health* which focus on “how the food industry influences what we eat.” In her analysis, she proceeds mostly by exposing the ways the industry uses “the political process—entirely conventional and nearly always legal—to obtain government and professional support for the sale of their products” (Nestle 2007, 1).

This kind of analysis has also been done to understand the influence of the meat industry in the United States. In *Meatonomics*, David Robinson Simon details how “The animal food sector wields its considerable economic clout to exert enormous influence over lawmaking at both the state and federal levels” (2013, xvii). Margo DeMello adds that often, “regulatory agencies are staffed with former representatives from the very industry they are charged with regulating” (2012, 137). Considering this influence, it is not surprising to see Paarlberg argue that “because the humane treatment of farm animals is more expensive for industry, it is unlikely ever to be undertaken spontaneously” (2013, 125–26). This is why some animal rights organizations turned to ballot proposition, the most famous one being the successful Proposition 2, the *Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act*, in California in 2008. Despite it being described as a “watershed moment in a decades long fight to secure some minimal humane legal standards for farm

animals” (Lovvorn and Perry 2008, 150) and as “a resounding victory” (Gruen 2011, 197), this remains only one of a few cases. Indeed, the political power of the animal industry remains a considerable force that has pushed proponents of animal rights and of ethical meat to take the fight outside traditional politics.

Another approach to food politics focuses on international political economy. Interestingly, one of the first books to propose such an analysis focused on meat, that is Frances Moore Lappé’s *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971). This book established a relation between meat consumption and world hunger, which was an original argument for vegetarianism at the time. It will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Today, while her analysis is considered simplistic, it remains that the analysis of food issues from the perspective of international political economy remains relevant. Indeed, books like *Food* by Jennifer Clapp (2012) and *A Foodie’s Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat* by Eric Holt-Giménez (2017) highlight the importance of analyzing the influence of transnational corporations and the development of an uneven trade regime favouring developed countries.

In the food politics literature in general, however, the issue of meat consumption is usually not problematized. For the most part, when it is discussed, it is usually to discredit the idea of veganism and at the same time, to render inevitable the continuation of meat production. This is usually done in two ways. First, for some authors like Paarlberg, veganism is problematic to the animals themselves: “Avoiding abuse is important, but if we all became vegans, farm animals would hardly thrive. They are domesticated species that cannot survive without human care, so if we stopped raising them for food, they would have to be kept in zoos or perform in circuses to avoid extinction” (2013, 123). Julie Guthman echoes a similar argument when she qualifies as an “excellent critique” Pollan’s argument

according to which veganism fails “to address the already existing plethora of domesticated (industrialized) animals” (2007, 263). The other way is to argue that preoccupation for the welfare of the animals is only a concern for developed countries that have the luxury to care about such things. The details vary, but the general argument is to oppose “public concerns on food safety, animal welfare, and climate-changing emissions” with “the welfare of some two billion people depending on livestock for livelihoods” (Mehta-Bhatt and Ficarelli 2013, 516–17). Another way to put it is to note that, as Paarlberg writes: “On many drylands in Africa, there is not enough rainfall to grow cereal crops, so the only source of food is grass-fed animals, such as goats and cattle” (2013, 18). In both cases, the point is to ignore veganism and to present animal welfare as a secondary issue. Considering that, it can be concluded that these publications are not entirely relevant to the analysis of the ethical meat discourse.

In other words, while works that focus on the state and on international political economy can be useful to understand some issues related to animals and meat, they do not appear to provide many insights about ethical meat. There are, however, texts that offer a more promising way forward. Indeed, while the first part of this section considered the impacts of politics on food, some authors focus on the politics of food representations. They explore the way food is conceived, discussed, debated and understood in books with evocative titles like *Food as Communication: Communication as Food* (Cramer, Greene, and Walters 2011) and *The Rhetoric of Food: Discourse, Materiality, and Power* (Frye and Bruner 2012). Of course, there is no clear cut division between these texts and the first ones presented. For example, Nestle proposes an analysis of “the marketing of foods to children” (2007, 176), but there is an overall difference of focus.

Indeed, in the texts that will be presented here, there is an underlying idea according to which these representations are deeply political. One clear example of this theoretical perspective is proposed by Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato in the introduction of the book they edited, *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning* (2008). They say:

This book begins from the premise that representations of food and foodways, when closely examined, illuminate both the repressive power and the productive potential of representation, in a Foucauldian sense. Food representations have historically been understood as mere barometers of cultural sensibilities; instead, we contend that these representations actively produce cultural sensibilities and the possibility of transgression. (LeBesco and Naccarato 2008, 2)

Another way to put it:

Food is deeply politicized, by which we mean interlarded with relationships of power and privilege. Most everyday food choices both reflect and reproduce societal power division. As Mintz insists, the meaning human beings give to food cannot be isolated from questions of power, since food's symbolic meaning are intrinsically connected to political-economic structures and large-scale institutions.” (Mintz 1996; Johnston and Baumann 2015, 113)

One very influential book to include such a perspective is Guthman's *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*¹². In her study of the development of organic farming in California, she takes the time to identify the four ideological inspirations of the organic farming movement: critique of modern agriculture, food safety movements, back-to-the-land movements and environmentalism (Guthman 2004, 4–9). She then proceeds to show how “contemporary agrarian populism” cuts “across all four of [these] movements.” Unlike some of their proposed solutions, “the new agrarianism sees the family-owned and—operated, small-scale farm as the locus of, indeed the key to, social justice and ecological sustainability. Moreover, and in contrast to the

12 For a similar account focused on the counterculture more generally, rather than just the organic movement, see Warren J. Belasco's *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture took on the Food Industry* (Belasco 2007).

counterculture critique, it places tremendous value on farmer independence rather than collective action” (Guthman 2004, 10). While her analysis does not directly address the themes of animals and meat, her assessment of agrarianism will be useful later to understand part of the ethical meat phenomenon.

One last example is Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann’s *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (2015). In the introduction of their analysis of foodies and foodie culture, they note that one of the goals of their book is “to use foodie culture as a lens for investigating the political dimensions of food practices”. They go on to state that the “rise of food politics in the current decade creates an opportunity [...] to integrate environmental issues, labor rights, animal welfare, and health concerns within discussions of gourmet food” (Johnston and Baumann 2015, 4). While they refer specifically to foodie culture, the integration of these issues with food choices can be seen more widely in society and can without a doubt be related to the rise of ethical meat at the beginning of the 21st century.

Moreover, they write that

To get at the question of food politics, we eschew simple yes/no answers for a more subtle approach that focuses on how political issues are framed in food discourse and embodied in the lifeworlds and words of foodies themselves. A common tendency is to think about food politics as a kind of list of foods you should, or should not eat [...]. This approach makes sense when grocery shopping, but only get us so far analytically. We argue that food politics is best understood as a broad social discourse that structures how we think about food’s political implications. (Johnston and Baumann 2015, 113)

This criticism of food politics echoes what Guthman wrote in 2007 in her *Commentary on teaching food: Why I am fed up with Michael Pollan et al.* (2007). The point here is that this approach reflects the criticism that was advanced in this research about the tendency of the literature on ethical meat to focus mainly

on whether it is good or bad instead of trying to deepen the understanding of its political implications.

In summary, the broad food politics literature is mostly relevant to the current research through its focus on food representations. While it does not provide direct answers to the question at hand, it contributes to this thesis on two levels; it provides a broad ideological framework in which ethical meat can be situated, and it highlights the relevance of focusing on the political implications of the way food is represented. That being said, it is now time to go back to the animal rights literature to see if they propose this kind of analysis about ethical meat.

2.2 Politics and Animal Rights

In a sense, the idea of animal rights has always been political. Indeed, as Tony Milligan puts it, there is no doubt about this when considering the fact that in 1975, Singer presented “animal liberation” in the same vein as women’s liberation and decolonization, and “suggested that an indefensible use of entrenched power could be challenged and finally overthrown” (2015, 9). Yet, as will be seen here, this “politics” has not always been fully explored. The first part of this section will review some publications that recognize this gap, while in the second part, the so-called “political turn” in animal ethics will be presented. It remains that, as will be seen, this is only partially relevant to the issue of ethical meat.

Political scientist Paul Hamilton argued in 2012 that while “animals are becoming salient subjects in the fields of law, sociology, and philosophy, they continue, for the most part, to be invisible in political science” (2011, 130). Political theorist Alasdair Cochrane adds that when animals are mentioned, it is “as a unit of comparison to illustrate the exalted status of human beings” (2010, 4). Whatever the reason for this lack of interest from political science, it remains problematic

because, while many authors agree that profound social changes are necessary to end animal exploitation (Torres 2007; Nibert 2013), political analysis of the movement and of the ways to induce such a change are often simplistic in the literature. As was already mentioned when discussing the animal rights literature, when the focus is on philosophical arguments, it is often assumed that “all the animal rights movement has to do is convince enough people [...] and [the end of animal exploitation] will eventually happen” (Garner 2010, 147). In other words, the political aspect is completely removed.

From a more critical perspective, Kris Forkasiewicz notes about animal exploitation that:

Much attention has been given to its philosophical, ethical and cultural aspects, resulting in volume upon volume of valuable critical literature. However, other aspects, like its politics, have gone underappreciated. In its concrete, real-world expression, the now global behemoth which enslaves, tortures and kills billions of other animals a year, is a profoundly political phenomenon, in which questions of cultural values and individual attitudes are interwoven with those of power structures, resource distribution, and institutional hierarchy, i.e. with the capitalist world system itself. With some exceptions, this fact is still largely unnoticed and undertheorized. (Forkasiewicz 2011, 130)

While the perspective is entirely different, part of this idea is not unlike Garner’s observation that there is a deep political dynamic in play that is mostly ignored.

As was hinted at the end of the first part of this literature review, a considerable part of the animal rights literature that can be considered partially political is devoted to the strategic debate between new welfarism and vegan abolitionism. One of the most famous such publications remains *The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation?* Which proposes a debate between Francione and Garner (2010). At one point, this debate was so pervasive that it was almost impossible to discuss animal rights without taking position. As was seen above, one

consequence of the dominance of this debate is that the phenomenon of ethical meat has been integrated into it unquestioningly.

While this debate is not without merit, it has led to an important fracture in the animal rights movement that has prompted some authors to find a way out. This is why Milligan identifies this fracture, “the influential contrast which Francione has drawn between ‘abolitionism’ and ‘new welfarism’”, as one of the two that led to what he calls a “political turn in animal rights.” (2015, 6–7) As Andrew Woodhall and Gabriel Garmendia da Trindade put it, this dissatisfaction “has resulted in the emergence of more political-based approaches being increasingly put forward within the literature largely in contrast to the traditional ethical approaches” (2017b, 2). More specifically, the two authors note that people working on “the theoretical side of the nonhuman animal movement” have started to propose “new and alternative means to how nonhumans ought to be considered and the issues they face should be confronted.” (Woodhall and da Trindade 2017b, 2)

In his article, Milligan argues that recently, the most influential texts about animals have been written by political philosophers and political theorists: Donaldson and Kymlicka’s *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (2011), Garner’s *A Theory of Justice for Animals: Animal Rights in a Nonideal World* (2013), Alasdair Cochrane’s *Animal Rights Without Liberation: Applied Ethics and Human Obligations* (2012), and Siobhan O’Sullivan’s *Animals, Equality and Democracy* (2011). While it does not appear essential to detail these books for the current research, it is important to note that in the animal rights literature, it is understood that the political turn was mostly liberal. This is clear when looking at the way Milligan describes what is implied in the “turn.” He first notes that the qualificative “political” can be “misleading given that animal rights discourse has

always been political” (Milligan 2015, 9). Indeed, as was explained above, it has always been rooted in politics. So, what is the defining characteristic of the so-called current “political turn”? According to Milligan, it “involves an appeal to a significantly broadened conception of liberal political values” which he defines as “liberty, equality, and, more ambiguously, fraternity” (2015, 9). In other words, the political turn was initially a liberal turn in a field that was already dominated by liberalism.

This liberal character has been noted and criticized by many authors. Indeed, in the book edited by Woodhall and Garmendia da Trindade (2017a), many authors start from the premise that this liberal dominance is problematic and propose other theoretical perspectives. For example, Josh Millburn writes that: “political theory does not begin and end with liberalism, and the political turn will be intellectually impoverished if it is unable or unwilling to engage with other strands of political philosophy” (2017, 97). This is why he proposes a right libertarian perspective. Zipporah Weisberg proposes a Left Humanist approach to nonhuman animals (2017). Finally, Angie Pepper proposes a global cosmopolitan approach (2017). The point here is not to have an exhaustive list, but to note that since the “liberal” genesis of the political turn, while still mostly liberal, there are more and more alternatives.

For the current project, however, this political turn is not entirely relevant since it remains deeply rooted in political theory and political philosophy. Indeed, the produced texts are mostly proposing normative research focused on the political structure that would permit some form of inclusion of nonhuman animals. While such work is important, the objective of this research is to propose a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of ethical meat, that is, to focus on what is happening now, and not on how things should be. In other words, the political

turn does not involve the type of empirical research that is needed to proceed which is not surprising since, as Josse writes, in the animal rights literature in general, political analysis and empirical research remain uncommon (2013, 3). Despite this difference, it remains that the issues that motivated this turn also justify one of the main conclusions of the first part of this literature review, that is, the need to go beyond moral philosophy. But most importantly, the newest publications in this political turn criticize the dominant liberal perspective in the animal rights literature, a critique shared by critical animal studies. As it happens, it might not be a coincidence that it is within that literature that the only political analysis of ethical meat could be found.

2.3 The Politics of Ethical Meat in Critical Animal Studies

It should not be surprising that with its critical perspective and multidisciplinary approach, it is from critical animal studies that most of the recent political analysis in the animal rights literature come from. Most importantly, it is in these texts that we see analysis going further than simply arguing that ethical meat is wrong. Some important texts of this field have already been presented in the first part of this literature review, but the focus here is on the original perspectives on ethical meat that have been proposed in the literature.

One of the first texts that can be found that address the issue of ethical meat in CAS was published in 2010 (Stănescu 2010). In it, Vasile Stănescu writes: “as a literary critic, I hope to provide to the locavore movement what they have given to others and to view their work as a text in order to reveal the manner in which they too, create an idealized, unrealistic, and, at times, distressingly sexist and xenophobic literary pastoral” (2010, 10). Like most texts about ethical meat, this one takes some time to offer arguments and counter-arguments against locavorism, mostly when discussing the environment. It is, however, unique in

being one of the first to offer a discourse analysis of that movement. As such, it presents a first step in an attempt to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced portrait. It is, however, problematic since it reduces the locavore movement to its worst elements, that is, by focusing on its roots in sexist and xenophobic ideologies. While, as will be seen later, part of the ethical meat discourse shares these roots, it is simplistic to criticize all the movement based solely on these. This kind of argumentation hints that the discourse analysis was done simply to discredit ethical meat. While such an endeavour is understandable from an animal rights perspective, it can also be seen as an obstacle to develop a comprehensive analysis.

Stănescu's article was republished in 2011 as a chapter (2011) in the collection *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation* edited by Sanbonmatsu (2011b). In his introductory chapter, Sanbonmatsu presents Stănescu's chapter in an original way. He starts by contrasting the Fordist and post-Fordist regime of accumulation: "Fordist regime of accumulation required the construction of a new mass consumer whose desires could be standardized to fit the needs of manufacturers, the post-Fordist regime is interested in creating a fragmented market of savvy, educated consumers". In the second category, he includes "product differentiation and niche marketing, like the 'batch production' of animal commodities like Kobe and Angus beef, new markets in so-called 'free range' eggs and 'humanely killed' veal calves". Why this change? He argues that "The world ecological crisis and the rise of a determined animal rights movement has made it necessary for the animal industry to develop new psychological and discursive frames in civil society to justify the continued exploitation of nonhuman beings for sport and killing". This was done with campaigns with the "twin objectives of shoring up the ideological base of speciesism as a mode of production and undermining the credibility of animal rights groups". Therefore, "Just as Fordism interpellated a

new form of mass consuming subject, post-Fordism is ‘hailing’ a new, post-animal rights consumer to preserve the overall regime of animal capital.” (Sanbonmatsu 2011c, 23)

He situates as part of this post-Fordist dynamics *Whole Foods*’ decision to “to encourage renewed consumption of other animals through the rhetoric of ‘green’ capitalism and ‘humane farming’”, Pollan and Barbara Kingsolver’s promotion of “‘locavore’ consumption as the solution to the world environmental crisis,” as well as their advocacy for “the exploitation and home-grown killing of captive chickens, goats, and other animals, portraying such practices as ethically and ecologically ideal”. This is where Stănescu’s chapter comes in. Sanbonmatsu’s take on it is, as was mentioned above, that locavorism is based on “unsupportable ecological arguments” and that it can be related to “romanticized autochthonous relationship,” “misogynistic and potentially racist discourses,” and “nativist sentiments that can be mobilized by the political right”. In an assessment of what this thesis names ethical meat, Sanbonmatsu both expands and reduces the idea. Indeed, on the one hand, compared to Stănescu, he includes *Whole Foods* and “‘resistance’ through consumption,” but on the other, he lumps everything together to relate it to the former’s criticism. In that sense, the same problem of oversimplification of the ethical meat phenomenon identified in Stănescu’s article is still present. The fact remains that his positioning of ethical meat as a reaction to the “animal industry to develop new psychological and discursive frames in civil society to justify the continued exploitation of nonhuman beings” is original (Sanbonmatsu 2011c, 23–24).

Fortunately, Sanbonmatsu expands this idea in another text published in 2011 (2011a). Indeed, after a lengthy critique of Lierre Keith’s *The Vegetarian Myth: Food, Justice, and Sustainability* (2009), he returns to the argument according to

which this kind of text should be understood in relation to the reaction of the animal industry that “has gone on the offensive and spent hundreds of millions of dollars in a concerted, multi-pronged counter-movement”. Indeed, he notes that “While Keith, Pollan, Kingsolver, and others are against factory farming too, but their locavore defence of killing and eating animals provides ideological cover for this larger project”. What he calls the “carno-locavore narrative” goes as follows:

corporate or industrialized agriculture is damaging our ecosystem, bad for our health, and ‘cruel’ to the animals trapped inside the system. [...] But happily, there is a solution. If only we grow our own food, raise and kill our own ‘meat,’ we can defeat the corporate Machine, restore the ecosystem to its former natural splendor, and feel good again about what we eat. It’s a win-win for all concerned—for ‘consumers,’ for poor people starved by trade imbalances, for ecosystems ruined by a petrochemical agriculture system, and for the farm animals who will now live ‘pampered’ and healthy lives before being mercifully killed. (Sanbonmatsu 2011a)

He notes that: “The innovation of carno-locavorism, against this backdrop, has been to legitimate this violent mode of appropriation by disguising it as a project of social reform, even of revolutionary possibility”. According to him, however, “Carno-locavore discourse, far from representing a new form of resistance, is in fact at one with patriarchal capital’s attempt to work out a new mode of regulation in the face of the massive social and ecological contradictions of the existing system”. What is particularly noteworthy is “The fact that this discourse is being developed by liberals and leftists” while it has many relations with the right, neoliberal and conservative ideas (Sanbonmatsu 2011a). While his arguments are convincing, the impression of contradiction might stem from the fact that Sanbonmatsu’s conceptualization of the “carno-locavore discourse” has been monolithic, but as was seen in the definitions of ethical meat presented earlier, that could once again be an oversimplification.

In an article published in 2013, Stănescu further discusses the specific idea that there is an apparent contradiction in the fact that the locavore discourse has anti-

feminist roots while it is mostly propagated by progressive authors (2013). His article is a reply to an article by Rudy arguing that what she calls local meat is compatible with feminism (2012, 26). More specifically, while she recognizes that some of the concerns presented by Stănescu in his 2011 article are relevant, she notes that: “The idea of the small farm in the locavore movement is unquestionably heteronormative, but instead of abandoning the small farm, feminism, queer theory, and other progressive ethnic and race-based social movements need to help transform it” (Rudy 2012, 35). She further “suggests that feminism offers a qualified endorsement of local eating, especially local meat eating; it also offers advice about future directions local food activism should take” (Rudy 2012, 26). Obviously, Stănescu disagrees with this assessment and argues that “proponents [of the locavore movement] engage in a wide panoply of practices of animal husbandry which [...] violate deeply held views of feminists, gay, and queer activists” (2013, 108). The point here is not to determine who is right, but to note that criticizing locavorism for its anti-feminism is not only unfair to authors like Rudy that pretend otherwise, but most importantly, it demonstrates an oversimplified understanding of the ethical meat discourse.

That being said, Stănescu expanded his analysis in the chapter *Crocodile Tears, Compassionate Carnivores and the Marketing of "Happy Meat"* (2014). The point of departure of his text is to note that in the older publications about ethical meat, most authors remained ambivalent about animal welfare. That is, it was not always clear to what extent “one should actually care for individual animals” (Stănescu 2014, 216). But, he argues, there is “a new genre of texts that, while arguing for the same small-scale pasture based farms and citing these earlier ‘locavore’ works, do so primarily out of an explicit concern for the animals themselves” (Stănescu 2014, 217). He further notes that they try to invert a “basic idea of animal rights,” that is, “that one should eat meat because he or she cares

about animals” (Stănescu 2014, 217). To illustrate this, he proceeds to analyze a publication of Friends that uses such arguments. In his chapter, Stănescu argues that from different points of view, the arguments are factually incorrect or contradictory. In other words, while this text proposes a deeper analysis of the ethical meat discourse, the underlying objective remains to discredit the whole idea of ethical meat. In conclusion, he, however, proposes an idea that is more original. He suggests “that the ‘compassion’ of the carnivore has less to do with the animal, and is instead about the human feeling of guilt” (Stănescu 2014, 230). This kind of idea is interesting since it goes beyond the who-has-the-best-argument logic to focus on the impacts of the discourse, which can have a political incidence.

In the same volume, Forkasiewicz adopts an explicit political point of view about veganism and animal liberation. While this text does not specifically discuss ethical meat, it is included here since it offers some insights that are similar to Sanbonmatsu’s argument about the impacts of ethical meat on the animal rights movement. While talking about new welfarists, which he calls “neo-reformists,” he notes that they “declare animal liberation as their goal, but [their] actions diverge from it every step of the way. Increasingly succumbing to co-optation by animal exploitation businesses, the substance of their self-definition is reduced to a hodgepodge of superficially radical slogans” (Forkasiewicz 2014, 47). More precisely, about co-optation, he adds a paragraph worth quoting at length:

Though many supporters will deny it, reformist and neo-reformist organizations have largely become a part of the animal exploitation complex and need it just as much as it needs them. Odds are, in any country where animal ‘protection’ is an issue at all, there operates at least one such group. On account of its moderate, modest postulates, that group is most probably positioned centrally, surrounded by smaller, more radical organizations and coalitions. The workings of the system based on oppression turn moderate politics into a reactionary position. The different strands of reformism gain influence by succumbing to what the Frankfurt school critical theorists, after

Freud, called the reality principle—that is, by effectively resigning themselves to the contours of the status quo. Within such a constellation, the related problems of human species-supremacy and the self-estrangement of the human being from its own animality scarcely ever arise; thus animal liberation is completely marginalized.” (Forkasiewicz 2014, 48)

In other words, welfarists and new welfarists, both sympathetic to ethical meat, are part of the “animal exploitation complex,” and as such, are contributing to its continuation, but their integration to that complex has the consequence of marginalizing the most radical parts of the movement and in turn, animal liberation as a whole. This is indeed similar to what Sanbonmatsu suggested, but here again, this deeply political dynamic is not sufficiently explored.

While Forkasiewicz talks about the co-optation of animal rights, Matthew Cole discusses a similar dynamic for environmentalism in his 2016 article, *Getting (Green) Beef: Anti-Vegan Rhetoric and the Legitimizing of Eco-friendly Oppression* (2010). Its focus is mainly on Simon Fairlie’s book, *Meat: A Benign Extravagance* (2010), which will be discussed extensively in chapter 5, and George Monbiot’s reaction, an environmentalist writing for *The Guardian*. Their story will be discussed in chapter 5, but for now, it is mostly important to know that Fairlie’s book proposes a defence of meat consumption in a ruralized England almost strictly based on environmental considerations. Considering his focus on small farms and the environmental issues associated with factory farming, it seems clear that his ideas belong with the ethical meat discourse. The most important parts of Cole’s article for the current research are his discussion of ethical meat’s influence and his conclusion that the “vulnerability to that influence rests on his continued lack of engagement with vegan ethics” (2016). For him, this is important as it highlights “the risk of co-option by the animal industrial complex” (Cole 2016) for people tempted by ethical meat. Moreover, it is interesting to note that while Fairlie’s defence of meat consumption is different from the ones that were presented earlier, it shares enough elements with the ethical meat discourse

to raise the question of how the two are related, something that has not been done in the literature.

In parallel to these publications, Melanie Joy proposed a related take on the issue of ethical meat. To understand it, it is necessary to go back to her 2010 essay *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* in which she proposes the concept of carnism (Joy 2010). It was subsequently defined as “the ideology that conditions people to eat (certain) animals” and as “a sub-ideology of speciesism” (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014, 21). In 2012, Joy published an article named *Understanding Neocarnism: How Vegan Advocates Can Appreciate and Respond to “Happy Meat,” Locavorism, and “Paleo Dieting”* in which she proposed another concept, neocarnism (2012). The way Weitzenfeld and Joy present it is particularly relevant to the current analysis:

Within the past several years, there has been a shift in cultural attitudes toward eating animals, at least in parts of the affluent West. As public awareness of CAFOs and veganism has increased, three distinct trends in the consumption of animals have emerged: “humane,” “sustainable/local,” and “nutritional” meat, dairy, and eggs. Each of these trends may be understood as part of a backlash against the vegan counternarrative; as such a counternarrative has sufficiently raised awareness of the impact of animal agriculture on animals, the environment, and human health. The new pro-carnism arguments may thus be seen as an attempt to defend the weakened animal-eating establishment against the very real threat posed by an increasingly powerful vegan movement. (2014, 23)

In other words, carnism has “morphed into new ideologies – neocarnisms – that are organized around the invalidation of the vegan counternarrative” (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014, 23). Like previous accounts of ethical meat, it is presented as a reaction to defend meat eating, but contrary to them, Joy proposes a more nuanced account of what it involves. In 2012, she highlights the importance of properly understanding neocarnism if it is to be refuted. Unfortunately, this short article did not lead to more research.

In sum, while these accounts of ethical meat propose convincing arguments against ethical meat, they suffer from some limitations. Most importantly, two have been identified. First, as was noted multiple times in this review, with the exception of Joy, the authors often propose an oversimplified understanding of the ethical meat discourse. This can be seen by the fact that they are mostly focused on finding internal contradictions and uncovering some embarrassing roots. This is problematic since like the previous focus on moral arguments, the objective remains that of “winning the debate.” Furthermore, they assume that some sort of internal consistency is essential, but an incoherent discourse can still have political impacts and this idea leads to the other limitations found in the literature. Second, most of the presented texts imply at one time or another that there is some political dynamic at play with the ethical meat discourse. Three such allusions are worth repeating. Sanbonmatsu presents this discourse as a reaction from the animal industry “to justify the continued exploitation of nonhuman beings.” Stănescu noted that the discourse “has less to do with the animal, and is instead about the human feeling of guilt.” Lastly, Forkasiewicz and Cole talk about the risks of co-optation of the ethical meat discourse by the animal-industrial complex. All these examples highlight the fact that there are power relations at play that are just waiting to be subjected to a political analysis, yet these authors only briefly mention them. This, therefore, is what this research proposes to do.

3. Research Question

Before expanding on the above conclusion, one thing must be noted. It is surprising to see that just as the ethical meat literature appears to have a limited understanding of itself, the animal rights literature that criticizes it has a tendency to oversimplify it. What this implies is that before any attempt at a political analysis of the ethical meat phenomenon is done, it is essential to

propose a better answer to the question “What is ethical meat?” Only after this shortcoming in both literatures has been addressed can the political implications of that phenomenon be explored.

That being said, going back to the above conclusion, it appears that while many political implications are attributed to the ethical meat phenomenon, they are never fully explored. In other words, while there is no lack of ideas in the literature, there is a gap in the research. Indeed, from the statement that ethical meat is a concerted reaction from the meat industry to keep its activity legitimate to the co-optation of parts of the animal rights movement into the animal-industrial complex, a comprehensive political assessment of ethical meat is just waiting to be done. More precisely, the common thread in all these political implications, which was spelled out most clearly by Joy, is the idea that ethical meat constitutes a threat to the animal rights agenda. Considering that, it appears logical to ask: “How has ethical meat operated to neutralize the political potential of the animal rights movement?”

Moreover, the review of the food politics literature provided hints as to how to proceed to explore these ideas. More precisely, Johnston and Baumann’s idea according to which keeping the focus mainly on what is good or bad limits the analytical potential of any research is particularly interesting from an animal rights perspective. Indeed, a similar conclusion was reached while looking at the way the animal rights literature discusses ethical meat. More directly, it appeared that by investigating the phenomenon of ethical meat with the explicit objective of criticizing it, it is difficult to produce a fair assessment and, consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Considering that, and despite the fact that this research constitutes a critical thesis with an explicit normative stance in favour of animal liberation, it appears essential to take a step back to produce a political understanding of ethical meat that aims to be fair and as objective as such an academic investigation can be. Therefore, before the present research question can be answered, it is essential to fill another hole in both the literature about ethical meat and animal rights by drawing a comprehensive portrait of the ethical meat phenomenon. But before proceeding, the Gramscian theoretical framework and the corresponding methodology that will be used will have to be detailed.

CHAPTER THREE: Theory and Methodology: From Gramsci to Hajer

The previous chapter concluded that a political assessment of the ethical meat phenomenon has yet to be carried out. Indeed, in the animal rights literature, there is a tendency to both oversimplify the understanding of this issue and to impute to it various political implications that are not fully explored. To proceed with such a political analysis, an appropriate theoretical framework is needed. As was suggested at the very end of the previous chapter, a theoretical framework based on Gramsci will be used. However, since Gramsci's concepts are not entirely adapted to the current research, his ideas will be modified based on Hajer's discursive conception of politics. Moreover, Hajer's idea will also serve as the basis for the methodological approach that will be used. To present all these ideas, this chapter will be divided in three parts.

In the first section of this chapter, Gramsci's theory will be presented. Before that is done, it will first, however, be necessary to question the pertinence of using Gramsci both for the study of issues related to animal rights in general and specifically to ethical meat. After that is done, a particular interpretation of Gramsci's theory will be proposed. The important concepts as well as their interrelation will be detailed. It will be concluded that while Gramsci offers a rich theoretical framework, it needs to be complemented to better address the issue at hand.

In the second section, Hajer's theory of discourse-coalition will be presented as a middle-range theory to complement to Gramsci's idea. This presentation will be made in three steps: (1) an overall description of the theory and its main concepts, (2) the theoretical compatibility between his approach and Gramsci's and (3) the

methodological implication of his theory. It will be concluded that, not only can Hajer's ideas be used to extend Gramsci's, but they also provide a methodological foundation.

The third section will focus on the research proposition of this thesis. More precisely, this means that the various concepts that have been introduced will be operationalized specifically to understand the ethical meat issue. This exercise will lead to a reformulation of chapter 2's research question in Gramscian terms and to an articulation of the thesis that will be argued in this project. After that is done, the proposed methodology will be detailed. The overall analysis will consist of three steps: proceed to an analysis of the content of the ethical meat discourse, analyze the internal dynamics of the ethical meat coalition and explore how various groups have engaged with that discourse.

1. Gramsci's Theoretical Framework

The objective of this section is to present Gramsci's theoretical framework. Before proceeding, it, however, appears essential to take some time to first not only justify the use of ideas developed by an Italian Marxist to analyze an issue that obviously did not exist at his time, but also show its pertinence. The second part of this section will propose a general presentation of Gramsci's concepts and their interrelation.

1.1 Why Gramsci?

The idea of using some of Gramsci's concepts to try to understand the issue of animal rights is not original to this thesis. Some authors already refer directly to him. For example, Torres explicitly refers to Gramsci when he says that his concept of hegemony is relevant to understand speciesism (2007, 7–8) and Hamilton describes the objective of the “animal liberation movement” in the

following words: “From a Gramscian perspective, the task is to create a counterhegemonic narrative that can challenge the existing hegemony of humans” (2011, 136). They do not, however, go any further than saying that these concepts are relevant.

There are also many references to the concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony, but with no mention of Gramsci¹³. Marc Williams talks about “hegemony of meat-eating” (2000, 151) and Twine describes the Animal-Industrial Complex (AIC) as “particular sectors of the global economy that strive to maintain a hegemonic position” (2012, 20). Carrie Packwood Freeman presents “animal rights organizations” as “participants in a counterhegemonic social movement” (2010, 163). It could also be argued, as will become clearer when the concepts are operationalized that, as Twine implies in the above quote, the idea of Animal-Industrial Complex can easily be related to the concept of hegemony.

While these references imply that it appears judicious to use Gramsci to understand the debate about animal rights, they remain limited to the concept of hegemony. Moreover, even if there is some research that uses Marxism¹⁴ more generally, like Ted Benton’s *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice* (1993), no research using Gramsci’s broader theory to analyze the issues of animal rights and animal exploitation could be found. While this shows how such an analysis could contribute to the literature, the question of the compatibility of Gramsci’s theory and the issue of ethical meat remains to be answered. In fact, it is a double issue since two questions must be answered. First, is it reasonable to use a Marxist theoretical framework developed in the 1920s and 1930s to

13 While Gramsci does not have the monopoly of the concept of hegemony, it is worth noting that according to Thomas, “It is upon the concept of hegemony, more than any other, that Gramsci’s contemporary fame rests; indeed, his name is almost synonymous with it.” (2009, 159–60)

14 In his *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*, Alasdair Cochrane proposed a chapter on *Marxism and Animals* (2010).

understand a contemporary issue such as ethical meat? Second, to what extent can ethical meat be understood using that theory? Both sides of this question will be explored below.

1.1.1 A Gramscian Perspective

As was just said, it is first important to ask whether Gramsci's concepts are appropriate to analyze an issue that is not directly related to his own concerns, that is, the relations of production and the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat¹⁵. This is a recurrent question in the Gramscian secondary literature and there is no consensus. On the one hand, Simon notes how struggles that do not have a class character (feminism, environmentalism...) can be relevant from a Gramscian perspective, but only as "part of the contest for the hegemony between the working class and the capitalist class" (2015, 44). On the other hand, Stanley Aronowitz, using the same examples, argues that Gramsci's theory can be used by "building from a micropolitics of autonomous opposition movements, whether derived from production relations or not" (1990, 167). In more recent research, Michael Ekers and Alex Loftus agree with the latter author by saying that Gramsci's "conceptual and political resources" can be used to analyze "political movements that were either on the outside or on the fringes of his concerns" (2012, 17).

As Adam David Morton argues, this disagreement can be related to "key debates on the history of ideas" (2007, 25). More precisely, he presents these different

15 Even if the animal rights issue does not directly have a "class character", it is still worth mentioning how it can be related to the concept of classes in two ways. First, Jason Hribal argues that animals are part of the proletariat (2003). Second, as was said above, some authors point out that the humane meat discourse mostly concerns the bourgeoisie as "it reflects the historical pattern of elites consuming most of the 'meat' – only now, the more affluent consume most of the chemical-free, 'humanely' produced 'meat,' while the vast majority consume the cheapest fare that the animal-industrial complex profitability can produce" (2013, 260). In the same vein, Cochrane notes that historically, for many socialists, the issue of "justice for animals" has been understood as "reflective of bourgeois morality" (2010, 102).

interpretations of Gramsci as being related to two different kinds of historicism: (1) *austere historicism* that “demands to return Gramsci to his historical context” and (2) *absolute historicism* that shows “an appreciation of ideas in and beyond their context” (Morton 2007, 25). The former approach “acknowledges a debt to the methodological writings of Quentin Skinner” (Morton 2007, 25). For Nigel Greaves, “Skinner argues for a relativistic approach to the historical exercise in which we are warned of the need to suppress our tendencies to invest texts of the past with claims and assumptions the original author could not foresee from his/her historical standpoint” (2009, 33). He further notes that many authors working with Gramsci are “in violation of the warnings of Skinner” because the Italian Marxist is “transported to an unfamiliar historical location” (Greaves 2009, 42). The latter approach, on the contrary, insists “on the importance of thinking in a Gramscian way” (Morton 2007, 35). Thus, his concepts cannot be literally transposed, but it is legitimate to adapt them as long as they remain “Gramscian.” As Stuart Hall said in an interview in 1997, “You’ve got to do your own work to make Gramsci work” (1997, 27). It is this second perspective that will be used for this thesis.

This, however, can be a risky enterprise. As was said above, according to Greaves, it is not “appropriate to apply Gramsci to conditions that are taken to be decidedly different from his” (2009, 22). In the same vein, Peter Thomas notes that “a decontextualised reading risks dissolving the search for Gramsci’s ‘organic concepts’ into so many moments of indeterminate postmodern *jouissance*” and lose sight that “they have a fundamental coherence and respond to specific questions posed in a particular conjecture” (2009, 46). While these warnings are important reminders against “relaxed” or “hermeneutically naïve reading” (Thomas 2009, 46), some authors still propose an “openness of reading” and reject the idea that there is a pure and true doctrine (Jablonka 1998, 24). As Thomas

points out, Frank Jablonka articulates “the implicit practice of many of Gramsci’s recent readers” according to which “the fragmentary nature of the *Prison Notebooks*’ literary form is precisely the element that imparts a continuing fertility and relevance to them” (2009, 45). According to this logic, the *Prison Notebooks* can become, “following Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, ‘a toolbox,’ a ‘plateau’ of a ‘rhizome’ that each reader can construct according to their own disposition or the need imposed upon them by the conjecture” (Thomas 2009, 45). While Thomas is critical of such a reading of Gramsci, the “toolbox” approach would seem appropriate for this thesis. This is exactly what will be presented later, but before going there, the issue of the relevance of Gramsci’s theory to understand ethical meat still must be discussed.

1.1.2 Why a Gramscian Analysis of Ethical Meat?

Regarding the pertinence of using Gramsci, the first question to ask is to what extent a Gramscian analysis can bring relevant insights. This question is obviously difficult to answer since a comprehensive Gramscian framework was never used to analyze issues related to animal rights. It remains that from what was discovered in the literature review, there are many hints indicating that it would be insightful. Three such hints will be discussed: (1) the criticism of the political turn, (2) the importance of materiality in the analysis of food-related issues and (3) the corresponding importance of ideology.

The first thing to note is that the decision to use a Marxist theory can be understood within the logic of the political turn in animal ethics that was discussed in the literature review and that, on two levels. First, as was already said, part of the motivation for this research is shared by the political turn, that is, to go beyond strictly ethical perspective and explore political perspectives. Second, as was mentioned about the internal debates within the political turn,

there is also a desire to go beyond liberalism which remains dominant in the animal rights literature. While, as was said in the literature review, this political turn is not entirely relevant for this project since it is more concerned with political theory than political analysis, it nonetheless demonstrates a desire for other theoretical perspectives and especially, political ones.

Second, as was seen both in the food politics and critical animal study literatures, the materiality of food consumption and production are important to consider, and that, on multiple levels. As Johnston and Baumann note, food representations are both reflected and reproduced by “everyday food choices” as well as “intrinsically connected to political-economic structures and large-scale institutions” (2015, 113). In other words, to fully understand food politics, it is important to have a perspective that goes from the daily practices of people to the structural economic power of different actors. This last point about structural power was also presented as relevant in the context of meat consumption where authors in the CAS literature argue that the desirability and demand for meat is a social construction that was for the most part put in place due to the industry’s economic influence. More specifically, about ethical meat, it was seen that both Stănescu and Sanbonmatsu situate this phenomenon in the context of what looks like Marxist political economy. Moreover, it will be seen that Gramsci also proposes the concept of common sense that can be used to analyze daily practices. Third, the importance of ideology/discourse is a recurrent theme in the literature (the relation between the two will be explained later). As was seen in chapter 2, the food politics literature that focuses on the political implications of food representation are particularly relevant here. For example, Johnston and Baumann argue that “food politics is best understood as a broad social discourse that structures how we think about food’s political implications” (2015, 113). This can be related to Sanbonmatsu’s idea that ethical meat represents the need of the

animal industry for “new psychological and discursive frames in civil society to justify the continued exploitation of nonhuman beings” (2011c, 23) . All these elements are relevant when viewed within a Gramscian theoretical framework as one of his contributions to Marxist theory is the inclusion of ideology in a theoretical landscape dominated by material determinism.

In conclusion, for these three reasons, but most importantly for the last two, Gramsci appears to offer considerable analytical potential to understand the phenomenon of ethical meat. Indeed, to understand food politics in general, it is important to remember that while its ideological aspect—food representations—is very important, the idea of “food” remains deeply grounded in the material reality of its daily consumption at the table, of its production at the farm and of its local/global distribution. This complex dynamic is particularly relevant for this thesis since both in the animal rights and ethical meat literatures, it is common to see authors argue that changing how people think about food and the way individuals eat can transform the global food systems. In other words, all these elements are interrelated and it is suggested here that Gramsci’s theory is appropriate to analyze that. That being said, his theoretical toolbox can be presented.

1.2 Gramsci’s Theoretical Toolbox

The complexity of Gramsci’s theoretical framework renders the presentation of isolated concepts impossible. As Greaves notes, this complexity of “Gramsci’s schema becomes fully apparent when [...] the attempt is made to dismember it into its component parts” (2009, 17). As such, Gramsci’s concepts must be presented in interrelations and this is what will be done here. Before proceeding, it is important to remember that, considering what was said above about the

interpretation of Gramsci, we do not claim to offer the “correct” interpretation of Gramsci, but a theoretical framework inspired by Gramsci.

Most importantly, it is essential to say that the framework that will be presented is mostly based on Perry Anderson’s *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci* (1976). This essay was first published in 1976 and Thomas notes that “it still remains today among the most well-known and influential of all studies of Gramsci in English” (2009, 47). Since then, it has, however, been severely criticized. Thomas notes that its most extensive critique was produced by Gianni Francioni (1984), but was never translated from Italian (Thomas 2009, 53). According to the former, Francioni “raised numerous doubts about the methodological procedure and philological accuracy of Anderson’s study” (Thomas 2009, 80) and even argued that it is “a singular case of schematisation and impoverishment of Gramsci’s thought” (Francioni 1984, 149). Despite these issues, Anderson will nevertheless be used since, despite its possible shortcoming in terms of fidelity to Gramsci, his work offers considerable analytical potential. Most importantly, Anderson argues that the way Gramsci develops the concept of hegemony leads to “what was an apparently formal sequence of propositions about the nature of power in history.” (1976, 20)

That being said, before going to the all-important concept of hegemony, it is necessary to take a step back. Indeed, the point of departure of this presentation is Gramsci’s concept of **integral state**, which, according to Thomas, “has a more legitimate claim to be [his] novel contribution to Marxist political theory”. His conception permits the analysis of “the mutual interpenetration and reinforcement of ‘political society’ and ‘civil society’ within a unified state-form.” More precisely, he writes:

According to this concept, the state (in its integral form) was not to be limited to the machinery of the government and legal institutions (the ‘state’ understood in a limited sense). Rather, the concept of the integral state was intended as dialectical unity of the moments of civil society and political society. Civil society is the terrain upon which social classes compete for social and political leadership or hegemony over other classes. Such hegemony is guaranteed, however, ‘in the last instance’, by capture of the legal monopoly of violence embodied in the institutions of political society. (Thomas 2009, 137)

Put differently, the hegemony in civil society and the control of state institutions mutually reinforce each other.

More precisely, **political society** represents the state understood in its limited sense, that is, “the machinery of government and legal institutions” (Thomas 2009, 137). Most importantly, this is where coercion is organized through direct domination with the legal monopoly of violence. For this analysis, however, since the objective of most of the animal rights movement is not to take control of the state’s institutions, this concept is not entirely useful¹⁶. It can, however, be understood as the site of legal struggle where different social groups try to change the orientations of the legal institutions. For example, Cochrane notes that “extending justice to animals involves recognizing that the treatment of animals is something that political communities ought to *enforce*” (2010, 3). While, as was seen in chapter 2, this legal struggle is important for some animal advocacy organizations, it is not central for the ethical meat issue. It will therefore, for the most part, be ignored.

Civil society represents all private relations. As Thomas illustrates with his synthesis of Anderson’s analysis, civil society is intimately related to the concept

¹⁶ This is not the case for authors like Best who considers that animal liberation is part of a wider struggle for total liberation (2014). From that perspective, it could be considered that the objective of the animal rights movement is to change the state. For this project, this objective will be excluded to focus on the analysis of the ethical meat issue.

of **hegemony**. Three key features of hegemony are important here. First, “the terrain of its efficacy is civil society, rather than the state.” Second, “it denotes a strategy aiming at the production of consent, as opposed to coercion.” Third, “it can be applied equally to bourgeois and proletarian leadership strategies, because it is in nuce a generic and formal theory of social power.”¹⁷ (Thomas 2009, 160). In other words, civil society is the site where different social groups compete for hegemony, which can be understood as the organization of consent through political and ideological leadership¹⁸. This competition does not, however, result in total domination of civil society by a specific group. Rather, hegemony refers to leadership within civil society which is never fully settled and where, thus, “resistance is possible” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 75). This is where the concept of **counter-hegemony** comes in. Just like a hegemonic group, a counter-hegemonic group can be formed, but its objective is to contest instead of maintaining the dominant power structure. The struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony can be labelled **hegemonic struggle** and, as was mentioned above, it operates on two interrelated levels: the ideological level and the political level. Thomas sums up Anderson’s understanding of hegemony in the following way:

[it] involves a leading social group securing the (active or passive) consent of other social strata, rather than unilaterally imposing its decrees upon unwilling ‘subjects.’ It relies more upon subtle mechanisms of ideological integration than direct recourse to arms. In a pacific and benevolent version, this involves forging coalitions based upon negotiation and compromise between different interest groups. (2009, 161)

That being said, in the hegemonic struggle, two strategies are available: (1) war of position, which is a strategy that is available to both sides and (2) passive revolution, which can only be done by the hegemony.

¹⁷ This last point is particularly controversial as it implies a form of symmetry between the two social classes that can be interpreted as hiding the actual power relation.

¹⁸ Benedetto Fontana, contrarily to most authors, explicitly says that “hegemony operates on two separate but closely related levels” that correspond to (1) political leadership and (2) ideological leadership (2009, 84).

The main process of competition between counter-hegemony and hegemony is called **war of position**¹⁹. This concept refers to the strategy based on the idea that political change will not happen by directly confronting the state (war of movement). To contest the hegemony, its organization of consent must first be undermined by challenging its political and ideological leadership. This process is, however, not one-way as the hegemony is also continuously adapting in response to its opposition. As Simon notes, hegemony

requires persistent activities to maintain and strengthen the social authority of the ruling class in all areas of civil society, and the making of such compromises as are needed to adapt the existing system of alliances to changing conditions and to the activities of the opposing forces. (2015, 35)

That is why Norman Fairclough writes that the hegemony is never stable or complete, it is “a contradictory and unstable equilibrium” (1992, 93). That being said, the war of position can also be divided into two types of struggle: (1) ideological struggle and (2) political struggle.

To understand the idea of **ideological struggle**, the concept of **ideology** must first be defined. It is particularly difficult to do so as it “is subject to a greater variation of definition in Gramsci’s thought than it is even in the writings of Marx and Engels themselves, famously multivalent on this issue.” (Thomas 2009, 281) Considering that, only one interpretation will be presented here or more precisely, a modification of one, as the concept has to be adapted to the fact that this analysis does not focus on social classes. It is first important to remember that Marx conceived ideology as “false consciousness” (Loftus 2012, 179). Loftus suggests that Gramsci rejected this and proposed “a more neutral conception than

¹⁹ The concept of “war of position” usually strictly refers to the action of the counter-hegemony that tries to become hegemonic. It will be assumed here that it can also include the action of the hegemony to preserve its position. This conception of “war of position” seems to be coherent with Michèle Barrett’s definition as “the battle for winning political hegemony, the securing of consent, the struggle for ‘hearts and minds’ of the people” (1991, 55).

that found elsewhere” to which he “largely avoids attaching value judgement” (2012, 187). That being said, at the most basic level, it appears that an ideology is a “conception of the world” or “worldview.” Considering that, the objective of the ideological struggle is understood as “the generation of a given conception of the world and its consequent proliferation and dissemination throughout society” (Fontana 2009, 85). To achieve a deeper understanding of this process, the concept of common sense is also used by Gramsci.

While there are many interpretations of the concept of **common sense**, it will be considered here as “the [ideology] that a social stratum receives, for the most part passively.” (Liguori 2009, 124) More precisely, Simon adds that it “is the site on which the dominant ideology is constructed” (2015, 65). This integration of the dominant ideology in common sense is one of the principal ways to secure consent in civil society because it implies that the hegemony can be considered natural. It is, however, important to note that common sense is never a direct copy of the dominant ideology. Indeed, common sense “is often confused and contradictory, containing ideas absorbed from a variety of sources and from the past”. (R. Simon 2015, 22) This mostly negative conception of common sense might give the impression that it should be eliminated, but according to Gramsci, this is not the case: it “cannot be eliminated; it is part of what is at stake in the struggle for hegemony.” (Liguori 2009, 130) As Guido Liguori sums it up, common sense “is a widespread, basic ‘conception of the world’ that *can be replaced or transformed but not eliminated.*” (2009, 130) That being said, it is important to note that common sense is reflected in daily practices.

To understand this relation, it is helpful to refer to Althusser who defines the “material existence” of ideology as the non-reflective routine internalized by individuals and institutions that correspond to the dominant ideology (1971, 164–

68). In the same vein, Diane Coole and Samantha Frost note that ideology “operate[s] most effectively when embedded in the material, practical horizons and institutions of everyday life.” (2010, 34) In that sense, common sense and **daily practices** can be conceived of as being the two sides of the same coin. Put differently, common sense and daily practices define each other while being deeply influenced by the dominant ideology.

That being said, it is important to remember that the process of ideological dissemination, as Simon points out, must not be “thought to consist [...] in the imposition of a class ideology on other classes” (2015, 64). On the contrary, it is a dynamic process that implies “the aggregation of interests” as will be seen with the conception of the **political struggle** (Fontana 2009, 84). More generally, this concept “describes the process by which coalitions are made and remade” which involves the “movement from the particular to the universal” interests (Fontana 2009, 84). This process happens on two levels. First, to become hegemonic, a dominant social group needs a political base with whom to share power, that is, a network of alliances which “demands the recognition of common interests” (Fontana 2009, 85). More precisely, in the process of coalition formation, an ideology that reflects the aggregation of the interests of its various members is constructed. Second, since the ideology is built on the particular interests of a specific coalition, to organize consent throughout society, the hegemony must present its particular interests as being universal. As Greaves says, its ideology “becomes the intellectual armament to establish a way of life conducive to the interests of certain” social groups (2009, 33). This process of universalization, however, also involves negotiations but this time with all other social groups (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 76). It is in that sense that the hegemonic ideology cannot be a simple imposition from above because it is the result of compromises. In other words, the rest of society is not entirely passive in the organization of

consent. This two-level process has been presented mechanically, but the richness of Gramsci's theory rests on the idea that the ideological struggle and the political struggle operate in dialectical relations, that is, they constantly influence one another.

To understand the second strategy of the hegemonic struggle, the **passive revolution**, it must first be said that in the war of position, there is a limit to the extent that the hegemony can adjust its ideology and coalition. To locate this limit, we can refer to Gramsci's differentiation of a conjunctural crisis and an **organic crisis**. The former refers to "immediate economic and political problems" (R. Simon 2015, 36) and can be dealt with within the continuing process of war of position. The latter is more profound as it emerges from structural contradictions within the hegemony. The revealing of these contradictions is the moment when "claims to universality, to advance the common good, [are] revealed to be in the service of particular interests" (Thomas 2009, 145). Without this claim to universality, it becomes impossible to organize consent and thus, the dominant ideology is seriously put in doubt. A passive revolution is the characteristic response of the hegemony when faced with an organic crisis. While from the perspective of the hegemony, the war of position is mostly defensive, in the presence of an organic crisis, a more aggressive response is necessary "to preserve its established power [...] through the prevention of the emergence of competing perspective." (Thomas 2009, 150) That is done by an extensive reorganization of its coalition and/or ideology to disorganize the counter-hegemony. Thomas gives two examples of strategy that can be used in a passive revolution: (1) "the depoliticization of politics-that is, the conversion of formerly expressively political debates into purely [...] technical questions" and (2) the absorption of "the leading figures" of "oppositional social movements" (2009, 150).

Before ending this presentation, there is one concept remaining, the concept of “intellectual”. There are two key elements here: the way Gramsci defines the concept and the way it is subdivided. First, as Simon write, Gramsci “extends the definition of intellectuals to all those who have the function of organizers in all spheres of society, in the sphere of production as well as in the spheres of politics and culture.” (2015, 94) As such, they do not only include academics, but also “industrial managers and technicians, economists, civil servants, as well as the organisers of a new culture and of a new legal system” (R. Simon 2015, 95). Second, Gramsci distinguishes two types: **organic intellectuals** and **traditional intellectuals**. The former represent the intellectuals that are “integrally linked to the specificity of the class project from which they emerge” and their role is to elaborate on such projects “in both ideological and practical terms.” (Thomas 2009, 416) The latter “represent an historical continuity and tend to put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the ruling class.” (R. Simon 2015, 95) They can also be considered as being “in fact, the organic intellectuals of a previously emergent and now consolidated and dominant social class” (Thomas 2009, 417) Considering these definitions, Simon quotes Gramsci who wrote that “one of the most important characteristics of any rising class is its struggle to assimilate and conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals” (R. Simon 2015, 95). While these are key concepts for Gramsci, they will not be used in the current research since it aims to focus more on the level of the hegemonic struggle and less on the specific role of particular actors.

Now that Gramsci’s concepts have been presented, it should be clear in what way his theoretical framework offers much potential. Indeed, he offers a whole set of concepts that can be used to analyze a complex political dynamic between two opposing forces. Most importantly, as will be seen later, the concept of passive revolution appears to capture the essence of the phenomenon of ethical meat as a

way to preserve the hegemony of meat eating. It remains that the concepts of hegemony and its corresponding ideology and coalition were presented in relatively general terms and as such, they would be difficult to directly operationalize. For that reason, the next section will propose an addition to this framework to make it operationalizable.

2. Hajer's Argumentative Approach

While Gramsci provides a rich theoretical framework, it does not provide an obvious way to be operationalized. This is mostly due to the fact that this project is proposing to analyze a contemporary issue that is not directly related to the concept of social class. As such, the existing literature does not provide much guidance. A way forward would be to find what could be named a middle-range theory to permit an operationalization of Gramsci's theory. More precisely, what is needed is a concept to operationalize the dynamic of the ideological struggle and the process of coalition formation of the political struggle. As will be seen in this section, Hajer's concept of discourse-coalition is appropriate to do so. More precisely, this section will: (1) explain the theory in which this concept is proposed, (2) discuss the compatibility and the way the two theories can be combined, and (3) present the methodological implications of Hajer's theory.

2.1 Hajer's Theoretical Framework

It is first important to note that Hajer developed what he calls an argumentative approach to propose an alternative way of understanding environmental politics. In using his ideas, it is assumed that environmental politics and animal politics have many common points. Most importantly, they share the idea of mixing scientific research with moral arguments to prescribe social changes that can have major impact on daily practices and on society as a whole.

That being said, Hajer writes that his **argumentative approach** “focuses on the constitutive role of discourse in political processes [...] and allocates a central role to the discoursing subjects” (1995, 58). He situates this double dynamic “in the context of the idea of duality of structure”²⁰ as developed by Anthony Giddens’s Theory of structuration (1984). From this theoretical foundation, he deduces two important characteristics of his approach. First, he takes a stance against perspectives that “see social constructs as function of interests.” On the contrary, he argues that “interests are intersubjectively constituted through discourse” which implies that the emergence of a new discourse “may actually alter the individual perception of problems and possibilities and thus create space for the formation of new, unexpected political coalitions.” (Hajer 1995, 59) Second, and related to the first point, he also rejects “theories that ground their argument in the idea that actions and perceptions should be understood against the background of deeply held beliefs or belief systems.” On the contrary, he “argues that discursive interaction can create new meanings and new identities” and as such, “discourse fulfils a key role in the process of political change.” (Hajer 1995, 59)

Considering these two points, the argumentative approach has a particular conception of politics. Hajer writes that it “conceives of politics as a struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality.” (1995, 59) Before talking about the condition of hegemony, it is essential to note that for him, the concept of **discourse** is defined as a “specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that is produced, reproduced, and transformed in particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.” (Hajer 1995, 60) From there, he proposes two

20 Hajer defines the duality of structure in the following way: “social action originates in human agency of clever, creative human beings but in a context of social structures of various sorts that both enable and constrain their agency.” (1995, 58)

conditions that are necessary to achieve **discursive hegemony** in a given domain. First, the condition of discourse structuration which implies that “the credibility of actors in a given domain requires them to draw on the ideas, concepts, and categories of a given discourse” (Hajer 1995, 60). Second, the condition of discourse institutionalization which implies that “a given discourse is translated into institutional arrangements” in that domain (Hajer 1995, 61).

According to the same logic, he notes that in environmental politics, most issues are “inter-discursive in nature,” meaning that “an understanding of the phenomena requires the combination of knowledge claims that are the product of distinct discourses.” Since he believes that this characteristic “has a profound influence on the sort of communication that” can take place, he proposes two key concepts to “be able to analyze this inter-discursive communication”: the concepts of storyline and discourse-coalition. He writes that these middle-range concepts “can show how discursive orders are maintained or transformed.” (Hajer 1995, 61) These two concepts, that are conveniently presented as being middle-range, are the ones that will be operationalized. As such they have to be thoroughly defined.

For Hajer, **storylines** “are narrative on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding.” To understand this definition, the concept of discursive closure is needed and it is defined as “the interpretive process [...] in the course of which complex research work is often reduced to a visual representation or a catchy one-liner.” Using this concept, it can be said that “story-lines are essential political devices that allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the achievement of discursive closure.” Hajer notes that it works like a metaphor since “by uttering a specific element one

effectively reinvolve the storylines as a whole.” (Hajer 1995, 62) From this apparently simple concept, important consequences can be deduced.

First, he notes that “argumentative discourse analysis holds that the power of story-lines is essentially based on the idea that it sounds right.” (Hajer 1995, 63) He, however, insists on the idea that this is not only a cognitive process, in the sense that it does not only depend on the plausibility of its arguments, but also on the attractiveness of the storylines (Hajer 1995, 65–66). The details of how to consider arguments will be explored later, but for now it is important to note that the argumentative dynamics, the “argumentative game,” is not just based on the plausibility of the arguments. Second, storylines “not only help to construct problems, they also play an important role in the creation of a social and moral order in a given domain.” As such, storylines “are devices through which actors are positioned, and through which specific ideas of ‘blame’ and ‘responsibility,’ and of ‘urgency’ and ‘responsible behaviour’ are attributed.” In other words, they can assign different roles that can have significant impacts on the capacity of some actors to “play” in the “argumentative game.” (Hajer 1995, 64–65)

To situate the concept of **discourse-coalition**, it is necessary to go back to the argumentative approach. Indeed, Hajer notes that with this approach,

in the struggle for discursive hegemony, coalitions are formed among actors [...] that, for various reasons [...] are attracted to a specific (set of) story-lines. Discourse-coalitions are defined as the ensemble of (1) a set of story-lines; (2) the actors who utter these story-lines; and (3) the practices in which this discursive activity is based. (1995, 65)

In other words, it conceptualizes the idea of a coalition based on storylines as they “are here seen as the discursive cement that keeps a discourse-coalition together.” In the process of coalition formation, actors gain political power “if previously independent practices are being actively related to one another, if a common

discourse is created in which several practices get a meaning in a common political project.” (Hajer 1995, 65)

To really understand, this concept, it is important to elaborate on two points: (1) the reasons why actors are attracted to a set of storylines and (2) the concept of actor itself. First, the author is not very explicit about what the “various reasons” are, but to be coherent with the theoretical foundation of his approach, he is quick to note that these coalitions are not necessarily based on an aggregation of interests as the various actors “might perceive their position and interest according to widely different discourses” (Hajer 1995, 65). Put differently, “story-lines, not interests, form the basis of the coalition, whereby story-lines potentially change the previous understanding of what the actors’ interests are.” (Hajer 1995, 66) Second, the concept of discourse-coalition broadens the idea of politics by proposing to look “at the activity of the actors who produce story-lines [...] and the practices within which this takes place.” (Hajer 1995, 66) This implies that these actors can be found in unexpected places and that any activity that constructs or proliferates a storyline can therefore be understood as political.

Putting these two concepts together explains why the author talks about “unconventional political coalitions.” Indeed, in a discourse-coalition,

the actors have not necessarily met, let alone that they follow a carefully laid out and agreed upon strategy. What unites these coalitions and what gives them their political power is the fact that its actors group around specific story-lines that they employ whilst engaging in environmental politics. It can be shown that although these actors might share a specific set of story-lines, they might nevertheless interpret the meaning of these story-lines rather differently and might each have their own particular interests. (Hajer 1995, 12–13)

He goes on to state one of the most important consequences that he deduces while talking about sustainable environment: “The paradox is that this coalition for sustainable development can only be kept together by virtue of its rather vague

story-lines at the same time as it asks for radical social change.” (Hajer 1995, 14) In other words, it is indeed paradoxical that the political power of a discourse-coalition is founded on the vagueness of its storylines. Hajer makes a similar argument about the political power of an individual text: it is “not derived from its consistency (although that may enhance its credibility) but comes from its multi-interpretability.” (Hajer 1995, 61–62) Since this multi-interpretability requires a certain degree of vagueness, the same characteristic is also present.

Now that the theoretical foundation and the main concepts of Hajer’s argumentative approach have been presented, it should be evident that it can be effectively used to operationalize the hegemonic struggle. However, before doing so, it is important to highlight not only how these two theories are compatible, but also how they diverge and assess whether or not these differences represent any obstacle to the current research.

2.2 Gramsci and Hajer

To assess the compatibility of both approaches, it would be tempting to simply argue that since both Gramsci and Hajer use the concept of hegemony, they must necessarily be talking about the same thing. It is clearly not the case. Yet, in this section, it will be argued that while the theories clearly have different theoretical foundations, the discourse-coalition approach can nevertheless be used to extend Gramsci’s theory and permits the analysis of the hegemonic struggle. In other words, while there is no general compatibility, the two can be articulated together to develop a coherent research project. This idea will be argued in two steps: (1) the incompatibility at the macro-level and (2) the compatibility at the middle-level.

First, before talking specifically about Hajer and Gramsci, it is important to remember that the latter’s theory is based on Marxism. Considering that, it could

be argued that Hajer's social constructivism has nothing to do with Marxism. Not only do they have very different theoretical foundations (ontology and epistemology), but they also have an entirely distinct focus. While Hajer's theory could be used to analyze various political issues, Marxism is mostly centred on class struggle and the relations of production. This double incompatibility can most clearly be seen with their respective conceptions of ideology. As was already mentioned, for the Marxist conception, ideology is "a simple tactical tool that can be used by the bourgeoisie to delude workers" (Smith 1998, 55). This clearly is in opposition with Hajer's rejection of "deeply held beliefs or belief systems" and of mechanical understandings of interests.

This, however, is not necessarily a problem since Gramsci departs from Marxism on several grounds, including with his conception of ideology. Indeed, for Gramsci, ideology "plays a constitutive and epistemological role: it is through ideological struggle that the terms that define the political terrain are constructed" and has "ontological effects, for where an ideology resonates with the masses, it takes on a 'psychological' validity: it organizes humans into groups, constructs group members' concrete sense of shared interests, and stages the groups' struggles." (Smith 1998, 55) While this appears closer to a social constructivist approach, it is far from sufficient to conclude that Hajer and Gramsci's theories are compatible.

However, instead of pretending that the two approaches are compatible by focusing only on certain aspects, it appears more productive to conclude that in the end, it is not entirely important if they are or not. While a deeper theoretical discussion would be interesting, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. What is important here is that from the modified version of Gramsci that was presented above, the kind of analysis that would be produced would not be that different

from what Hajer would do. Indeed, the respective dynamics described by Gramsci's definition of hegemonic struggle and by Hajer's struggle for discursive hegemony are not that different. As such, in the remainder of this section, it will be argued that the two theories can be combined through that concept. More precisely, it will be proposed that by using the concept of discourse as a methodological concept that serves as a proxy to study ideology, it becomes possible to use Hajer's discourse-coalition approach to analyze/operationalize Gramsci's hegemonic struggle. To highlight how this is possible, three points are important.

It is first important to note that in the context of Gramsci's theory, the concept of discourse-coalition combines both the ideological struggle and the political struggle as the development of storylines is interrelated with the process of coalition formation. While this may appear logical, when the concepts are combined in this fashion, two problems arise since the way the concept of coalition is presented in the Gramscian literature corresponds to what Hajer calls a "traditional political coalition." The first problem is about the basis of the coalition. As was said above when discussing the political struggle, in the present understanding of Gramsci, coalitions are based on "the aggregation of interests" (Fontana 2009, 84). Hajer rejects this idea since storylines can change how actors perceive their own interests. The second problem is about the form of the coalition. Again, in the presentation of the political struggle, coalitions were presented as being institutionalized in one form or another. For Hajer, in a discourse-coalition, "the actors have not necessarily met, let alone that they follow a carefully laid out and agreed upon strategy." (1995, 13) These are not problems, however, if Hajer's conception of discourse-coalition is used instead of Gramsci's. Not only does it not appear to lead to any incompatibility, it brings a more "open-ended" understanding of coalition formations to Gramsci.

The second important point to explore is the relation between ideology and discourse. At the first level of analysis, it could be argued that Hajer's definition of discourse is not that different from Gramsci's conception of ideology, that is, as a worldview. This similarity is, however, hardly sufficient. It is more at the level of their respective roles in the hegemonic struggle that they can really be related. Indeed, following Fontana, for Gramsci, the ideological struggle is based on "the generation of a given conception of the world and its consequent proliferation and dissemination throughout society." (2009, 85) In other words, the objective is to make this worldview dominant in civil society. This dynamic can be related to Hajer's idea of discursive hegemony. Indeed, if one considers a discourse-coalition as hegemonic when its storylines have integrated common sense/daily practices, the two theories can be related. In other words, the two conceptions of hegemonic struggle appear to be looking at the same dynamic. As such, it appears reasonable to assume that by analyzing Hajer's struggle for discursive hegemony, Gramsci's hegemonic struggle, which includes both the ideological and political struggles, is also analyzed. Indeed, by analyzing the coalition itself as well as its underlying storylines, it is possible to see how it derives its political power and how it positions itself in relation to competing perspectives.

For the third point, it is necessary to say a few words about the fact that by using a discursive approach like Hajer's, an important aspect of Gramsci's theory could be lost, that is, its consideration of both ideological and material forces. This was presented as one reason to use the latter's theory, but it appears it would no longer be a relevant argument with Hajer. While it is true that Hajer's theory of discourse-coalition only focuses on discourse, it is important to note that he does not say that the material reality is irrelevant, but that it is given meaning through discourse. This opens up an opportunity to include part of it in the analysis. As

was discussed above, one of the most important aspects of the material reality for food politics is to stay grounded in the daily practices of people. In the current interpretation of Gramsci, common sense and daily practices were presented as two sides of the same coin representing both the ideological and material reflection of the dominant worldview in people's lives. Considering that, it is easy to see how with the inclusion of common sense in the analysis, the corresponding daily practices are also included. In other words, while the resulting analysis focuses on discourses, it can partially include the material reality through the concept of common sense/daily practices. This idea should become clearer once the methodological implications are discussed.

In sum, while there are some theoretical discrepancies between Gramsci and Hajer, if they are assumed to not have significant consequence and are, thus, put aside, it becomes apparent that, for the concepts that are relevant to the present research, the two theories can be combined. In other words, since Hajer provides more tools to implement his concepts, they can be used to operationalize Gramsci's concepts. Considering that, it is time to look at the methodological implications of Hajer's discourse-coalition approach.

2.3 Methodological Implications

As was just said, what is particularly original with the concept of discourse-coalition is the way discourses and their corresponding coalitions are interdependent. This is one of the reasons why it was chosen to complement Gramsci theoretical framework and we will now see how this approach opens up methodological opportunities. Obviously, discourse analysis is at the heart of Hajer's methodology. In this section, the way he conceives this type of analysis will be detailed. More precisely, there are two important aspects of his discourse analysis that need to be presented: (1) the relevant factors to consider when

analyzing the content of various discourses and (2) the way to understand the insertion of discourses in the hegemonic struggle.

To understand the methodological implications of Hajer's approach, we have to go back to his argumentative approach. As was said above, this approach "conceives of politics as a struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality." (Hajer 1995, 59–60) He then identifies three factors that determine what he calls "the dynamics of this argumentative game": (1) credibility, (2) acceptability and (3) trust. Firstly, credibility is required to "to make actors believe in the subject-positioning that a given discourse implies for them and to live by the structure positionings it implies" (Hajer 1995, 59). In other words, a discourse is deemed credible to actors if they can imagine themselves in the position that the discourse assigns to them. For example, a vegan discourse will only appear credible if people can imagine a vegan world. Secondly, "acceptability requires that position to appear attractive or necessary." (Hajer 1995, 59) Put differently, the position described by the discourse must look attractive to the actors and/or necessary to society. Again, using the same example, a vegan discourse will appear acceptable only if actors believe that veganism is attractive to them or if it is perceived as essential. Thirdly, trust "refers to the fact that doubt might be suppressed and inherent uncertainties might be taken for granted if actors manage to secure confidence [...] in the author." (Hajer 1995) To understand this last definition, we have to refer back to the idea that, for Hajer, a storyline is necessarily vague. Considering that, trust can render "acceptable" any ambiguities present in the discourse. For example, if an actor does not understand what would happen to farm animals in a vegan world, that actor might not care if she trusts that the person propagating the discourse has thought about everything.

Three points are noteworthy about this understanding of the “argumentative game.” First, as was already said while presenting Hajer’s concepts, discursive hegemony is “essentially socio-cognitive product, whereby the social and the cognitive are seen as essentially intertwined” (1995, 59–60). Again, what this means is that arguments must not only be judged by their coherence or philosophical validity, but on how they are understood and perceived. In other words, focusing on who has the “best arguments” overlooks the subtleties of the social-political process at play. Second, this conception of the argumentative games also provides a rich analytical potential in the ways in which the three factors are interrelated. Indeed, when a discourse is propagated, “credibility and authority are allocated” (Hajer 1995, 23–24). In other words, while the impact of a discourse depends on its credibility, its acceptability and the trustworthiness of its champions, the discourse is itself implicated in a process of defining what is credible, what is acceptable and how to assign trust.

Third, and most importantly, as was hinted in the previous section, it is precisely through the argumentative game that the concepts of common sense/daily practices can be included in this discourse analysis. Indeed, it is with the three factors, but most importantly credibility and acceptability, that their importance can be considered. Again, as was said above, the material reality is not directly considered, but the way that a particular discourse deals with common sense/daily practices can have dramatic impacts on the way it is received. An obvious example imposes itself here. A vegan discourse arguing that people must stop eating meat will necessarily be considered unacceptable by the vast majority that do so on a daily basis. In other words, the discourse is simply not attractive since it is in complete opposition to what is considered “normal” and to what people actually do. In other words, with this approach, the discourse analysis

must remain grounded in the material reality as this can significantly impact the way arguments are considered in the argumentative game.

The second main element of Hajer's discourse analysis focuses on the reproduction and the interruption of discourses. As he argues, "discourse analysis should illuminate two things." The first is "the way in which cognitive and social commitments are routinely reproduced." In other words, this implies looking at the way a hegemonic discourse is maintaining its dominant position. It is, however, the second element that is of interest for this research since we are mostly interested in discursive transformation. Hajer writes that we have to look at "the way in which discursive 'interpellations' take place, whereby interpellations are understood as those moments where routinized proceedings are interrupted." More precisely, he says, the "focus of analysis here is on those discursive practices which [...] can be understood as the inter-discursive transfer points where actors exchange positional statements and where new discursive relationships and positionings are created." (Hajer 1995, 60) In other words, this implies that the focus of the analysis should be on the discursive practices that reconfigure the discourse-coalitions at play. Pushing this logic further, this implies looking at the practices that destabilize the argumentative game and force reevaluation of the various positions and as such, might lead to the formation of new discourse-coalitions. It should not be surprising here that this interpretation of Hajer's ideas is influenced by our understanding of Gramsci's concept of passive revolution. More concretely, this means looking at texts that try to build bridges, form new alliances and/or create divisions in the opposite side.

In sum, Hajer proposes methodological guidelines to analyze the struggle for discursive hegemony. More precisely, he provides a framework to analyze the socio-cognitive process at play in the argumentative game and a way to explore

how discourse-coalitions are reconfigured. Now that this has been presented, a comprehensive research proposition can be detailed.

3. Research Proposition and Methodology

Now that all the theoretical pieces are in place, it is possible to go back to the ethical meat issue and see how these various concepts can be operationalized to generate a research proposition and a detailed strategy to answer the research question. More precisely, this section will be divided into three parts. It will (1) reformulate the issue of ethical meat within the broader context of what can be called a Gramscian understanding of the politics of animal rights, (2) offer a reformulation of the research question that was proposed at the end of the literature review using the new concepts and a thesis, and (3) explain how the research will be done.

3.1 A Gramscian Understanding of the Politics of Animal Rights

Before it is possible to formulate the research question, it is essential to explicitly develop a Gramscian perspective on the issue of ethical meat. Many elements have already been said or implied in the above discussion, but it seems important to produce a succinct and systematic operationalization of the concepts before going further.

The point of departure of this operationalization is the concept of hegemony. In the context of animal rights, as was suggested by many authors, the dominant position is on the side of what Marc Williams calls the “hegemony of meat-eating” (2000, 151) or Joy’s concept of carnist ideology (2010). This can easily be seen by the fact that for the vast majority of people, the legitimacy of eating meat can be considered a part of common sense that is reflected in the daily practice of eating animals. Following the above framework, however, it is not just the hegemonic

ideology that is of interest. Indeed, Gramsci also talks about political leadership and using Hajer's discourse-coalition concept, both the ideological and the political aspects of hegemony are combined.

In the animal rights literature, the concept of Animal-Industrial Complex emerges as the best candidate to represent this idea of discourse-coalition in favour of animal exploitation. As was said in chapter 2, Twine defines this concept in the following way: "a partly opaque and multiple set of networks and relationships between the corporate sector, governments, and public and private science. With economic, cultural, social and affective dimensions it encompasses an extensive range of practices, technologies, images, identities and markets." (Twine 2012, 23) This definition works particularly well with the concept of discourse-coalition for three reasons. First, the way Twine presents the form of the complex as a "multiple set of networks and relationships" implies that there is no formal and hierarchised institution. Second, the contour of the included actors appears vague and fluid. Third, the definition includes a wide range of domains, from agriculture to research on animals and knowledge from various disciplines. While the first two points refer to the form of the coalition, the third refers to its basis. It is particularly the last point that is important here as the concept of storyline can be used to understand how actors coming from vastly different horizons can appear to work together towards a common goal, that is the perpetuation of animal exploitation. In that sense, the storyline at the basis of the Animal-Industrial Complex can simply be defined as the idea that animals completely lack moral status (Garner 2005, 11) and as such human animals can do as they please with them.

From that perspective, the counter-hegemony is necessarily the animal rights movement. More specifically about meat eating, "vegan praxis" can be

understood as the “counternarrative and practice in which nonhuman beings are not viewed or treated as appropriate for human consumption” (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014, 21) As was seen in the last chapter, this movement can hardly be considered coherent. From an analytical perspective, we can once again use the storyline approach to understand how it is relevant to consider it as one coalition despite its internal contradictions. Indeed, if one considers the storyline at the basis of this coalition as an opposition to the AIC storyline, it could simply be defined as the idea that animals have a certain moral standing which in turn implies some obligations on the part of human animals. From there, it is easy to see how the different branches of the movement can share this storyline, but interpret its implications in entirely different ways. In other words, understanding the animal rights movement as a discourse-coalition appears to be coherent. It is, however, important to note here that, for the current research, qualifying the AIC and animal rights movement as a discourse-coalition is not necessary as the concept was introduced to understand the ethical meat phenomenon.

From this picture of the AIC and the animal right movement, the basis of an analysis of the politics of animal rights can be founded. More clearly, it can be understood as a hegemonic struggle between two vaguely defined discourse-coalitions for the propagation of their respective conception of nonhuman animals. This is obviously a simplified picture, but it allows the use of Gramsci concepts to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the political dynamic at play. When the issue of meat consumption is considered specifically, a question arises: where does the ethical meat discourse fit in this picture?

To propose an answer, it is first necessary to take a step back to qualify the hegemonic struggle. It could be argued that the way these two coalitions are

competing can be understood as a war of position. This, in itself, does not offer much analytical power. Things get more interesting if we consider the possibility that the hegemony is facing an organic crisis. Returning to Thomas' definition of an organic crisis as the moment when "claims to universality, to advance the common good, were revealed to be in the service of particular interests" (2009, 145), we will further explore the meanings of: (1) a claim to be in service of the common good and (2) a revelation to serve particular interests.

First, following Garner's logic, factory farming has long appeared to serve the common good because "it has largely achieved its original function, which was to ensure a plentiful, cost-effective, and regular supply of [animal products]." (2010, 159) This perception remained possible as long as the cruelty of factory farming stayed mostly hidden. Indeed, even when only the most basic form of moral consideration of animals, based on the "unnecessary suffering principle," is accepted, this cruelty is intolerable. This is problematic for the "common good" element if it is agreed with Garner that this conception "has reached such a degree of acceptability that it can be regarded as the moral orthodoxy"²¹ (2010, 107). In other words, it is difficult to argue that the practices of factory farming are for the common good when they are in contradiction with the most basic of animal consideration.

Second, the idea that factory farming serves particular interests is best presented by Noske:

The animal industrial complex undoubtedly meets the need of Western people that they themselves feel to be real. In doing so, however, it suppresses the needs of animals in factory farms [...] in the most violent

21 The central feature of the moral orthodoxy "is an insistence that humans are morally superior to animals but that, because animals have some moral worth, we are not entitled to inflict suffering on them if the human benefit thereby resulting is not necessary. The principle of unnecessary suffering, therefore, can be invoked if the level of suffering inflicted on an animal outweighs the benefits likely to be gained by humans." (Garner 2010, 107)

manner. Yet this ever-expanding and self-perpetuating complex also seems to create its own contradictions. Capital interests appropriate and misapply enormous natural resources at the expense of the well-being of animals and increasing number of humans. The animal industries are built around principles of greed and profit, not just around human needs. (1997, 37)

That is, the practices of the AIC are not only for the particular good of its members; they are in opposition to the common good. Indeed, considering the environmental and human health impacts of factory farming on top of its ethical issues, it becomes difficult to present this practice as “good.”

In other words, with the generalized revelation of the cruelty of factory farming by animal rights organizations and with the development of environmental and human health criticisms, it can be argued that the internal contradictions of the AIC became apparent and that this led to an organic crisis within the hegemony. As such, it can be said that the storyline of the AIC was put into doubt when people realized that they could not condone the practices of factory farming. As was mentioned in chapter 1, this led to a questioning of the legitimacy of meat eating. Referring back to Gramsci, it is clear that the characteristic response of the hegemony to such a crisis is a passive revolution.

This is where the phenomenon of ethical meat comes into play. Indeed, as was suggested in the previous chapter and especially with the concept of neocarnism, ethical meat is often presented as an alternative conception of meat and of animals to preserve the legitimacy of meat consumption. In Gramscian terms, it is a way for the hegemony “to preserve its established power” (2009, p. 150). In sum, the concept of passive revolution appears promising to analyze the ethical meat phenomenon. This is precisely what this research proposes to do.

3.2 Research Proposition

The previous literature review ended with the following research question: “How has ethical meat operated to neutralize the political potential of the animal rights movement?” Following the above operationalization of the politics of animal rights using a Gramscian theoretical framework, it appears natural to reformulate the question in Gramscian terms: “If the emergence of the ethical meat discourse is understood as part of a passive revolution, what can the specific process of passive revolution tell us about the impacts of the ethical meat discourse on the animal rights movement?”

Gramsci’s presentation of the concept of passive revolution suggests an answer to this question, but this thesis proposes to go further. Indeed, while the concept of passive revolution would indicate that the emergence of the ethical meat discourse contributed to the preservation of the legitimacy of meat eating, it is possible to go much further. More precisely, from the analysis of the process of passive revolution, this project argues that its most important impact is the marginalization of the animal rights movement through a process operating on two levels. Using the mechanisms of passive revolution proposed by Thomas, it will be shown that it is with processes of depoliticization and absorption that this marginalization mainly comes about. The precise way these ideas will be argued will be presented in the next section.

3.3 Research Strategy

While the objective of this research is to analyze the process of passive revolution, it is not possible to directly proceed. Indeed, as was argued in the literature review, the literature currently only proposes a limited understanding of the ethical meat phenomenon. As such, it is essential to first produce a richer account before the process of passive revolution can be explored. Considering that, we are

proposing to proceed in three steps corresponding to three different perspectives on the ethical meat discourse-coalition: (1) description of its content, (2) analysis of its internal dynamics and (3) analysis of its functioning. The first two focuses on producing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, an understanding that is required for the third step, the analysis of the process of passive revolution. It is with the last step that the thesis will explicitly be argued. In this section, each step will be detailed. More precisely, their respective method of analysis and corpus of data will be presented.

As the examples that were already provided might indicate, the analysis will focus on the United States. Indeed, most of the debates around the ethical meat issue are happening in that country. Not only did the United States create factory farming and propose its most advanced version, it serves as a case study for most authors writing for and against ethical meat. Considering that, the necessary data will be more accessible. That does not mean that the analysis will only focus on that particular country. Indeed, historically, the United Kingdom was a precursor in the animal rights movement, but the United States will constitute the main source of data.

3.3.1 Understanding the Ethical Meat Arguments

In the first step of the analysis, the content of the ethical meat discourse will be described through its arguments. This is a promising avenue since when the idea of ethical meat is brought up, it is almost always in the context of a debate with factory farming and/or veganism. In other words, it is usually presented through a specific set of arguments to demonstrate how it is better than the other options. As such, this presentation will offer a broad vision of what constitutes the ethical meat discourse, but most importantly, this exercise will permit the extraction of the essence of that discourse which, in turn, can be used to identify the ethical

meat storyline. What this means is that by looking at the various arguments, it is believed that the common thread that unites them can be used to define the storyline. In sums, this step will not only partially make up for lacking understanding of ethical meat in the literature, but also further show how the concept of storyline is particularly relevant to understand this particular phenomenon.

More precisely, the analysis can be divided into two main parts. Firstly, the ethical meat arguments have to be found in the ethical meat literature. To do that, the first thing to note is that the ethical meat literature being relatively new, it remains possible to have comprehensive overview. This was done by analyzing most of the books and scientific articles that discuss this phenomenon. From there, it was possible to identify the most important arguments. Here, “important” is understood as being equivalent to the frequency of their utilization and to their use by the most influential authors of the literature. For example, since Pollan is probably the most quoted author, most of his arguments are found in the analysis. Moreover, more importance was given to the texts that focus on the United States. That being said, it is important to note that the objective here is not to produce an exhaustive list of arguments, but to identify the most important ones. Considering that, this method of selection for the texts and arguments appear rigorous enough.

Secondly, we will try to identify the common thread between the set of arguments. To do so, their assumptions, their implicit conceptions of animals and agriculture, and the way they position themselves in relation to veganism and factory farming will all be compared. Not all of these elements will be identified for each argument, but the most relevant ones will be extracted. Some arguments will also be compared to see if they contradict themselves and identify points of

tension within the discourse. With all these elements and despite the friction, it is hoped that a storyline for ethical meat will emerge giving a form of coherence to what can initially appear to be a disparate collection of arguments. Once this storyline has been identified, it will serve as a point of reference to explore the internal dynamics of the discourse-coalition in the following step.

3.3.2 Understanding the Ethical Meat Discourse-Coalition

The second step will focus more precisely on the concept of discourse-coalition. From the storyline that has been identified, it will highlight how entirely different conceptions of ethical meat can be developed. In other words, this part of the analysis will explore how the concept of discourse-coalition can make sense of the fact that various understanding of ethical meat, that are at times in contraction, can coexist in what appears a coherent coalition. More precisely, this will be done by presenting a typology of four distinct discourses that are all based on the ethical meat storyline: (1) the humane meat discourse, (2) the urban homesteading discourse, (3) the agrarian populist discourse, and (4) the permaculture livestock economy discourse. The elaboration of this typology will have two advantages. First, it will permit the analysis of the internal dynamics of the discourse-coalition and it will highlight its internal tensions and contradictions. Second, it will further deepen the understanding of the ethical meat phenomenon by, for example, showing how, as was seen in the literature review, it can appear to hold multiple positions at the same time.

More precisely, this analysis will also be divided into two parts. The first part will identify and define each of the four discourses of the typology. The identification process was mostly based on the previous literature review. More precisely, while exploring the ethical meat literature, we have seen that most authors use a variety of arguments, but what was not said explicitly in the previous analysis is

that some of them situate themselves in a larger conception of how society should change to adapt to ethical meat. In other words, they situate their argumentation in a more specific normative vision which proposes a particular diagnostic of the current problems with animal agriculture and corresponding solutions. More details on the identification process will be provided in chapter 5.

For their presentation, while a considerable part of the ethical meat literature will still be used, the corpus of texts will have to be expanded. This is necessary since for each discourse in the typology, a three-step analysis will be done: (1) the ideological, in the Gramscian sense, foundation of the discourse will be detailed, (2) the discourse will be presented through the lens of that foundation and (3) an analysis of how this discourse insert itself in the argumentative game will be proposed.

First, as their respective name implies, these discourses situate themselves in movements or ideologies that go beyond the issue of meat production. As such, it was necessary to find more texts to define the context from which the discourses come from. So the first step in the presentation for each discourse will be to briefly go over what will be called its ideological foundation. Table 3.1 presents each of them. Considering that, it will be essential to go over part of the literature on each of these foundations and the relevant references have been included in the table.

Table 3.1: Ideological foundations and references

DISCOURSE	IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION
Humane Meat Discourse	• Political consumerism ◦ Books (Micheletti 2003; Stolle and Micheletti 2013) ◦ Book chapters (Eden 2011; Micheletti and Stolle 2011; Clough 2013)
Urban Homesteading Discourse	• Prosumerism ◦ Book (Toffler 1980) ◦ Articles (Kotler 1986; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Paltrinieri and Esposti 2013; Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012)
Agrarian Populism Discourse	• New agrarianism ◦ Books (Strange 1984; Brass 1996; Guthman 2004) ◦ Book chapters (Shome 2013; Bruxvoort Lipscomb 2016) ◦ Article (Guthman 2008)
Permaculture Livestock Economy Discourse	• Permaculture ◦ Books (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978; B. C. Mollison 1979; B. Mollison 1988) ◦ Article (Goldsmith and Allen 1972)

Second, while for some discourses, their content is comprehensively discussed in the ethical meat literature, it is not the case for all of them. The first two discourses in particular are mentioned in the ethical meat literature but not discussed extensively. As such, more data is needed. More precisely, since the humane meat discourse is mostly concerned about ethical meat labelling, the necessary data can be found directly on the publications of the organizations that propose such certifications. For the urban homesteading discourse, the obvious source of data is the body of practical guides about this practice as well as the burgeoning scientific literature that analyzes it. The data that will be used for each discourse has been compiled in Table 3.2. The most important references have also been included in the table. Further justification for their selection will be presented in chapter 5.

Table 3.2: Data and references

DISCOURSE	DATA
Humane Meat Discourse	• Animal Welfare Approved ◦ Web pages (Animal Welfare Approved 2016, 2017; Animal Welfare Institute 2018; A Greener World 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) ◦ Reports (A Greener World 2015, 2016) • Certified Humane ◦ Web pages (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) ◦ Report (Humane Farm Animal Care 2015b) • Global Animal Partnership ◦ Web pages (Global Animal Partnership 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018) ◦ Book (Mackey and Sisodia 2013) • American Humane Certified ◦ Web pages (American Humane Certified 2018a, 2018b, 2018c)
Urban Homesteading Discourse	• Urban homesteading guides ◦ Books (Madigan 2009; Kaplan and Blume 2011; Coyne and Knutzen 2010) • Scientific literature ◦ Articles (Wood et al. 2010; Bartling 2012; Schindler 2012; Blecha and Leitner 2014; McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten 2014)
Agrarian Populism Discourse	• Joel Salatin ◦ Books (Salatin 2007, 2011)
Permaculture Livestock Economy Discourse	• Simon Fairlie ◦ Book (Fairlie 2010)

Since the last step is mostly analytic, it does not require new data. It is, however, the most important from the perspective of Hajer’s methodology. Indeed, since the previous analysis proposed a list of “independent” arguments, it would be

tempting to evaluate them for their cognitive power, but this is not what he proposes. What is important is how these arguments are combined and articulated to give the discourse argumentative power. In other words, this will use Hajer's three factors model (credibility, acceptability and trust) to produce a systematic analysis of the way the arguments are mobilized. This will imply not only identifying the main arguments used by each discourse, but analyzing how they use them. We will have to ask questions like: How is this argument used to present ethical meat as a realistic alternative? How does the discourse refer to the daily practices of people to make itself appear desirable? How do the arguments implicitly define trustworthiness and assign responsibility?

Finally, for the second part, an analysis that focuses on the coalition aspect of the discourse-coalition will be developed. More precisely, the way each discourse inserts itself in the argumentative game, the way they interact with each other (if they do) and their main points of disagreement/contradiction will be presented. The point here is not to criticize the discourses for their inconsistency (this would not make sense from a discourse-coalition perspective anyway), but to identify lines of tension that could have significant impacts on the way the ethical meat discourse is integrated by various organizations. It is precisely on this process of integration that the last step of the analysis will focus.

3.3.3 Understanding the Ethical Meat Passive Revolution

In this last step, based on the detailed presentation of the ethical meat discourse from the first two analyses, we can finally focus on the concept of passive revolution. That will be done in two substeps. First by analyzing how various types of organizations have engaged with the ethical meat discourse and how their position evolved over time. Second, based on the first substep, a broader analysis will be proposed to detail the actual process of passive revolution.

For the first substep, three elements have to be considered: (1) why these types of organizations were chosen, (2) what data will be analyzed and where it will be found, and (3) how it will be analyzed. In theory, to analyze the process of passive revolution, it would be necessary to explore how the ethical meat discourse resonates at large within society. For the current project, it will be assumed that this is not necessary and that it is sufficient to look at actors who are in key positions in the process of passive revolution. Two criteria were used to identify organizations in this position. First, obviously, their practice or interest has to be related to animal agriculture and/or meat. Second, and this is the most important one, they have to be in an influential position within the debate on meat consumption. What this means is that how they respond to claims about ethical meat could have significant impact on the rest of society. In sum, it is assumed that the process of passive revolution can be analyzed by looking at the organizations that are in such a position.

Now, there are many actors in this position, but for the scope of this thesis and since it proposes the first analysis of this kind, only three types of organizations have been selected. They are the meat industry, animal advocacy organizations and environmental organizations. The way these three conform to the above two criteria should be fairly obvious, so it appears much more important to explain why they were selected. This can be understood by going back to the storyline concept. As will be seen in chapter 4, the ethical meat storyline is defined by its opposition to both factory farming and veganism. Considering that, it can be assumed that the reaction of the meat industry and animal advocacy organizations are key in the debate. Put differently, these two groups were selected since they are the main targets of the ethical meat discourse and as such, it is reasonable to assume that their reaction is significant in the debate. For their

part, environmental organizations were selected since they perfectly represent the kind of actors that have *a priori* no obvious reason to take a particular position in the ethical meat debate. Indeed, since all sides pretend to offer the best environmental practices, they can be understood as a detached group to be convinced. Clearly, if they do take a firm position in the debate, it would have a considerable impact.

That being said, it is important to note that they were also chosen because they do engage with the ethical meat discourse. As was said above, this research assumes that ethical meat is involved in a process of passive revolution so that the actual process can be analyzed. As such, it does not seem relevant to take the time to find where the discourse resonated since it is already known that it did in some important organizations. In other words, this part of the analysis will be interested, not on whether the ethical meat discourse has influenced this or that actor, but to analyze how it has done so. Considering that, the organizations have to be selected consequently.

To analyze these organizations, the first obvious source of data is their official publications. More specifically, the way they engage with ethical meat can be found on their respective websites and in documents like their annual reports as well as particular documents that announce new positions, like press releases and other various reports. Moreover, since we are also interested in the evolution of their position to see how it might have evolved, documents that are released periodically will be privileged to have consistent points of comparison. However, since these documents are not always available, old versions of their websites will also be used. More specifically, this will be done with the digital archive of the *Wayback Machine* as suggested by Arora et al. (2015). With this website archived snapshots of various websites at regular intervals in times, it is possible to see

how each organization presented itself online over time. The period of analysis will be from before the emergence of ethical meat, that is from the end of the 1990s, to today.

Before detailing the way the analysis of this data will be done, the above information and more details about the various sources of data have been compiled in Table 3.3. For each type of sources, the references have also been included in the table.

Table 3.3: Organizations and references

TYPE OF ORGANIZATIONS	ORGANIZATIONS
Meat Industry	• Tyson Foods • Web pages (Tyson Foods 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) • Reports (Tyson Foods 2006, 2014) • Press release (Hayes and Whitmore 2017) • Smithfield Foods • Reports (Smithfield Foods 2003, 2011, 2018) • Cargill • Web pages (Cargill 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e) • Press release (Thoni 2018) • Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef • Web pages (GRSB 2017, 2018a, 2018b) • Report (GRSB 2014) • Press release (USRSB 2015) • Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply • Web page (CSES 2018) • Reports (CSES 2018, 2015b, 2015c)
Animal Advocacy Organizations	• Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals • Web pages (ASPCA 2013, 2016, 2018a, 2018b) • The Humane Society of the United States • Web pages (HSUS 1997, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d) • Friends of Animals • Web pages (Friends of Animals 2002, 2005, 2013; Feral 2005) • Direct Action Everywhere • Web pages (Direct Action Everywhere 2018a, 2018b) • Podcast (Linden, Hsiung, and Francione 2015) • People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • Web pages (PETA 2001, 2014, 2015, 2018; Newkirk 2012) • Mercy for Animals • Web page (Mercy for Animals 2014)
Environmental Organizations	• Worldwatch Institute • Reports (Nierenberg 2005; Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 2008; Nierenberg and Reynolds 2012) • Environmental Working Group • Web pages (EWG 2011a, 2011b) • Natural Resources Defense Council • Web pages (NRDC 2018; Grasslands Alliance 2014) • Greenpeace • Web pages (Greenpeace USA 2018a, 2018b) • Report (Greenpeace International 2012) • Sierra Club • Web page (Sierra Club 2015) • Friends of the Earth • Web pages (Friends of the Earth 2018a, 2018b) • Rainforest Action Network • Web pages (Rainforest Action Network 2015, 2018)

In these references, to see how these organizations engage with the ethical meat discourse, the first thing to look for obviously is how they position themselves in relation to it and if this positioning evolved over time. More precisely, based on Hajer's methodological implications, that can be done by focusing on the ideas of reproduction and interruption. About reproduction, we will look for moments where the legitimacy of meat eating is reaffirmed. As was said above, there is not much that is expected from this, except maybe from the meat industry, since it is the transformation that is of interest to understand the process of passive revolution. Indeed, it is the concept of interruption that is of most interest. Using Hajer's description, we will look for "inter-discursive transfer points." What this means in the context of discourse analysis is that we will be looking for the moments when support for ethical meat is declared. Not only that, but also the precise discourse through which it is done. Indeed, it is believed that the choice of discourse in the typology can be revealing about the way an organization engages with the coalition. Put differently, we will look for the way the various organizations' objectives are presented as compatible with ethical meat. In this process, it will also be important to note how these transformations interrupt the preexisting routines within these organizations. Most importantly, we will look for the way they might create division, most notably within the animal advocacy organizations. The general objective of this analysis is to see how the relative positionings of all the organizations are reconfigured by the emergence of ethical meat.

Finally, for the last substep of this chapter, based on the present conclusions as well as on chapters 4 and 5, a broader analysis of the process of passive revolution will be proposed. This analysis will first consider the passive revolution as a whole and then focus on the two mechanisms noted by Thomas, that is, the processes of depoliticization and of absorption. For the current

analysis, the former will be understood as presenting the debate about the legitimacy of meat eating as peripheral. The latter implies the adoption of the ethical meat discourse by organizations that used to or could have become critical of meat consumption. Based on this analysis, the chapter will end by explicitly noting how these processes led to the marginalization of the animal rights movement.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, it was explained why Gramsci's theory is appropriate and relevant to understand the phenomenon of ethical meat. After presenting the foundation of this theoretical framework, it appeared that it is the concept of passive revolution that offers the most analytical potential to do so. It was, however, noted that Gramsci's concepts were difficult to directly operationalize and as such, Hajer's concept of discourse-coalition was proposed to complement Gramsci's theory. With the key concepts of passive revolution and of discourse-coalition, it was possible to develop a research proposition to explore the political implications of ethical meat. Finally, with Hajer's concepts, a detailed methodology to proceed with the research was developed. The next chapter will start this analysis by focusing on the arguments in favour of ethical meat.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Ethical Meat Discourse

In chapter 2, while defining ethical meat, it was noted that it can be difficult to do so without referring to the arguments used by its proponents. Indeed, it appears that the ethical meat discourse has been constructed in relation to both the traditional justification for the consumption of meat and vegan arguments. As such, in its positioning, it seems to be less concerned with defining itself than with saying how it is better than the alternatives. This is probably one of the reasons why not much effort is put in providing a formal definition and this is precisely why it was proposed in the previous chapters to explore the content of the ethical discourse through its arguments. The objective of this survey is to develop a deeper understanding of the discourse, but most importantly to identify its main storyline, that is, the metaphor that has the potential of giving a sense of coherence to all the arguments.

More precisely, it will be argued that in the double distancing away from veganism and factory farming, the image of the small farm emerges as the central metaphor representing the ideal of ethical meat. It will appear that by trying to differentiate itself from both positions and presenting itself as a third way, it uses arguments that are not always coherent, often vague and not entirely compatible. Yet, it manages to present a convincing ideal of ethical meat. Most importantly, what is clear is that, as Rothgerber puts it, ethical meat is presented as a win-win solution to get out of the meat paradox, that is, caring for animals and eating them at the same time (2015, 196–97). Or, using Hajer's concepts, the ethical meat discourse presents itself as a very attractive alternative.

To get there, this chapter will be divided into five parts. First, the logic behind the choice of arguments will be explained and, most importantly, the reason why only animal ethics, the environment, and human health will be detailed. The next three parts will respectively present each of these three categories. The last part will then propose an analysis of the arguments to arrive at the storyline.

1. Countering Vegan Arguments

It is common in the vegan literature to argue that veganism rests on three pillars: animal ethics, the environment, and human health. As such, it is not surprising that the ethical meat discourse exhaustively responds to all three. That is exactly why these are the three categories that will be considered in this chapter. It is, however, important to note that this discourse does not stop there. Indeed, some ethical meat proponents also use what could be called community arguments. As such, in this short section, the reasons why those arguments are ignored will be presented.

The logic of community arguments goes as follows: the industrial food system is dismantling communities by reducing people to individual and generic consumers. While this could be said of any mass produced industrial commodities, it is arguably different in the case of food because, according to (Pollan 2006, 255), it “is a powerful metaphor for a great many of the values to which people feel globalization poses a threat, including the distinctiveness of local cultures and identities, the survival of local landscapes, and biodiversity.” (Pollan 2006, 255) Some also use the concept of alienation²² to illustrate this:

22 While Pollan does not use the term alienation when talking about industrial food, he does so in reference to vegetarianism. According to him: “Even if the vegetarian is a more highly evolved human being, it seems to me he has lost something along the way, something I’m not prepared to dismiss as trivial. Healthy and virtuous as I may feel these days, I also feel alienated from traditions I value: cultural traditions like the Thanksgiving turkey, or even franks at the ballpark, and family traditions like my mother’s beef brisket at Passover. These ritual meals link us to our history along multiple lines — family, religion, landscape, nation” (Pollan, 314).

As a site of capitalist production, and therefore of alienated and divided labour, food becomes *ipso facto* a site of struggle. [...] When it confronts the labourer/consumer as excessively divided (in the form of heavily refined products, or as severe alienation in the relations of production) food contributes to their degradation. As another form of one-sided labour—pre-prepared meals, for example, require no creativity or complicated input—refined food products make the individual one-sided and abstract in the same way that capitalist labour does. In other words, refined food and its preparation and consumption is alienated, and reproduces the alienated processes of production. (Cheney 2016, 119–20)

According to these arguments, local food producers are in a key position to counter this dynamic. Again, as Pollan says, “That’s because farms produce a lot more than food; they also produce a kind of landscape and a kind of community.” (2006, 258) He provides the example of Community Supported Agriculture “in which customers ‘subscribe’ to a farm, paying a few hundred dollars at the start of the growing season in exchange for a weekly box of produce through the summer” as a way “for urbanites to connect with distant farmers.” (Pollan 2006, 245) The community-building potential of local food is even clearer in the case of urban farming. For example, in the case of urban chickens that will be explored in great details in the next chapter, people claim that the presence of the animals and the sharing of extra eggs help create bonds with their neighbours, giving a sense of community (McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten 2014, 435). In other words, food serves as a nexus to bring people together. Hence, with local food, the negative impacts of industrial food are avoided and communities are brought together again.

While these arguments are convincing, they are not entirely relevant here. Indeed, if it is accepted that industrial food has negative impacts on society and that the promotion of local food is an effective means to counter this influence, this dynamic is not directly related to the issue of meat. It becomes related to

meat production only when veganism is associated to this industrial food system by being presented as being only possible with it. As will be seen in this chapter, many proponents of ethical meat do exactly that. From that perspective, the solution is not only local food, but also local meat. However, a quick survey of the animal rights literature clearly shows that most of the proponent of veganism, especially critical animal studies scholars with their intersectional approach, share the same criticism of the industrial food system (Torres 2007; Nibert 2013). In other words, most of the community arguments are also used by vegans and, as such, they cannot be used to differentiate ethical meat from veganism.

While it could be interesting to dig deeper in these issues and see if they are discussed differently in the animal rights and ethical meat literatures, this inquiry is beyond the scope of this thesis as it does not appear to be relevant for a first overview of the arguments. It is nevertheless important to note how in these community arguments, the small/local farm already appears to occupy a key place within the ethical meat discourse. That being said, to understand how ethical meat positions itself in relation to both veganism and factory farming, only the animal ethics, environmental and human health arguments will be considered.

2. Animal Ethics

As was seen in the chapter 1, one of the most important vegan arguments states that since meat production is inherently cruel, meat consumption is necessary ethically wrong. However, since the 1960s, this argument has been articulated specifically around the cruelty of factory farming. In other words, since then, the particular case of factory farming has provided concrete evidence that remains commonly used to conclude that, in general, meat production is a cruel practice. This can be seen in animal rights campaigns that present the public with graphic scenes of violence that occur daily in factory farms and that invite people to

boycott meat. There is, however, an obvious flaw in such a line of argument and addressing it is usually the first thing most ethical meat proponents do.

Indeed, the ethical meat discourse recognizes that there are considerable problems with factory farming, but they point out that they are problems related to the practices of factory farming in particular, and that are not inherent to meat production in itself. Or as R. G. Frey was already saying in 1983, this argument is “not actually [an objection] to eating animals but to the treatment animals receive in the course of being converted into meat.” (1983, 30) In other words, they argue that it is possible to produce meat while making sure the animals are properly treated. For example, it is argued that on a small farm, it is possible to produce meat while attending the needs of each individual animal. This, of course, implies that boycotting meat is not the only alternative to factory farming.

This argument is intuitively appealing. Indeed, it relies on a form of idealized picture of the traditional farm where animals were free to roam in the field. For many proponents of ethical meat, this image constitutes a sufficient refutation, as a counter-example, of the animal ethics vegan arguments, but not for all. Indeed, since the modern animal rights movement was constructed around the arguments of moral philosophers like Singer and Regan, some ethical meat authors want to counter their argument on their own terrain. As such, they have proposed formal arguments based on various moral theories to defend the idea that producing meat can be morally permissible. It is, however, not always the case, and since the underlying ethical basis for their arguments is not always explicitly stated, it must sometimes be inferred.

That being said, what is particular about these arguments is that they try to strike a balance between factory farming and veganism. On the one hand, they reject

the traditional position that can be used to justify the cruelty of factory farming, according to which humans animals do not have to show any moral consideration to nonhuman animals (Garner 2005, 11). On the other hand, they also reject the abolitionist's outcome—that if animals do have moral value, then their exploitation is necessarily unjustifiable. Tatjana Višak sums up this balancing act by noting that to support what she calls “animal-friendly animal husbandry,” a moral theory needs to fulfill two conditions: “show concern for animal welfare, *and* allow the killing of animals.” (2013, 10) In other words, moral consideration has to be shown towards animals, but not to the extent of prohibiting their killing. Another way to look at these two conditions is by considering what they are addressing. Indeed, the moral consideration is what differentiates the ethical meat discourse from the traditional position, and the permission to kill is what differentiates it from the vegan arguments. Ethical meat, thus, positions itself between these two poles and the implications of such positioning will have to be considered when presenting the arguments.

While these general considerations already show how ethical meat positions itself as a win-win solution, more specific arguments can be identified. First, the use of two moral theories²³ to argue that ethical meat is morally acceptable will be analyzed: (1) contractualism and (2) utilitarianism. Second, two arguments claiming that ethical meat is morally superior to veganism will also be presented using utilitarianism: (3) the logic of the larder and (4) the seat at the table

23 In her overview of ethical theories that can be used to support “the goal of animal-friendly animal husbandry”, Višak also mentions virtue ethics and relational moral theory. The former is based on the idea that “duty to care well for animals is not strictly speaking something we owe *to animals*. Rather, not caring well for animals is considered a shame for the human race and/or a sign of disrespect for certain moral and spiritual realities.” The latter “holds that our moral duties towards others are based on the relationships we have with them.” (2013, 10–11) They are not included here because while they are sometimes discussed in the animal ethics literature, they are not common in the ethical meat one. For the current research, only Roger Scruton was found to use them (2004, 2006).

argument. The objective here is not to refute them, but to detail them and see what they imply for the positioning of the ethical meat discourse.

2.1 Contractualism

Contractualism refers to social contract theories that have been developed by “renowned philosophers [such] as Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, Kant and more recently Rawls²⁴ and Gauthier.” (Palmer 1997, 414) To see how it is used to justify meat consumption, a deep understanding²⁵ of these theories is not necessary. As such, it is only the idea that the social contract “implies limitations on some freedoms,” but should bring “gain to all contractors (win-win)” that will be considered (Palmer 1997, 414). From the present argument, animal husbandry can be presented as a mutually beneficial practice based on “an imaginary contract between humans and animals.” (Višak 2013, 12) This idea will be explored here.

The first thing to note is that this argument is not original to the ethical meat literature. Indeed, both Stephen Budiansky (1992) and J. Baird Callicott (1988) proposed this idea to defend animal husbandry. Pollan’s account of this argument appears to be based on Budiansky. Indeed, he argues when presenting the history of animal domestication that it “is certainly not a regime humans somehow imposed on animals some ten thousand years ago.” On the contrary, it “took place when a handful of especially opportunistic species discovered, through

24 It should be noted with Palmer that the idea of contract here is not based on a modified version of Rawls social theory, which is “a contract made between human beings which takes animals into account”, but of a “special contract relationship between human beings and animals”. (1997, 412)

25 Palmer offers a general list of key characteristics shared by most social contract theories: (1) “The social contract signifies a transition from one state to another (usually from a state of ‘nature’ to a state of ‘culture/society’).” (2) “The social contract implies limitations on some freedoms (usually the loss of some freedoms in order to gain some forms of protection).” (3) “All parties to the contract are free and equal individuals who understand and consent to it.” (4) “The contract brings gains to all contractors (win-win).” (1997, 414)

Darwinian trial and error, that they were more likely to survive and prosper in an alliance with humans than on their own.”²⁶ The following deal apparently resulted: “Humans provided the animals with food and protection in exchange for which the animals provided the humans their milk, eggs, and—yes—their flesh.” (Pollan 2006, 320)

From a contract perspective, it is possible to see how domesticated animals accepted to lose some of their liberties in exchange for security. This arrangement is, however, only beneficial to animals if it is assumed that their life in the wild was short, stressful and painful. In other words, if the domesticated life is better than the life they had before. Overall, according to Pollan, from an evolutionary point of view, this contract was a “tremendous success” since “cows, pigs, dogs, cats, and chickens have thrived, while their wild ancestors have languished.” (2006, 320) This way of presenting the argument can, however, be used to justify domestication and meat consumption in general and does not say much about ethical meat per se.

To make it an ethical meat argument, one has to further explore the benefits the contract brings to animals. If the only criteria is to propose a better life than in the wild and it is assumed that wild animals do not have an enviable life, the bar is pretty low. In other words, it could be used to justify factory farming, or at least some of its forms and practices. This is why Nicolette Hahn Niman adds that “it’s reasonable to assume, as well, that animals would never have opted for such an arrangement if torture had been part of the deal. Stated simply: By raising animals in factory farms, humans are violating their age-old contract with

26 Some animal rights scholars are contesting this definition of domestication as a “benign partnership”. Most importantly, Nibert proposes to instead use the term “domesecration” to highlight “the systemic practice of violence in which social animals are enslaved and biologically manipulated, resulting in their objectification, subordination, and oppression.” (2013, 12)

domesticated animals.” (2014, 230) In other words, this contract implies better treatment than what is dispensed in factory farms. It is meant to be a fair contract, one that these domesticated animals would consent to.

Of course saying that “torture” would violate the contract does not provide much more details on what conditions would respect the contract. In the case of Niman, the argument is presented in a larger argument in which it is implied that a small farm would respect the contract. This lack of precision is not surprising as the logic of the contractualist argument does not go beyond this. In sum, the argument is based on the idea that it is acceptable to eat meat since human beings have a longstanding virtual contract with animals, but that modern-day factory farming conditions violate this contract.

2.2 Utilitarianism

In her book, *Killing Happy Animals: Explorations in Utilitarian Ethics*, Višak writes that she focuses “on utilitarian moral theory because on the face of it, it is more likely to provide a justification for animal-friendly animal husbandry than rival moral theories.” (2013, 2) Considering that, and the fact that the two arguments that will be presented after are relying on it, it is worth defining it more extensively. As Višak notes, utilitarianism,

in its simplest form, states that the morally right action is the one that results in the greatest net balance of enjoyment over suffering. Thus, outcomes of possible actions have to be compared in terms of their overall effects on welfare. The welfare consequences that an outcome contains have to be brought together (aggregated) in order to determine the overall value of the outcome. Utilitarianism thereby takes into consideration the welfare consequences for all sentient beings, equally. Thus, utilitarianism strives for the maximization of welfare for all sentient beings. (2013, 2–3)

Singer’s original contribution in the 1970s was to include all sentient animals, and not just human animals, in our understanding of moral equality. As he argued,

doing otherwise would consist in *speciesism*. While this contribution is considered by many authors to have been essential to the foundation of the modern animal rights movement, utilitarianism is often considered insufficient to protect animal interests. Indeed, Garner noted that many authors, the first being Regan (1983), argued that with utilitarianism, “no particular exploitation of animals is automatically ruled out as illegitimate, because they are contingent upon a utilitarian calculation.” (Garner 2005, 35) Most importantly, he concludes that this “leaves open the possibility that, for instance, a reformed system of animal agriculture, removing the worst excesses of factory farming, could conceivably meet Singer’s demands.” (Garner 2005, 35–36) This is exactly what the ethical meat discourse argues.

Pollan even contacted Singer to ask “him about the implications for his position of the ‘good farm’—one where animals got to live according to their natures and to all appearances do not suffer.” (2006, 327) Here is how Pollan relates his answer:

I agree with you that it is better for these animals to have lived and died than not to have lived at all ...,” Singer wrote back. Since the utilitarian is concerned exclusively with the sum of happiness and suffering, and the slaughter of an animal with no comprehension of death need not entail suffering, the Good Farm adds to the total of animal happiness, provided you replace the slaughtered animal with a new one. However, this line of thinking does not obviate the wrongness of killing an animal that “has a sense of its own existence over time, and can have preferences about its own future.” In other words, it might be okay to eat the chicken or the cow, but perhaps not the (more intelligent) pig. Yet, he continued, “I would not be sufficiently confident of my argument to condemn someone who purchased meat from one of these farms. (Pollan 2006, 327)

With this short answer, Singer captures all the elements of the utilitarian argument in favour of ethical meat. Of course, as Višak shows, there are many varieties of utilitarianism. Since they do not all permit ethical meat, only the most common version that does so will be presented. To understand the argument, its various elements can be broken down. Based on both Singer and Višak, from a

utilitarian perspective, slaughtering animals is morally acceptable if: (1) they were “happy,” (2) they were slaughtered in a “humane” way, (3) when slaughtered, they are replaced by other animals, and (4) they are not self-conscious.

Since the first two are fairly obvious, they will be treated quickly. First, Singer notes that meat consumption could be morally acceptable if “animals can be reared on a small scale without suffering.” He adds that “Some farmers take pride in producing ‘humanely raised’ animal products.” (2011, 56) From the ethical meat perspective, it is taken for granted that this condition is automatically fulfilled on a small farm. In utilitarian terms, that means that these animals have “positive welfare.” This, however, is not always clear since the condition is often understood as only requiring doing better than factory farming²⁷. Second, when only considering the “harm of death,” if it is done painlessly, the act itself does not cause suffering and as such, causes no loss of welfare. For ethical meat proponents, this is also considered a simple condition to fulfill as the animals just have to be “humanely slaughtered.” Again, the extent to which there is no suffering involved is not always clear, but that issue will be ignored for now since it can be assumed to be theoretically possible. What is more important is that if animals indeed have “positive welfare,” their killing “has the effect that the outcome contains less welfare than it would have contained if the animal had continued to live a pleasant life.” (Višak 2013, 28) From a utilitarian perspective, this loss has to be compensated, and leads to the third condition.

The third condition can be named the “replaceability argument.” It is a complex argument that is debated extensively in moral philosophy, but a simplified

²⁷ George Schedler argues on utilitarian grounds that grazing animals fulfill that condition because they avoid the “pain associated with factory farms” and enjoy the grazing experience (2005, 501).

version can be presented²⁸. As was just said, it is essential because: “All else being equal, killing an animal that could have continued a pleasant life constitutes a loss of welfare.” (Višak 2013, 45) According to the replaceability argument, that welfare can be compensated if that animal is replaced “by another animal, whose lifetime welfare is at least as positive as the future welfare of the killed animal would have been” (Višak 2013, 50). For the ethical meat discourse, this argument holds because each happy animal slaughtered is indeed replaced by another happy animal, therefore preventing a negative balance of utility. This is, however, a highly theoretical argument (mostly because it involves comparing existence with non-existence) and as such, it is rarely mentioned in the ethical meat literature. Yet, from a utilitarian point of view, it remains essential. One could also wonder if, according to the same logic, a happy human being could also be killed and replaced by another happy human. According to some version of the argument, the answer is yes, and that is why one last condition is required (Višak 2013, 50).

The fourth and last condition is there to restricts the replaceability argument to only some animals. In her book, Višak describes how Singer tries to restrict the scope of this argument (2013, 54–68). According to her account, Singer claims that only non-persons are replaceable, but the distinction between a person and non-person is not equivalent to the one between a human animal and a nonhuman animal “as this would be likely to be unjustified discrimination, and thus what Singer calls ‘speciesist’.” (Višak 2013, 58) Again, according to Singer, the most relevant characteristic here would seem to be that “persons possess a sense of their own existence over time and future-directed desires.” (Višak 2013, 57) It is that difference, which can be called “self-consciousness,” that makes a being non-replaceable. Indeed, according to that logic, the death of a person implies that her

28 For an extensive discussion, see (Višak 2013).

or his “future-directed desires” will never be fulfilled, which implies a loss of welfare of an order of magnitude higher than the death of a non-person, that is, a being without such future-directed desires. According to Singer, it is not always easy to know which animals fulfill this condition: “Our increasing knowledge of the intellectual capacities of nonhuman animals has extended the number of species to which this reason against killing can reasonably be applied.” (2011, 119) However, no such nuance can be found in the ethical meat literature. They seem to assume that the death of animals, as long as it is painless, is never problematic because they are animals. In other words, they remain speciesists. In a sense, this is understandable as the replaceability argument is a theoretical one probably unknown to most proponents of ethical meat.

While this whole argument can be criticized in multiple ways, as Višak does, this is not the objective here. What is striking in this presentation of utilitarianism is the binary understanding of animal happiness and humane slaughter. For most ethical meat proponents the argument is straightforward: obviously, animals on small farms are happy (and are killed humanely since it is done by people who care about them) and animals on factory farms are miserable. In other words, with this binary representation, details are superfluous and the discourse can remain vague. Just like the previous argument, the logic appears to be: what is not factory farming is good.

2.3 Logic of the Larder

In the previous section about utilitarianism, the first sentence of Singer’s reply to Pollan was intentionally ignored. It said: “I agree with you that it is better for these animals to have lived and died than not to have lived at all.” This type of reasoning is related to what Henry S. Salt, as early as 1914, labelled as the “Logic of the Larder.” (1914) That “argument claims that we do animals a favour by

keeping them for their meat, eggs and milk, for if we did not keep them for these purposes, the animals in question would not exist.” (Višak 2013, 129) He chose this name because “it implies that the real lover of animals is he whose larder is fullest of them” (Salt 1914). In his own time, it was already presented as an old argument, but it remains very common (Višak 2013, 129). In their article *Human Diets and Animal Welfare: the Illogic of the Larder*, Matheny and M. A. Chan provide a long list of people that still use it, including Pollan (2005, 579).

In their critique of the logic of the larder, the two authors note that the argument is usually presented informally (Matheny and Chan 2005, 579). Scruton provides a good example. After wondering “why should life be sacrificed, just for [meat]?”, he writes that this question “has a clear and rational answer: namely, that the life that is sacrificed would not exist, but for the sacrifice.” In other words, “a great number of animals owe their lives to our intention to eat them.” He concludes that “if we value animal life and animal comfort, therefore, we should endorse our carnivorous habits, provided it really is life, and not living death, on which those habits feed.” (Scruton 2006, 61) Presented in this fashion, the argument defends meat in general, but for most recent authors, it implies that the animals “had a life worth living” (Matheny and Chan 2005, 579) and so, it can be understood as an ethical meat argument.

This argument is often conflated with the replaceability argument because both involve comparing existence to non-existence. Višak argues that there is a fundamental difference between the two:

The Logic of the Larder goes further than the Replaceability Argument in the sense that it does not only aim at justifying animal-friendly animal husbandry as morally permissible. It even promotes animal-friendly animal husbandry as morally superior to vegan agriculture. According to the Logic of the Larder, animal-friendly animal husbandry can be not only morally neutral, but even positive, morally good or obligatory. Remember that the Logic of the Larder has been brought forward against vegetarian and vegan

diets. It is not about how to compensate for the welfare loss due to the killing. Rather, it is about how to maximize welfare by killing animals that exist only for that purpose. (2013, 130)

In other words, while the replaceability argument claims that eating ethical meat can be considered “morally neutral,” the logic of the larder purports that it can be “morally good.”

There is, however, an important difference between claiming that ethical meat is “morally good” and arguing that it is morally superior to veganism. The argument usually implies the latter, as the 19th-century philosopher Leslie Stephen wrote: “Of all the arguments of Vegetarianism none is so weak as the argument from humanity. The pig has a stronger interest than anyone in the demand for bacon. If all the world were Jewish, there would be no pigs at all.” (1896, 236) But the former does not necessarily imply the latter: even if it is accepted that raising animals to produce ethical meat constitutes a moral good, it does not mean that vegan agriculture would not be better. That is why Višak concludes, based on Matheny and Chan’s analysis:

On empirical grounds alone, the Logic of the Larder is unconvincing. After all, a vegan diet would save a lot of space, energy and resources that could be used more efficiently in order to allow animals with pleasant lives to live. So, even if creating happy beings were a morally worthwhile aim to strive for, animal husbandry would not be an efficient means to this end. (Višak 2013, 130)

Utilitarianism is useful for such comparisons²⁹. The details are, however, not important because depending on the various assumptions, it is easy to arrive at the desired conclusion. For, example, after noting that “it is better for an animal to have a happy life, even if it is a short one, than no life at all”, Hare goes on to

29 Utilitarianism is used here because it is the most common theory to present the logic of the larder formally, but Višak writes that it is “not a particular utilitarian argument” (2013, 130) and Matheny and Chan note that it “is commonly presented in utilitarian terms, it needn’t be so” (2005, 580n1).

conclude, using the utilitarian concept of “quality-adjusted life year” that we should not refrain “from eating animals” because if we did, “the market for meat would vanish, and no more animals would be raised for meat-production.” (1993, 226–28) Just like Stephen, he notes that many pigs “would certainly not be kept except for the bacon market.” (Hare 1993, 228) Matheny and Chan, however, disagree because “raising farm animals may prevent a greater number of wild animals from existing.” (2005, 584)

In sum, whatever the details, what remains important is that the logic of the larder is still widely used and that it is one of the most important arguments concluding that ethical meat can be morally superior to veganism. Not only does it neutralize the moral arguments in favour of veganism, it also provides justification for eating *more* meat, as long as it is ethical. In a sense, it brings the ethical meat moral argument to its extreme conclusion: if raised animals are happy, why not eat more?

2.4 Seat at the Table

The seat at the table argument is another one that compares ethical meat to veganism to conclude that the former is better for animals. It is also not a new one. A related argument could already be found in 1983 when Frey wrote:

More generally, if it can be shown that boycotting meat is not the most effective step one can take to lessen animal suffering or that there is an equally efficacious course of action which allows us to remain meat-eaters, then the case for changing out eating habits will, on the argument’s basis, have vanished. (1983, 39)

He then goes on to argue that the boycott of meat is not the most efficient way to reduce suffering. Following the same logic, in his 1993 short article *Why I am only a Demi-Vegetarian*, Hare writes:

Demi-vegetarians have one very powerful advantage over full vegetarians when it comes to influencing the market. Since they eat little meat, but do eat

some, they would be in a quite strong position to influence animal husbandry practices [...]. By selecting carefully the meat that they did buy, they might help to cause practices to be abandoned which occasion most suffering to animals. (1993, 230)

What Hare implies is that ethical meat is in a unique position to influence the industry and, thus, reduce suffering.

The basic idea of this argument is that while veganism is an understandable option when faced with the cruelty of factory farming, such a boycott is not the best way to help animals. As Friend says: “People who become complete vegetarians for the sake of animals are basically getting up from the table and leaving the room.” (2008, 248) On the contrary, “Flexitarians, vegetarians who eat meat occasionally, are remaining at the table. Carnivores who choose to go meatless now and then are remaining at the table.” (Friend 2008, 248) This is better for animals since “Carnivores speak most loudly not through their words, but by how they spend their food dollars. People who remain at the table and support sustainable, responsible, and humane agriculture by purchasing meat from these farmers are sending a message to those farmers” (Friend 2008, 248). In other words, it is by supporting farmers that take good care of their animals, that is, a boycott, that the cruelty of factory farming can be best reduced. Consumers have to keep a “seat at the table,” hence, the name of the argument.

The seat at the table argument is both a political and an economic one. It supposes that purchasing ethical meat exerts more political and economic pressure to change the way meat is produced than a boycott of meat can. In that sense, it also includes an element of strategy which is most often discussed in the political consumerism literature. The discussion about the seat at the table argument as a strategy will, however, be postponed until next chapter. The argument first has to be understood from a moral point of view.

Some philosophers indeed use this argument. For example, Scruton writes:

I would suggest not only that it is permissible for those who care about animals to eat meat; they have a duty to do so. If meat-eating should ever come confined to those who do not care about animal suffering then compassionate farming would cease. All animals would be kept in battery conditions and the righteous carnivore would exert no economic pressure on farmers to change their ways. (2006, 62)

In the same vein, more recently Frey wrote that the “most effective” strategy would be “a direct engagement with the rearing (and killing) practices that most disturbed one and with the attempt to get farmers and members of the agribusiness lobby to deal with those very practices.” (2004, 119) While Frey, unlike Scruton, does not talk about ethical meat or compassionate farming, his argument remains very similar to Friend’s. There is, however, a key difference since Frey mostly talks about transforming the industry, while Friend is more concerned with promoting the emergence of an alternative food system.

Again, this argument does not merely conclude that eating meat can be considered morally acceptable but, as Scruton says, that eating meat is a “duty.” Yet, there is a difference with the logic of the larder argument. The logic of the larder claims eating ethical meat is better than veganism because it permits more animals to live happy lives. The seat at the table argument holds that the act of purchasing ethical meat makes the life of future animals better, but it does not argue that more meat should be eaten. On the contrary, it recognizes the value of boycotting factory farming, but concludes that buying ethical meat is a better practice. In that sense, as was said above, it implies a strategy to improve the life of farmed animals.

2.5 Conclusion

In this section, it was seen that the ethical meat discourse proposes arguments to get out of the meat paradox, that is, showing how to it is simultaneously possible to eat animals and care about them. That being said, some important elements stood out. First, the idea that animals are happy or do not suffer is generally presented in vague terms. This was most particularly striking in the discussion about utilitarianism since a tendency to present these complex issues in binary terms was apparent. This is precisely where the small farm metaphor is used since it provides a shortcut to assume that animals are treated properly as it is taken for granted that conditions are better there than in factory farming. From the perspective of Hajer's theory, this idea could also be understood in terms of trust since the word of the farmer is usually considered enough to assume that the animals were properly treated. Second, while the first two arguments are important from a theoretical perspective, the last two are much more significant from a political perspective. Indeed, not only do they defend meat consumption, they also directly attack veganism. This is important because it goes further than simply refuting their arguments. Third, there appears to be a tension about the quantity of meat that can be morally eaten. On the one hand, the logic of the larder argument suggests that people should eat more meat. On the other hand, the seat at the table argument implies that even if they do not eat much meat conscientious omnivores can still have an impact on the meat industry. While it should be clear that not many authors explicitly argue for eating more meat, it remains important to note that there is a tension between the various arguments and as will be seen, there is an even greater tension when considering environmental arguments.

3. Environment

It would be tempting to also divide the environmental arguments in two categories: those that say that ethical meat is better than factory farming and those that argue that eating ethical meat is better for the environment than veganism. It would, however, hide the fact that environmental arguments are much more complex than ethical ones. Indeed, some of them have different levels of argumentation which can focus on factory farming and/or veganism. It therefore appears much more appropriate to group the arguments according to the respective model of animal agriculture they promote. Three will be presented: the ecological leftover approach, mixed farming, and the holistic planned grazing approach. Note that they are not mutually exclusive models; they do overlap on some aspects, yet they differ on their focus.

Given this outline, the different environmental issues related to animal agriculture will not be presented separately. They will only be presented in relation to the models that discuss them. This implies that some issues will be ignored, for example, water consumption, air pollution, biodiversity, etc. They are ignored, not because they are not important, but because they are not central arguments to any of the models. Only one exception will be made with climate change since it is one of the most controversial issues and therefore requires more discussion. This section will, thus, be divided in four parts: (1) the ecological leftover approach (2) mixed farming, (3) the relation between animal agriculture and climate change, and (4) the holistic planned grazing system.

3.1 The Ecological Leftover Approach

The idea that there is a competition between the food produced for humans and livestock food first appeared in a major book with the publication in 1971 of Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971). The author provided "an argument

for vegetarianism that based its claim on the resource intensiveness of the feed grain—livestock complex and its implications for world hunger.” (Guthman 2004, 8) The foundation of her argument is that animals are not effective converters of proteins. More precisely, she argues that because of this inefficiency and because animals are fed a “large quantity of humanly edible proteins”, in 1968, enough proteins were lost to meet “*90 percent of the yearly world protein deficit.*” (Lappé 1971, 5) Put more succinctly, if this food was fed directly to a human being, it would go a long way to alleviate world hunger. Guthman notes that “This justification for vegetarianism was particularly powerful in moving the emphasis out of the realm of individual ethics to the international political economy of agriculture.” (2004, 8) In other words, the consumption of meat could not be reduced to a personal choice because it had important international implications.

At the time, Lappé recognized that this link between grain production and livestock had not always been there. Traditionally, livestock served “as a ‘protein factory,’ converting humanly inedible substances, like cellulose, and low-quality protein in plants into high-quality protein for our benefit.” (1971, 5) Now, it is estimated that livestock consume more than a third of all cereal output, with factory farms in developed countries relying to a considerable extent on this production. In the developing world, animal agriculture does not depend as much on it, but this is rapidly changing in some countries (Garnett 2009, 494). To end this apparent competition between the food for human animals and nonhuman animals, the ecological leftover approach argues that the solution is to go back to the way livestock farming used to be done.

Other names have been proposed to describe this approach. Most importantly, Fairlie uses the expression “default livestock” because it is used by the *United*

Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). After criticizing the way that this organization uses the concept he defines it in his own words:

But the FAO are correct to state that in traditional agricultural communities the main role of animals is to turn vegetation that cannot be eaten or economically harvested by humans into useful goods and services. [...] Peasants with access to arable land, unlike people who buy their meat from a supermarket, are only too aware from the exigencies of their daily life that livestock are an inefficient way of producing human food. Pouring hard-earned grain down the throat of an animal is not something any poor farmer is likely to do to any great extent, unless there is a large surplus and no market for it. (Fairlie 2010, 36–37)

His definition was also used by *Greenpeace* in its *Ecological Livestock* report (2012, 20). Tara Garnett prefers the expression “ecological leftover” approach. She defines it in the following way:

[The ecological leftover] is to take ecological capacity as the ultimate constraint and to quantify what level of livestock production and consumption would be possible. This would need to assess what land and byproducts are available for livestock that are genuinely unsuited to other purposes, bearing in mind both the second order impacts of land use and the opportunity cost of using these resources for livestock rather than for something else, such as energy production. It would then be necessary to calculate how many livestock numbers could be supported, without the need for external inputs, and at sustainable stocking levels that do not lead to overgrazing. The number of livestock we could rear and ultimately consume would be bound by these absolute limits. (Garnett 2009, 499–500)

In both cases, any competition for food and any relations with world hunger appear to be eliminated. Also, in both cases, meat production is considered sustainable if it does not depend on external inputs. Since the name “ecological leftover” better describes the logic of the approach and it appears to be the one used in the scientific literature, it will be used here. It is also worth mentioning that Fairlie recognizes that the expression “default livestock” has “a pejorative feel about it” (2010, 42).

That being said, two elements remain unclear in these short definitions and therefore deserve to be detailed. First, what exactly constitutes leftover food? Second, what is the actual limit mentioned by Garnett and how is it defined? The rest of this section will explore these two questions.

3.1.1 What is Leftover Food?

Before addressing this question, it is worth noting that this concept is rarely used explicitly in the ethical meat literature. However, the idea that meat can be produced without external input and without the products of agriculture is omnipresent. In other words, just like in the animal ethics section, the arguments are often implicit and as such, they have to be decoded in the texts.

To understand what leftover food is, it is useful to simplify reality by grouping farmed animals into two categories: ruminants (cattle, goats, sheep...) and omnivores (pigs, chickens...). The former must be fed grass and the latter can be fed almost anything. In other words, to feed ruminants, “leftover pastures” are required, while to feed omnivores, “leftover food” is needed. Fairlie provides some examples of the latter: food processing waste, crop residues, food waste, slaughterhouse waste... (2010, 37–38) While this appears coherent and simple, there are complicated debates on the subject to be found in the literature. To illustrate this, a famous example will be detailed to highlight how the issue of leftover food is deployed in the actual ethical meat discourse.

According to Pollan, one of the best examples of small farms seems to be Joel Salatin’s *Polyface Farms*, “one of the most productive and influential alternative farms in America.” (2006, 126) Much more will be said about him in the next chapter, but for now, it is mostly important to know that he calls himself a “grass farmer” because this community of plants “is the foundation of the intricate food

chain Salatin has assembled at Polyface, where a half dozen different animal species are raised together in an intensive rotational dance on the theme of symbiosis.” (Pollan 2006, 126) According to Pollan, by “the end of the season,” Salatin’s “grasses will have been transformed by his animals” into various types of meat and his pastures “will be in no way diminished by the process.” That is why he concludes that the meat produced “looks an awful lot like the proverbially unattainable free lunch.” (2006, 126–27) From this description, while Pollan does not mention it, *Polyface Farms* meat does indeed look like it is produced from leftover pastures: there is no external input to fertilize the soil and the animals are not fed food that could have been given to humans.

This picture has, however, been criticized by James McWilliams. For one thing, he blames Pollan for only mentioning much later in his book that Salatin imports “industrial feed for his chickens so they can fertilize the soil that grows the grass that fattens his beef” (McWilliams 2015, 168). Moreover, while Pollan and Salatin never pretend that the latter’s pastures are “leftover”, McWilliams argues that they do not say that *Polyface Farms* has the best possible condition to produce grass-fed beef (2015, 173–74). In both cases, McWilliams’ arguments imply that Salatin’s beef cannot be said to be grown from leftover pastures. Indeed, not only does his production require external input, but it relies on land that could be partially used for agriculture.

The point here is not to argue that the leftover approach is a fiction since clearly it is not, but to highlight two elements. First, it is interesting to see how Salatin replied to the first criticism. In a Facebook post, he recognized that he imports food and replied that it is no worse than factory farming—which he assumes McWilliams supports (2012). So, not only is there an association between industrial agriculture and veganism, but most importantly, there is a recognition

that the production of meat without external input is difficult, which leads to the second element: this debate highlights a line of tension within the ethical meat discourse. On the one hand, Pollan is happy to present *Polyface Farms* as “one of the most productive and influential alternative farms in America”. But on the other, if McWilliams’ criticism is accepted, it appears that its productivity is in great part possible due to external feed and ideal pasture conditions. This makes sense because the main reason factory farming became so widespread is because of its efficiency. It is, thus, difficult to argue that small organic farms can be both very productive and environmentally benign.

In sum, while defining leftover food, it became apparent that the classification is not always simple. Moreover, with the example of *Polyface Farms*, it was seen that this issue is related to the broader questions of external inputs and of productivity. In other words, it could be argued that the environmental gain that is obtained from the ecological leftover approach comes at the cost of lower productivity, but that this consequence is not always acknowledged. As will be seen, a similar dynamic can be observed about ecological limits.

3.1.2 Ecological Limits

While the ecological leftover approach tries to refute the idea that there is a competition between human animal and nonhuman animal food, its implication that leftover food is limited in quantity is not always recognized. There are, however, some authors that acknowledge this and even try to calculate the limit. This can be considered an argument in favour of ethical meat since it can be understood as “giving permission” to eat the portion of meat that was produced using leftover food. This issue of ecological limits will be explored in this section. To illustrate the logic of this limit, researchers E.V. Elferink, Sanderine Nonhebel, and H.C. Moll have proposed a graphical representation (2008, 1232) that Fairlie

calls the “hockey stick curve” (2010, 35). As can be seen on Figure 4.1, it shows “Environmental impacts” as a function of “Animal product consumption”. The curve consists of two sections: a gentle slope from A to B and from B to D, a much steeper one. The dotted line at point C represents approximately current meat consumption in developed countries. Section A-B highlights the low environmental impact of meat consumption while animals are fed leftover food. At point B, it is assumed that this source of food is entirely used up and as such, to respond to greater demand, animals have to be fed on dedicated feed crops. That is why section B-D goes up much faster. In other words, it is “environmentally acceptable” to consume meat up to point B and that remains much lower than the current situation represented by C.

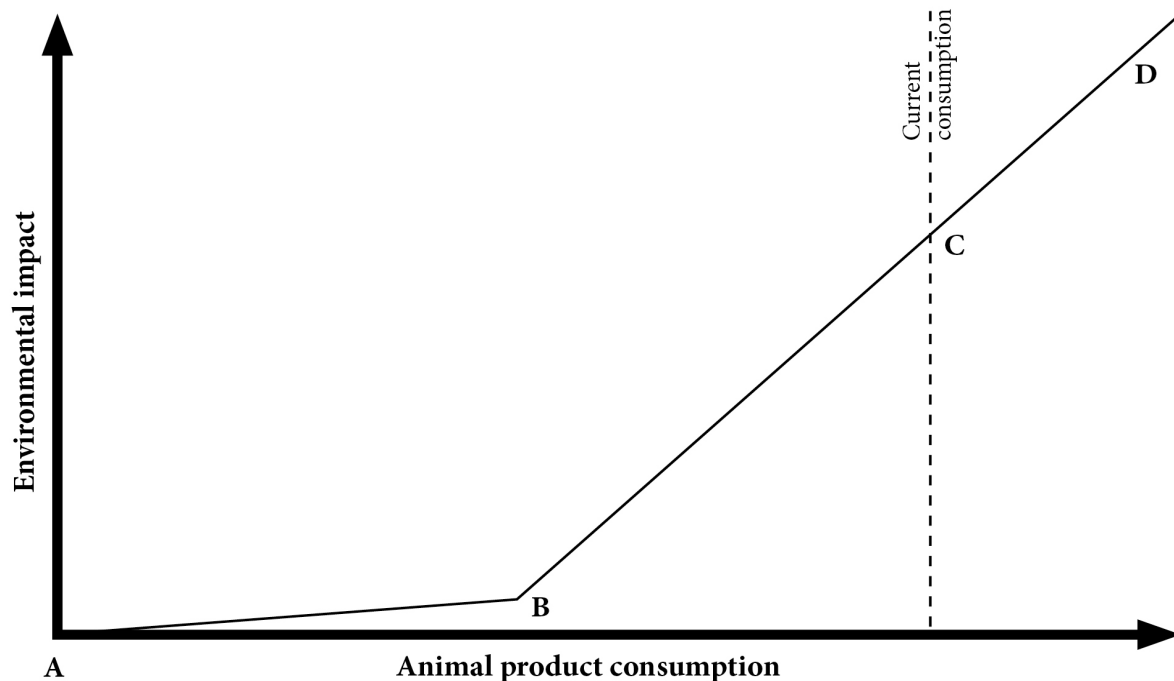


Figure 4.1: Environmental impact as a function animal product consumption

To compute this limit or to find point B, it is necessary to “assess what land and byproducts are available for livestock that are genuinely unsuited to other purposes.” (Garnett 2009, 499) Fairlie and Vaclav Smil have tried to calculate the quantity of meat that could be produced “without any competition with food crops” (Smil 2013, 209). They proceed by adding up all the meat and milk that could be produced each year with the ecological leftover approach and then divide the sum by the planet population, to see what each human being would be allowed to eat. The former estimates it would be possible to produce 18 kg/person/year of meat (and 39 kg/person/year of milk, although this will be ignored for now) (Fairlie 2010, 39) and the latter arrives at about 21 kg/person/year meat (Smil 2013, 209).

Since these numbers do not make much sense without some point of reference, they can be compared to the current consumption. From a North American perspective, these figures imply a massive reduction from 83 to 88% of meat consumption because, according to a report by *Greenpeace*, the average consumption in 2007 was 121 kg/person/year (2012, 25). According to the same data, India could drastically increase its own meat consumption since it was at 3 kg/person/year in 2007. The fact that meat consumption is currently far from being evenly distributed around the world highlights an important point about these calculations. Indeed, the main reason why this reduction appears so high for North America is not because global production would be lower, but because it would be evenly distributed. That, however, should not be used to discredit these calculations because, as was said at the beginning of this section, the ecological leftover approach is in part concerned with refuting Moore Lappé’s argument that was concerned with global hunger.

That being said, these calculations provide a powerful argument in favour of ethical meat as not only does it counter the vegan argument according to which there is no such thing as “green meat,” but it also offers concrete numbers to put in the debate. Yet, from a discursive point of view, referring to Hajer’s theory, the idea of reducing meat consumption, especially in North America, is not the most attractive argument. This is probably one of the main reasons why, despite the fact that these calculations have been made by proponents of meat consumption, they are rarely mentioned in the ethical meat literature.

This outcome suggests that proponents of ethical meat are faced with a dilemma similar to the one about the productivity of the ecological leftover approach. Indeed, authors that use the ecological leftover approach to argue that some meat could be produced with minimal ecological impacts have, in theory, to accept that it implies that meat consumption would need to be drastically reduced. In both cases, there is a flip side to their arguments. These tensions can be further understood when remembering that the ethical meat discourse is trying to navigate between factory farming and veganism. To the former, it must say that small organic farms can be productive and can produce a lot of meat. To the latter, it must argue that meat can be “green” and share the conclusion that people eat too much meat. As will be seen in the conclusion of this chapter, this kind of tension has important implications for the discourse-coalition.

3.2 Mixed Farming

While the ecological leftover approach focuses specifically on what the animals are fed, the mixed farming has a broader focus as it discusses how livestock constitutes an integral part of any sustainable farm. As Fairlie notes, “The role of the animal in the traditional, peasant, default economy is to mop up wastes, residues, surpluses, and marginal and interstitial biomass, and to provide services

such as traction and nutrient movement.” (2010, 37) The logic here is that livestock provide “services” on a farm that, without animals, would have to be substituted by mechanical (e.g. machinery) or chemical alternatives (e.g. fertilizer). Some proponents argue that the presence of animals is essential to the sustainability of a farm. Others are more nuanced and note that “the elimination of farm animals from crop-integrated, and other more sustainable farming systems, is ecologically naive.” (Fox 1997, 152) In other words, this idea remains controversial. It will nevertheless be discussed while presenting the two benefits that animals can provide on a farm: (1) manure production, and (2) nutrient movement.

3.2.1 Manure Production

Obviously, the first livestock service that comes to mind is the production of manure. It has been argued by many proponents of ethical meat, and most importantly by proponents of small-scale organic farming, that manure is essential to produce food without synthetic inputs. Put this way, this implies that small organic farms including animals are the only alternative to the actual industrial agriculture system. As Fairlie writes: “Organic farmers, defending meat production, [...] often cite the necessity for manure to fertilize organic arable production. Without it, they claim, organic farming couldn’t survive, and hence stock rearing is necessary, and meat is integral to the whole system.” (2010, 68) In other words, not only manure “contributes vital nutrients to the soil” (Garnett 2009, 497), it is essential to get out of industrial agriculture in general. This argument is convenient because it implies that organic vegan agriculture³⁰ is not a viable sustainable solution. For some people, this implies that vegan activists are

³⁰ Organic vegan agriculture is understood as agriculture that is both organic and stockfree. Fairlie provides a convenient way to understand this: “Every farming system stands somewhere along two separate axes, one of which runs between chemical farming at one pole and organic at the other, while the second runs between livestock-based and stockfree (or vegan) farming”. (2010, 68)

de facto allies of the industrial system since, for them, the only way to produce food without animals is to use chemical fertilizers.

However, the idea according to which animals are essential on farms is questioned even within the ethical meat discourse. As Garnett writes after talking about the benefits of manure: “This said, substitute materials, such as compost can also have these properties [natural source of nitrogen and other mineral inputs]. Incorporating grass/legume leys into a crop rotation can also increase soil organic carbon.” (2009, 497) Fairlie recognizes that with particular crop rotations, manure is not necessary. However, after analyzing various stockless rotations, he concludes that a mixed farm would be more efficient:

If arable crop and meat production took place on organic mixed farms where the whole rotation operated at less than 1.5:1 conversion rate, then the produce of those farms, added to the meat provided by beef and pork fed entirely on pastureland and crop residues would probably produce at least as much food as could be obtained from universal organic vegan production. (2010, 84)

By recognizing that such an organic vegan production is indeed possible, the argument becomes one of efficiency.

This argument about the importance of manure is interesting in the sense that it perfectly exemplifies how a single idea can be developed into two different arguments. On the one hand, if one argues that animals are essential to sustainable agriculture, that is, that vegan agriculture requires synthetic fertilizer, veganism can be associated with industrial agriculture. On the other hand, if organic vegan agriculture is assumed to be a viable sustainable solution, it is argued that it is less efficient than mixed farming. While the second version of the argument is much less convincing, it can be improved by noting that animals on a farm provide other services.

3.2.2 Nutrient Movement

Beside manure, it is also argued that on a mixed farm, animals bring other important services based on their capacity to move. The most obvious example would be to use the livestock traction power, but this service will be discussed in more details in the next chapter. The service that will be discussed here is the capacity of animals to move nutrients.

To understand this argument, it is important to go back to leftover food. While this may appear trivial, it is essential to remember that for manure to be produced, animals have to eat, so the nutrients contained in their manure comes mostly from the food they ate. It is, thus, necessary to ask to what extent is feeding leftover food to animals to produce manure is logical if the same leftover could have been composted to fertilize the soil directly. In that sense, what is described as “leftover food” is not necessarily a useless resource that can only be fed to livestock. However, this counterargument only makes sense for leftover food that is easily transported. For example, “a sugar beet processing plant yields beside sugar [...] beet pulp and molasses for feed purposes” (Elferink, Nonhebel, and Moll 2008, 1228), but the leftover food produced by such a plant could be relatively easily be transferred to serve as fertilizer for nearby farms. It is not that simple when considering marginal and interstitial biomass since it is by definition far and dispersed and as such it would be fairly expensive to harvest and transport it to fertilize the soil.

According to Fairlie, animals do that for free. As he says, “the advantage of animals in cultures which have no access to fossil fuels or municipal subsidies: they mop up nutrients from distant pastures and sparse hillsides and deposit them on arable land, with relatively little human energy expenditure.” (Fairlie 2010, 79) The underlying assumption here is that “hay from poor pasture or leaf

mould from woodland, or more commonly nowadays, municipal compost” are expensive, from an energetic point of view, to gather and transport (Fairlie 2010, 79). Considering the fact that he proposes a global ecological vision (which will be detailed in the next chapter) in which fossil fuels are a thing of the past, this is a reasonable argument.

In sum, the nutrient movement argument can be understood as one more reason why organic mixed farming is more efficient than the vegan alternative. Considering all that, it is noteworthy that to the extent that these arguments also address factory farming, it remains a secondary target. Indeed, it is taken for granted that it is not a viable system. Out of these two extremes, mixed farming presents itself as the best compromise:

A vegan diet is one without animal products; the industrial meat diet [...] is one that allows for anything that the consumer can afford and the producer can supply. In the muddy spectrum between, there are not many secure footholds, but the default livestock diet can be reasonably clearly defined as one that provides meat, dairy and other animal products which arise as the integral co-product of an agricultural system dedicated to the provision of sustainable vegetable nourishment. (Fairlie 2010, 42)

The important takeaway from this is that with mixed farms, animals are not produced in isolation, they are the “integral co-product” of a larger system. As Fairlie writes, “the extent and nature of the animal foods and services available are determined by the agricultural system as a whole.” (2010, 37) What this implies is that the quantity of meat produced is dictated by the system and as such, this solution also implies a reduction in meat consumption, as was already noted in the previous section about the ecological limits.

3.3 Climate Change

Before presenting the last model of animal agriculture, it is important to discuss the relation between climate change and livestock. Not only is it a transversal

issue, but it is necessary to understand the holistic planned grazing approach. That being said, the most important year for the debate about the relation between livestock and climate change is without a doubt 2006. Before that, the impacts of livestock were already discussed (Garnett 2009, 492), but it is with the publication of the FAO report *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (Steinfeld et al. 2006) that it became an serious element in the debate over meat eating. At that time, the report attracted a lot attention because in its Executive Summary, it stated: "The livestock sector is a major player, responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions measured in CO₂ equivalent. This is a higher share than transport." (Steinfeld et al. 2006, xxi) The controversy over the actual figure got even worse when, in 2009, the World Watch Institute published a paper claiming "that livestock and their byproducts actually account for at least [...] 51 percent of annual worldwide GHG emissions." (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 10) Things got even more confusing when in 2013, the FAO reduced its estimate to 14.5% in another report by the same first two authors as its 2006 one (Gerber et al. 2013, xii).

While these figures vary greatly, from a discursive point of view, it does not matter which report is right. Two things are, however, important. First, these reports, especially the one from 2006, made climate change an argument against meat production, one that could not be ignored. This is testified to, as will be seen throughout this analysis, by the fact that almost all proponents of both industrial and ethical meat try to respond to it. Second, while the discrepancy between the figures is not in itself important, the way the various numbers and/or their disparity is used in the argumentation game can be revealing.

That being said, three arguments are usually used to respond to the FAO conclusions: (1) livestock contribution is not as important as the reports claim, (2)

livestock is an important contributor, but one that can easily be mitigated by changing the way meat is produced, and (3) if livestock is managed properly, it can actually help fight climate change. The last one will be presented in the section about the holistic planned grazing approach since it is mostly used there. As such, only the first two will be presented here.

3.3.1 Questioning the Contribution of Livestock

The first way to reply to the report is to simply say that it is wrong. This strategy has been used by proponents of factory farming, but also by ethical meat authors. More precisely, they do so in two ways: by attacking the messenger or by attacking the message.

Firstly, to attack the FAO reports and its authors, Fairlie starts by noting that there exist various reports proposing various figures, all of them lower than 18%. He argues that the discrepancy “does not necessarily mean that one figure is wrong and the other right.” (Fairlie 2010, 159) He further writes that “The assumptions that different analysts make will (whether they mean to or not) reflect their ideological position.” (Fairlie 2010, 160) He takes this detour to argue that Henning Steinfeld, the lead author of the 2006 FAO report, is biased against small farmers since according to Fairlie, the report recommends to “reduce grazing and move towards factory farming” (Fairlie 2010, 160). In other words, proponents of factory farming and vegans are ganging up against small farmers. McWilliams again provides an example of the attitude adopted by some proponents of the ethical meat. When he referred to a study claiming that grass-fed beef is actually responsible for more GHG emissions than corn-fed beef, he was accused of supporting factory farming (Salatin 2012) even though he is explicitly against all forms of animal exploitation.

Secondly, the figures can be criticized more directly. Since there are many arguments doing so, only two will be presented here. One argument is to say that “before coming to any conclusions about the environmental impact of [livestock], we need to examine the opportunity costs” (Fairlie 2010, 171) What Simon Fairlie means is that it is not sufficient to calculate the emission of meat production, the alternatives must also be considered. Methane can illustrate this argument because it is a potent GHG which is an intrinsic byproduct of the digestive system of ruminants. According to FAO reports, it accounts for about a third of livestock contributions. While recognizing that ruminants indeed contribute to methane emissions, Fairlie argues that if we eliminated all of them, we would need to produce more food whose production would also emit methane, especially rice. He also adds that domesticated animals would probably be replaced by wild animals who emit methane, like deer (2010, 172). He concludes that by considering all those factors, the methane contribution of livestock becomes relatively lower. While this argument also applies to the defence of factory farming, the next one is particularly relevant for ethical meat.

Another argument is to point out that the various reports include in their calculations factors that are not inherent to meat production. The most obvious is the contribution of deforestation which, according to FAO reports, also counts for about a third of total livestock emissions. To give a general idea, *Friends of the Earth* notes that in Brazil’s Amazon region, more than 60% of the deforested land is used as pasture for cattle (2014, 36). However, it could be argued that that deforestation is a conjunctural issue and even if livestock is an important driver, that issue is not inherent to meat production, which is exactly what Hahn Niman says when pointing out that deforestation has nothing to do with beef “mostly kept on grass” in the United States (2014, 12). More generally, however, this argument is particularly important from the point of view of the ecological

leftover approach since it would necessarily be opposed to the production of “new” pastures. It is, however, noteworthy that the opposite of this argument is rarely discussed, that is, letting pasture be reforested could serve as a carbon sink. Two elements are worth emphasizing. First, while the second argument is mostly relevant for ethical meat, for the most part, there is an overlap in the way livestock GHG emissions are defended by proponents of factory farming and ethical meat. While this is certainly not intentional, especially for the ethical meat side, it remains that the overall impression is that meat, in general, is not as bad for the climate as some claim. Second, the way veganism is associated with factory farming through McWilliams’ criticism of grass-fed beef is again used to present ethical meat as the only sustainable solution.

3.3.2 Mitigating the Contribution of Livestock

Whether people agree that the GHG emissions of livestock are considerable or not, whatever their level, most proponents of meat agree that there are obvious ways to reduce them. Indeed, to defend meat production, various ideas about how to mitigate these emissions are proposed. Two will be presented here: a minor argument and a major one.

The minor argument is that meat production can be made more efficient, that is, it can use fewer resources and cause less pollution to produce the same quantity of meat. The concept of “feed efficiency” is often used here. Garnett provides an example: “Many studies conclude that diets rich in concentrates (cereals and oilseeds) are not only more digestible for dairy cows but also increase their milk output. This means that CH₄ per unit of output will decline.” (2009, 498) This argument is considered minor because it is not used that often in the ethical meat literature for two reasons. First, as Garnett’s example implies, most of these increases in efficiency are only relevant in the context of the industrial

production of meat. Second, as the UNEP notes in a report, “a very narrow focus on high feed efficiency might compromise animal welfare, animal health or human health” (Westhoek et al. 2016, 118). In other words, it would go against the idea that ethical meat is supposed to be beneficial for farmed animals and for human health.

The major argument notes that livestock has a great climate change mitigation potential. As a report by *Greenpeace* points out: “significant GHG emission savings can be made by minimizing reliance on feed grains (thus minimizing land use change due to expansion of croplands to grow animal feed) and optimising use of pasturelands, including managing soils for improved carbon storage.” (2012, 24) Two propositions can be identified in this citation. The first one can easily be understood with the ecological leftover approach. The second one means that by managing ruminants on pastures differently, the soil can sequester carbon. Put differently, it can act as a carbon sink. The logic is that with their grazing and manure production, ruminants help restore organic matter in the soil that, in turn, adds to its carbon content. In the literature, while there is no doubt that some sequestration is possible, there are intense debates about the level of carbon that can actually be absorbed.

Two issues are usually mentioned in this debate: (1) the mitigation potential of carbon sequestration in soil and vegetable is often overestimated (Powlson, Whitmore, and Goulding 2011, 52), and (2) even if a management method “maximises livestock’s carbon [sequestration]”, the trade-off is “higher methane emissions per unit of milk or meat produced” (Garnett 2009, 500). The last point by Garnett is based on the idea that grass-fed beef emits more methane than the factory-farmed equivalent because they live longer and eat grass, which leads to more methane. This proposition is debated in the ethical meat literature, as was

seen above in the anecdote about McWilliams being accused of supporting factory farming for using the same argument. Again, whether the carbon sequestration potential can offset the methane emissions or not is not really important here. What is important is that this argument appears to put reasonable doubt into the debate about beef's climate change contribution.

In sum, while grazing animals can indeed sequester carbon, the actual potential is still debated. The uncertainty is, as was just said, not important because this argument still manages to cast doubt on the climate arguments in favour of veganism. Most importantly, it contributes to countering the demonization of cow husbandry which, since 2006, is often presented as the biggest individual contributor to climate change. As such, it is a very attractive argument since it breaks the link between meat and climate change. There is, however, a version of this argument for which the actual level of carbon sequestration is important. It is based on the fact that there is a difference between saying that well-managed pastures can reduce the climate footprint of ruminants and claiming that the sequestration potential is actually higher than the emissions of ruminants—in other words, arguing that grazing cows can help fight climate change. This is exactly the argument proposed by proponents of holistic planned grazing.

3.4 The Holistic Planned Grazing Approach

The holistic planned grazing approach is less common in the literature, but as will be seen, it is nevertheless very important. It was developed by a series of authors, but its most popular figure is without a doubt Allan Savory. The Zimbabwean wildlife biologist farmer has been active since the 1950s, but his first publication was in the *Rangelands* journal in 1980 (Savory and Parsons 1980). In 2009, he founded the *Savory Institute* to promote his theory (Schwartz 2013, 61). It is, however, only with a TED talk from 2013 that his ideas became widely known. In

this talk, he argues that with his holistic planned grazing method, livestock can “fight desertification and reverse climate change” (Savory 2013). While these two propositions are related, they can most easily be understood separately. Details of the method will be presented along with the two propositions.

Savory’s first argument disputes “the ideas that livestock grazing is responsible for much of the globe’s denuded landscapes and desertification, and that the problem boils down to far too many animals eating too much vegetation and doing too much trampling.” (Niman 2014, 101) He goes against this conventional knowledge by arguing that “most of the world’s grazing lands are not being overgrazed, they are being improperly grazed and ‘over-rested.’” (Niman 2014, 82) According to him, the proper way to graze “is to re-create, to the extent possible, the conditions under which grasslands evolved.” (Niman 2014, 39) Hahn Niman sums up the method:

Stated succinctly, Savory advocates that animals be kept in dense herds and moved often; that grazing stimulates biological activity in the soil; that animal waste adds fertility; that hooves break the soil surface, press in seeds, and push down dead plant matter so it can be acted upon by soil microorganisms; that all of this generates soil carbon, plant carbon, and water retention; and that this is the only way to stop and to reverse desertification the world over. (2014, 39)

The key to this method is that for it to be effective, “significant numbers of animals are absolutely essential” (Niman 2014, 40). In other words, cattle are necessary to preserve the health of grasslands, they can reverse desertification and, most importantly for the argument, to achieve that, more cattle are necessary.

The same logic is at the basis of his proposition about climate change. As was said in Hahn Niman’s description, grazing can also store carbon. As was seen in the section on climate change, this idea is not controversial. However, Savory goes

further: “Cattle are not, in fact, a climate change problem at all; instead, cattle are actually among the most practical, cost-effective solutions to the warming of the planet.” (Niman 2014, 34) The claim here is that cattle grazing constitutes a carbon sink and not a source. Put differently, properly managed pastures can help fight climate change. According to a paper first published by the *Savory Institute* and later published as a book chapter, holistic planned grazing

has the potential to remove excess atmospheric carbon resulting from anthropogenic soil loss over the past 10,000 years as well as all industrial-era greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions. This sequestration potential, when applied to up to five billion hectares of degraded range and agricultural soils (former wild grasslands), could, in theory, return 10 or more gigatons of excess atmospheric carbon to the terrestrial sink annually and lower GHG concentrations to preindustrial levels in decades. (Sacks et al. 2014, 156)

In sum, raising much more cattle could save the world! While this might sound like a caricature, it is actually the name of a book by Judith D. Schwartz about this method: *Cows Save the Planet: And Other Improbable Ways of Restoring Soil to Heal the Earth* (2013). This is a bold claim and it is controversial even within the ethical meat literature. Many authors do not mention it and stick to the argument that with carbon sequestration, the climate footprint of cattle can be reduced. Fairlie remains sceptical by noting that while he finds “Savory’s theories inspiring”, the way some authors present them “sound too good to be true” (2010, 194). Indeed, it is a convenient conclusion since, as McWilliams puts it in his critique of Savory’s thesis, “the environment could be saved if humans simply sharpened their knives and ate more beef.” (2015, 167) Using Hajer’s framework, this is without a doubt an argument that could be qualified as attractive.

Here again, it is not that important to determine who is right. What is relevant is the way Savory’s ideas are received and presented. As was just said, it is controversial even within the ethical meat literature. More important, however, is the fact that Savory’s proposition has been relayed broadly in the media, but not

always with the caveats that his ideas are highly controversial and that according to what he says himself, they are not easy to put in place. The result is a further shift in the debate about the impact of livestock on climate change. In the previous section, it was mentioned that it was put in doubt that livestock was damaging for the climate, but here, it is argued that they can save it. In other words, the middle-ground position becomes that livestock has a neutral impact on the climate. Moreover, it is important to note that while Savory is mostly quoted by proponents of ethical meat, there is nothing in his ideas that only make sense in the context of a small farm. On the contrary, what he describes could be easily understood as some form of industrial grazing where the animals are strictly monitored and moved according to a rigid schedule.

3.5 Conclusion

Following this presentation of the environmental arguments, three conclusions can be advanced that highlight internal tensions within the ethical meat discourse that are mostly due to its attempt to navigate between factory farming and veganism.

First, some authors have the reflex of defending their environmental propositions by associating veganism and factory/industrial farming. This is usually done in two ways. On the one hand, following a Manichean logic, some argue that all environmental arguments against ethical meat or small farms are arguments in favour of factory farming. On the other hand, if one assumes that a vegan organic agriculture is impossible, veganism becomes only possible with industrial farming. While it is noteworthy to see a more aggressive stance than the one observed with ethical arguments, it remains that this does not reveal much about the implications of the environmental arguments.

Second, a much more apparent tension appears when the question of efficiency is discussed. Indeed, it appears that some proponents of ethical meat try to have it both ways, in the logic of a win-win scenario, by arguing at the same time that there is no competition between human animal and nonhuman animal food since ethical meat can be produced using leftover food, and that ethical meat can be produced very efficiently. As was said above, these two ideas are not necessarily compatible. The argument is even more problematic when one sees that proponents of ethical meat are not always voluble about the reduction of meat production that their propositions imply. This silence is most certainly strategic as it presents an alternative without compromise, but it ends up giving the impression that reduced efficiency of small farms and the limits of leftover food are nonexistent. Again, it gives the impression that they want it both ways.

Thirdly, the discussion about the impact of livestock on climate change highlights an ambivalent relation between ethical meat and factory farms. Indeed, most of the arguments proposed can be applied to meat production in general and it is even proposed that grass-fed beef emits more GHG than grain-fed beef. The result is that even if proponents of ethical meat are against factory farming, their climate arguments also defend the climate balance sheet of factory farming. This ambiguous relation is further highlighted by the uncritical acceptance of Savory's ideas which are not explicitly associated with small farms. From a discursive perspective, the impact of these climate arguments is to cast doubt on the idea according to which meat production is negative for the climate. Again, this supports factory farming as much as ethical meat.

4. Human Health

From a human health perspective, meat has had some very negative press recently. From the *World Health Organization's* conclusions that red and

processed meat could be carcinogenic (Bouvard et al. 2015) to the *American Journal of Epidemiology* concluding that its “results indicate that high consumption of red meat, especially processed meat, may increase all-cause mortality,” (Larsson and Orsini 2014, 282) and the *British Medical Journal* that observed an “increased risks of all cause mortality and death due to nine different causes associated with both processed and unprocessed red meat,” (Etemadi et al. 2017, 1) the benefits of meat consumption are being called into question. There are, however, two entirely distinct arguments here that are often conflated: that is, the health consequences of meat consumption itself and the negative impact of high consumption of meat. In the literature, there are not many people contradicting the second one. Indeed, most authors³¹ recognize that people in developed countries eat too much meat and it is becoming a considerable public health issue. That is why some people note that a reduction in meat consumption would be equally good for the health of human beings and the planet (Potter 2017).

Hence, it is mostly the health impact of meat itself that is debated. Before addressing that dispute, it is necessary to mention that few authors argue that meat is essential to human health. One of the most influential books making this claim is Keith’s *The Vegetarian Myth*. In this essay, she concludes from her personal experience that “A vegetarian diet—especially a low-fat version, and most especially a vegan one—is not sufficient nutrition for long-term maintenance and repair of the human body. To put it bluntly, it will damage you.” (Keith 2009, 9) This kind of argument will not be discussed in this section since there appears to be an overwhelming scientific consensus³² concluding to the

31 There are some exceptions like the *Weston A. Price Foundation* and the paleo diet that recommended as much or more meat consumption.

32 The *American Dietetic Association* and the *Dietitians of Canada* concluded: “Well-planned vegan and other types of vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including during pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence.” (American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada 2003, 748)

contrary, but most importantly, because not many ethical meat authors actually endorse this idea³³. Therefore, only two types of arguments are worth exploring: (1) arguing that factory farming meat is responsible for the health issues associated with meat and, (2) casting doubt on health and nutrition research more generally.

4.1 Blaming Factory Farming

What is probably the most common health argument in favour of ethical meat is to argue that most of the health issues associated with meat consumption are caused by the kind of meat produced by factory farms. In other words, meat in itself is not bad, but the way it is produced at the industrial level makes it unhealthy. That is to say, ethical meat does not have most of the problems presented in the medical literature. The argument focuses on three points: (1) it does not have health issues related to factory farming (2) it contains more healthy nutrients, and (3) it has a better fat profile.

First, the most common type of argument is related to specific health issues that came about with the industrialization of animal agriculture. One of those is the continual feeding of antibiotics to animals. As Hahn Niman puts it, the animal industry does “this both to stimulate growth and to stave off diseases.” (2014, 212) She adds that “In recent decades, evidence has piled up about the dangers of antibiotics overuse with livestock.” (Niman 2014, 212) In the same vein, Pollan writes that “Most of the antibiotics sold in America today end up in animal feed, a practice that, it is now generally acknowledged (except in agriculture), is leading directly to the evolution of new antibiotic-resistant superbugs.” (2006, 78) A similar argument is made about the use of growth hormone by the industry which “creates health and welfare concerns for cattle and leads to food that may

33 One noteworthy exception is Joel Salatin which will be discussed next chapter.

be unsafe for humans.” (Niman 2014, 214) Hanh Niman notes that the “European Union banned such hormones in 1989” over these concerns (2009, 148). It is important to note about these arguments that they are also used by vegan activists. So here as well, we have arguments against factory farming that can both be used in favour of veganism and ethical meat. The two other types of argument, are, however, specific to the latter.

Second, about grass-fed meat, Pollan writes that a

growing body of scientific research indicates that pasture substantially changes the nutritional profile of chicken and eggs, as well as of beef and milk. The question we asked about organic food—is it any better than the conventional kind?—turns out to be much easier to answer in the case of grass-farmed food (2006, 266)

Based on that idea, most ethical meat proponents talk at one point or another about how “better” meat is more nutritious. A few examples can be provided. Kingsolver writes that “Good-quality animal fats contain vitamins A, D, B6, and B12, and some essential minerals.” (2007, 98) Pollan notes that “meat, eggs, and milk from pastured animals also contain higher levels of omega-3’s” (2006, 287). Hahn Niman refers to the idea that “forage-based diet [is] healthier for cattle and results in higher levels of both vitamin E and beta-carotene in foods.” (2014, 197) More could be provided, but the general idea that ethical meat contains more healthy nutrients than the factory farmed variant should be clear.

Third, they also argue that ethical meat contains less unhealthy fat. Pollan writes that “Research in this area promises to turn a lot of conventional nutritional thinking on its head.” (2006, 268) More concretely, this implies for example “that the problem with eating red meat—long associated with cardiovascular disease—may owe less to the animal in question than to that animal’s diet.” (Pollan 2006, 268) In other words, the problem is factory farming. More precisely, regarding the fat content of grass-fed beef, he says:

That flesh will also have considerably less fat in it than the flesh of animals fed exclusively on grain [...]. But all fats are not created equal—polyunsaturated fats are better for us than saturated ones, and certain unsaturated fats are better than others. As it turns out, the fats created in the flesh of grass eaters are the best kind for us to eat. (Pollan 2006, 266–67)

In an almost caricatural way, Kingsolver writes that “Free-range meat and eggs have a healthy rather than unhealthy cholesterol content, because of what the animal ate during its happy little life.” (2007, 98) Put differently, it is factory farming practices that have transformed meat into unhealthy food.

It remains that this kind of argument does not answer, nor does it pretend to, the question of whether meat is ultimately healthy or not. Not only is it a foolish question as nutrition is a complex science, but it is also not important from a discursive perspective. Indeed, what is relevant here is the impact this kind of argument has. Just as in the case of some of the environmental arguments that were discussed above, it appears that the main consequence of these arguments is to cast doubt on the idea that meat might be unhealthy. It does so by blaming factory farmed meat and claiming that ethical meat is better. When discussed in the context of the questionable conditions in factory farms, this is an intuitively convincing argument. This is precisely what this argument relies on since the focus is not entirely on the medical/nutrition research but on the idea that “natural” meat is necessarily better. The next argument, however, focuses more on the scientific debate.

4.2 A Confusing Scientific Debate

Parallel to the arguments focusing specifically on ethical meat, there is a much larger debate about the science criticizing meat. While this thesis is not the place to discuss these debates, they are relevant for one specific reason, that is, the way the science is presented in traditional media. To illustrate this dynamic, the example of the “Butter is back” debate will be presented.

As the *Harvard Public Health Magazine* writes, despite nuanced research results, “during the 1980s and 1990s conventional wisdom and national guidelines in the U.S. shifted the spotlight to reducing total fat—period—despite little or no evidence that this simplistic advice would prevent disease.” (Moran 2014, 17) During what they call “one big, happy, fat-free feeding frenzy”, butter as well as other animal products was demonized for causing heart diseases. To reflect this, the cover of a 1984 *Time* issue feature two fried eggs and a piece of bacon representing an unhappy face with the caption “Cholesterol³⁴: And Now the Bad News...”. The cover story was titled: “Hold the Egg and Butter: Cholesterol is Proved Deadly, and Our Diet May Never Be the Same” (Wallis et al. 1984).

Considering this, to see the *Time*, almost 30 years later, write on the cover of one of its 2014 magazine, “Eat Butter: Scientists labeled fat the enemy. Why they were wrong” is a major reversal. What happened? The triggering point appears to be the publication of two studies, one in 2010 (Siri-Tarino et al. 2010) and one in 2014 (Chowdhury et al. 2014), that seemed to cast doubt on the relation between saturated fats and heart disease. As the cover story puts it: “Ending the War on Fat: For decades, it has been the most vilified nutrient in the American diet. But new science reveals that fat isn’t what’s hurting our health.” (Walsh 2014) While the article brings about a more nuanced message, it remains that the title sets the tone: all along, the science was wrong. As well known nutritional scientist Nestle replies: “any time you read that science got it wrong, be skeptical. Maybe they did, but it’s more likely that the science is still incomplete.” (2016)

³⁴ Here, since the details of the debate are not important, the nuance in the relation between animal fat and cholesterol will be ignored. It will just be assumed that the latter usually comes with the former.

Following this, a few similar scientific studies were published (Pimpin et al. 2016), but most importantly, many scientific institutions reacted to point out that the science is much more complicated than claimed in the media. The *Center for Science in the Public Interest* replied that one such study was misleading (Liebman 2016), *Harvard School of Public Health* wrote “Butter is Not Back”, and a new study replying to the previous ones concluded that “These findings support current dietary recommendations to replace saturated fat and trans-fat with unsaturated fats.” (Wang et al. 2016, 1134) The point here is not to argue that one side is wrong, but to show at the minimum that it is much more complicated than what the *Time* said. And this is precisely the point: that most of the responses to this “Butter is back” wave blamed the way the media relayed the science. There is even one author of the 2014 article who was presented as vindicating animal fat, Emanuele Di Angelantonio, who was surprised and said: “It was reported as ‘butter and burgers,’ and that’s not what our paper said.” (Moran 2014, 20)

However, since the ethical meat discourse is of interest here, it is necessary to see how they deal with this debate. From the ethical meat perspective, Mark Bittman is a perfect example of the way this debate is considered. In response to the 2014 study, he wrote in *The New York Times* an opinion piece title “Butter is Back”:

the tip of this iceberg has been visible for years, and we’re finally beginning to see the base. Of course, no study is perfect and few are definitive. But the real villains in our diet—sugar and ultra-processed foods—are becoming increasingly apparent. You can go back to eating butter, if you haven’t already. (Bittman 2014)

He then goes on to criticize the industrialization of food, including factory farms, to finally conclude: “eat less meat but eat better meat.” Taken as a whole, this appears to be a coherent message, but if one considers the relative positions of the title and of this last recommendation, it is reasonable to wonder what the reader will remember.

Some authors are less nuanced. In her *Defending Beef*, Hahn Niman dedicates numerous pages to review the scientific literature, including papers such as the 2010 one that was mentioned above, to conclude: “The saturated fat idea was not necessarily ever the theory with the most science behind it. But for various reasons [...], it was the idea that won the day, eclipsing other competing theories.” (2014, 143) While she criticizes factory farming in other parts of her book, in the context of the saturated fat discussion, she does not.

The point is that the ethical meat discourse appears to have a conflicting relation with this whole saturated fat debate. On the one hand, it clearly has an interest in demonstrating that meat is not unhealthy, but by doing so, it firmly positions itself as an ally of factory farming. For them, the way to avoid that is to focus on the first argument about the comparison between ethical meat and factory farmed meat, but as the example of Bittman demonstrates, relaying a nuanced message is often difficult.

4.3 Conclusion

In this short section about health arguments, it was shown that here as well, the ethical meat discourse tries to find its way between veganism and factory farming. With the first argument, they recognize that meat can be unhealthy, especially if it is factory farmed, while with the second one, they side with factory farming to argue that it is simply not true that meat is unhealthy. While this is not necessarily a contradiction, it shows some ambivalence in the way to defend ethical meat. In other words, despite their effort to differentiate themselves from factory farming, the nuance of the first argument is often lost in the whole debate about the healthiness of meat and of saturated fat. One of the reasons is probably that, as was seen, considering how traditional media are eager to relay scientific evidence that present meat in a good light, even for proponents of ethical meat, it

is tempting to jump into the bandwagon in the hope that their discourse will benefit from this exposure.

5. The Ethical Meat Story-line

Following this presentation of the various arguments in favour of ethical meat, one idea should be clear: proponents of this discourse repeatedly try to present their view as a middle ground between two other positions that are constructed as unappealing. This is done in various ways.

In the ethical meat arguments, it was concluded that with ethical meat, people can simultaneously care about animals and eat them. Not only that, but eating them, with the seat at the table argument, does more to improve their conditions than veganism. In other words, what was initially constructed as a compromise between factory farming and veganism appears in the end to be a win-win scenario where not much compromise is really done. The only constraint for the consumer is to get meat from animals that were treated properly, and it is repeatedly implied that on a small farm such conditions are fulfilled.

While the various environmental arguments are more complex, a similar logic can be found. Indeed, on the one hand, environmental arguments in favour of meat are presented, but on the other hand, the conclusion that they imply a drastic reduction of its consumption does not always follow. Again the argumentation is centred on the idea that the small farm is sustainable. There is, however, an uneasiness when they are accused by factory farms of not being efficient enough to fulfill the demand for meat. When faced with this reply, the proponents of ethical meat are torn between arguing that they can be as efficient and recognizing that while this is true, it is irrelevant since their proposition also implies a reduction in consumption.

Regarding the health arguments, they simultaneously focus on the fact that the problem is factory farming and that meat, in general, is not unhealthy. The first argument focuses on the idea that it is the industrial methods that made meat unhealthy, implying that traditional small farms do not have these problems. The second criticizes the science behind the suggestion that meat is unhealthy which, while being an important argument for ethical meat, can end up promoting factory farming.

From this, beyond the discursive strategy of presenting itself as a third way to get out of the dilemma between veganism and factory farming, two important characteristics of the ethical meat discourse can be identified. First, the way it often tries to “have it both ways” and to present a “win-win scenario” make it difficult to identify its position as it is often vague and appears to simultaneously hold multiple positions that are not always coherent. This underlines the pertinence of using Hajer’s concept of storyline as it is not about having coherent arguments, but about having an attractive storyline. In other words, criticizing its lack of coherence or its vagueness misses the point as it assumes the ethical meat discourse tries to present a coherent argumentation. When one considers the storyline as a political device “that allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the achievement of discursive closure” (Hajer 1995, 62), it makes more sense. In other words, when the ethical meat discourse is understood as a political discourse whose aim is to serve as the glue to form a coalition, an entirely different field of analysis becomes visible.

Second, at the centre of most of the arguments is some form of idealization of the small farm. As was probably noted by the reader, in this analysis, no attempts were made to define this idea. There are two reasons for this. First, only one

definition was found in the ethical meat literature and it was explicitly presented as an idealization (Cuneo 2016). Second, the power of the idea of small farm is precisely that while it is difficult to define, everybody has a clear image of what it is and it is a very attractive one. Not only does it serve as a stark contrast with factory farming, but it also mobilizes common sense ideas about how small farmers love their animals, are in equilibrium with nature, and produce ‘natural’ food. In other words, it addresses all three categories of arguments. It is, thus, around this idea that it seems the most promising to define the ethical meat storyline.

Given these two ideas, a storyline can be proposed: *While it is true that factory farming ethical, environmental and health problems, these should not be conflated, as veganism does, with the idea that meat should not be consumed. Indeed, by producing meat on small farms, it is possible to avoid the excesses of factory farming while continuing to eat meat.* In other words, the idea of the small farm is presented as the solution to avoid both veganism and factory farming. As was said above, this storyline is voluntarily vague as its objective is to be as attractive as possible. In the next chapter, following the logic of the concept of discourse-coalition, the way completely different discourses can be constructed from that simple storyline will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Ethical Meat Discourse-Coalition

In the last chapter, it was suggested that a certain appearance of coherence could be given to the various arguments in favour of ethical meat since they all share some reference to the metaphor of the small farm. Despite this shared storyline, when a closer look is taken, not only do some of the arguments appear incompatible, but some could be in contradiction. Considering that, it would be difficult to use this discourse in any analysis as the conclusions would change depending on which arguments are included. To go further, a way to organize the arguments and give a sense of order to the overall discourse is needed.

This is exactly where the concept of discourse-coalition can be useful. One of the first consequences of this concept is the idea that, despite its use in previous chapters, there is no single, uniform, ethical meat discourse. There is, however, an ethical meat discourse-coalition that is based on an ethical meat storyline. For simplicity, the expression “ethical meat discourse” will still be used, but it is important to keep in mind that it refers to the discourse-coalition. This distinction is important, because this chapter proposes to define some actual discourses, in the traditional sense, as ensembles of ideas giving meaning to reality, that can be identified as part of the discourse-coalition. Each of these discourses will be understood as striving for coherence and consistency in its elaboration of a much more precise take on the idea of ethical meat.

More precisely, a typology of discourses will be presented. This classification provides two benefits. First, from a theoretical point of view, it will help make sense of the ethical meat literature by providing discourses that are much more coherent and specific than what can be proposed when everything is considered

simultaneously. From what has been read in the ethical meat and animal rights literatures, such an organization of the ethical meat discourse has never been done. Second, from a methodological point of view, it will provide the necessary framework that will be used to analyze the political effect of the discourse-coalition. In other words, the findings of this chapter will be used in the next to analyze the process of passive revolution.

To proceed, this chapter will be divided into six sections. First, the basis of the typology, the reasoning behind the choice of discourses, and the way to classify them will be presented. Second, sections two through five will define four discourses, respectively, the humane meat discourse, the urban homesteading discourse, the agrarian populist discourse and the permaculture livestock economy discourse. Finally, the interactions between the various discourses will be analyzed to identify shared ideas and lines of tension within the discourse-coalition.

1. Typology of the Ethical Meat Discourse-coalition

To understand the logic of the typology, it is necessary to take a step back. Since the four discourses are part of the coalition, they share the premise of the ethical meat storyline, that is, that while factory farming is unacceptable, ceasing to eat meat—veganism—is not the only alternative since it is possible to produce ethical meat on small farms. As such, it could be said that each discourse proposes an alternative to industrial meat that is not veganism. The alternatives they propose will serve as one of their main differentiating characteristics. In other words, the element that will be used to classify the discourses within the typology is the logic behind their proposed solution to depart from industrial meat.

That being said, to offer a relevant classification, specific characteristics of their solutions have to be identified. This typology will use two that will permit the organization of the discourses along two axes: the prosaic-imaginative (vertical) axis and the individualist-systemic (horizontal) axis. The prosaic-imaginative axis is based on John S. Dryzek's typology of environmental discourses (2005, 14). It has been adapted to indicate to what degree the departure from industrial meat is different from current dominant practices of meat production. A prosaic departure takes these practices as given and tries to adapt them to conform to ethical meat. An imaginative departure proposes an entirely different organization of the way meat is produced.

The individualist-systemic axis is inspired by Johnston and Baumann's classification of discourses about food politics (2015, 119). It indicates to what extent the departure from industrial meat is done by focusing on changes by individual actors or by systemic changes. The expression "individual actors" is used because it refers both to the consumption practises of individuals or families as well as to the production practises of individual farms. By systemic, it is meant that a systemic change is required to the way meat is produced. Here, systemic can refer both to change in the meat industry and in society as a whole.

Using these two axes, four discourses can be identified, corresponding to the four possible combinations: the humane meat discourse (individualist-prosaic), the urban homesteading discourse (individualist-imaginative), the agrarian populist discourse (systemic-prosaic) and the permaculture livestock economy discourse (systemic-imaginative). The resulting typology is illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Classification of discourses

	INDIVIDUALIST	SYSTEMIC
PROSAIC	Humane meat discourse	Agrarian populist discourse
IMAGINATIVE	Urban homesteading discourse	Permaculture livestock economy discourse

Before proceeding to the definition of each discourse, two important questions arise: (1) how were they chosen? and (2) is the typology exhaustive? The first question has a fairly straightforward answer. Indeed, for each of the four cells of the table, these discourses were chosen since they had the most important presence in the literature. Considering that, the second question becomes very important. Indeed, does this process of selection produce an exhaustive typology, in the sense of having the potential of classifying all ethical meat authors?

The simple answer is no, but it can be argued that it is “exhaustive enough”. Two elements have to be detailed to justify this answer.. First, some discourses were excluded because they do not fit in the logic of the discourse-coalition. The most obvious examples would be the idea to produce artificial meat (Bonny et al. 2015) or to genetically modify farm animals “with the aim of reducing agricultural pollution.” (Ormandy, Dale, and Griffin 2011, 546) Even if they both propose alternatives to factory farming that could reduce animal suffering, in both cases, what they propose is some kind of further industrialization of meat production. As such, they are not coherent with the metaphor of the small farm.

The second is more complex since it involves texts or authors that would straddle two discourses or could be placed in more than one. This overlap is not surprising when remembering that if each discourse is defined by its solutions, it is possible for an author to propose multiple solutions. It is difficult to provide detailed

examples before the discourses have been defined, but a general one can be proposed. Leigh wrote in *The Ethical Meat Handbook*:

I believe that, right now, the best way to access good food and good meat is by raising it ourselves, or by buying it directly from a fellow community member who has done so. And for those of us not able or willing to produce our own animals for meat, I assert that exceptional, good meat, right now, for all who endeavour to support it, will require us to pay more money, stimulating a ‘middle market.’ (2015, 6)

In this short quote, the author proposes ideas that could fit in three different discourses: “raising it ourselves” could be understood by urban homesteading, “buying it directly from a fellow community member” hints an agrarian populist logic and “pay more money, stimulating a middle market” refers to the political consumerism of humane meat.

This is not a problem for the proposed typology in the sense that its purpose is precisely to provide a framework to analyze what actors say about ethical meat and not to rigidly put them in boxes. Moreover, the fact that authors and texts straddle more than one discourse is precisely what makes the concept of discourse-coalition relevant. If they were all hermetically sealed, they would probably not even have a storyline in common. What this implies is that the typology could have included more categories to classify discourses that propose various combinations of arguments, but this would not necessarily provide more analytical power. A typology must strike a balance between precision and concision to be useful and it is argued here that this typology does that. Indeed, while some authors might be difficult to classify, the most common ethical meat ideas can all be understood using one or more discourse.

That being said, the four discourses will be analyzed in the next four sections. Each will proceed with more or less the same logic: (1) the ideological foundation (its origin, its influence...) of the discourse will be presented, (2) the content of the

discourse will be described through its main authors, (3) its main arguments will be detailed using the list that was developed in the previous chapter and (4) a short conclusion about a relevant aspect of the discourse will be proposed.

2. Humane Meat

The humane meat discourse has to be defined by its belief that while the current animal agriculture industry³⁵ is responsible for the disaster of factory farming, it can be reformed. More precisely, the industry can change its practices to fix the animal ethics, environmental and human health problems associated with its worst facets. To do so, it has to move towards the ideal set by the ethical meat discourse.

Before detailing the humane meat discourse, it is important to note that it is not the only one proposing to reform the animal industry. Indeed, the first were probably welfarist groups. Historically, they focused on activism to pressure government and on lobbying to reform animal agriculture practises. For example, James M. Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin note that their “activities had legislative results,” like “the federal *Humane Slaughter Act* of 1958.” (1992, 61) A considerable part of their focus used to be on the adoption of legislative reforms to increase animal welfare and on the prohibition of the most cruel practices. In other words, they focus on what Francione pejoratively calls “welfarist single-issue campaigns.” (2010, 75)

More recently, the focus switched from the public sphere to the private one. Indeed, while governmental lobbying is still an important part of the strategy of welfarist organizations, they now also actively promote labelling schemes (Stolle

³⁵ While, at this point, it appears necessary to define what the animal agriculture industry is, this discussion will be postponed to the next chapter since it is better understood within the concept of passive revolution. For now, it can just be assumed that it refers to the industrialized part of animal agriculture, that is, mostly factory farming.

and Micheletti 2013, 161). There are also new organizations that focus only on such schemes. More details will be given about what that entails, but for now, it can be understood as voluntary food labels that aim to encourage consumers to buy “better” products in the hope that the sum of their individual decisions will pressure the industry to reform itself. This change of strategy has two implications. First, as was just said, it implies a focus on individuals instead of the state. This switch will be explored in more details in the next section. More importantly for now, the second implication is that labelling schemes focus more on a vision of what the animal agriculture should look like and less on particular practices in the industry.

This last point is essential to understand the difference between the humane meat discourse and welfarism. Indeed, while both hope to reform animal agriculture and share some objectives (like ending cruel practices), only the former is considered part of the ethical meat discourse-coalition since it focuses on a vision of the ethical farm. Note that the expression “small farm,” from the storyline, was not used here because this discourse's relation to the size of farms is quite singular. In sum, the humane meat discourse represents the part of the ethical meat discourse-coalition that focuses on labelling schemes.

Considering that understanding, it should be easy to see why this discourse is classified as prosaic-individualist. It is prosaic because while it does propose to transform the animal agriculture industry, it does so for the most part with a reformist perspective in which potential changes are limited by current practices. It is individualist in the sense that it focuses on changing the consumption habits of consumers in the hope that this will then change the practices of individual meat producers. To understand this and, more generally, the logic of labelling

schemes, it is necessary first have a look at the ideological foundation of such strategy, that is, political consumerism.

2.1 Political Consumerism

According to Dietlind Stolle and Michele Micheletti, “since the 1990s, political scientists have called attention to an alleged decline in political participation and citizen involvement.” (2013, 33) According to many scholars, this decline of what is understood as “conventional forms of political participation” represents “a fundamental threat to the survival of healthy communities and democratic political systems.” (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 33) However, not everyone shares this pessimistic interpretation. Indeed, many “theories discuss how citizens attempt to find ways to take responsibility when faced with government inaction”(Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 34).

To understand this relatively new phenomenon, Stolle and Micheletti propose the concept of individualized responsibility-taking which they define “as reasonable individual choice involving considerations about the societal effects of one’s actions.” (2013, 21) More concretely, it “has a strong normative element: it asks individuals to engage in reasonable choice-making even when they are not required by law to do so, when it goes against common social conventions, and when it can mean suppressing private interests and changing private lifestyle habits.” (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 21–22) As they argue,

in contrast to conventional participative forms, clearly defined as targeting government or government-related bodies within nation-states, the individualized practices of responsibility-taking aim beyond the government at a diversity of targets (both public and private) as long as they influence allocations of common societal resources and values and, therefore, have de facto political power. (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 38)

The underlying idea here “is that everyday acts by citizens [...] have the power to potentially restructure society.” (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 35)

One of the most important forms of such participation based on responsibility-taking is political consumerism. Stolle and Micheletti define this concept as “consumers’ use of the market as an arena for politics in order to change institutional or market practises found to be ethically, environmentally, or politically objectionable is a specific form of participation that characterizes individualized responsibility-taking.” (2013, 39) They further identify four forms of political consumerism: (1) boycotts, (2) buycotts, (3) discursive political consumerism, and (4) lifestyle commitments. As will be seen in the next section, to understand the humane meat discourse, it is the buycott form of political consumerism that is the most important. As such, only this one will be presented here.

According to Stolle and Micheletti, buycotts are one of the most “widespread form of individualized responsibility-taking, and began to mushroom in the 1990s along with rising environmental and global social justice awareness.” (2013, 40) The basic idea is to “prefer certain products over others for political, ethical, or environmental reasons.” (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 40) For the two authors, buycotts are restricted to the use of “labelling schemes and shopping guides” which act as “the necessary link between a product and its consumers” (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 40). More specifically, a label “seeks to guarantee that goods are produced under certain conditions, such as least damaging to the environment, without child labour, in a certain local or national context, and with a fair wage to producers.” (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 40)

Stolle and Micheletti appear to be mostly restricting buycotts to labelling schemes but, in theory, buycotts in no way require labels. A label is necessary when it is not possible to rely “on direct consumer perception” to provide “secondhand

information” (Eden 2011, 172). In most cases, it is indeed impossible to observe directly the production conditions of a given product, but with food production, it is more and more possible. The most obvious example remains the food movement that encourages people to buy their food at the farmers’ market or directly at the farm.

It is also important to note that not all labels require some form of certification. For example, in the United States, many “labels do not involve any certification, especially where the ecolabel is a generic product claim, such as ‘GM-free,’ ‘free-range’ and ‘not tested on animals.’” (Eden 2011, 172) The key difference is that the certification process offers some form of guarantee to consumers. As Sally Eden writes about ecolabels that use certification, they are “guaranteeing traceability for consumers to choose ‘better’ products, rather than merely supporting commercial promotion.” (2011, 172)

Moreover, not all guarantees come from the same type of actors. As Emily Clough’s categorization of food labelling schemes highlights, standards can be divided “into those set and enforced by the state and those set and enforced by non-state actors (including NGOs and the private sector).” (2013, 618) In the United States, the most obvious example of standard enforced by the state is the USDA Organic label that is discussed in great detail in Guthman’s analysis of organic farming in California (2004). In the case of meat labels, however, the USDA as yet to be seriously involved. Indeed, as will be seen, all the labelling schemes that will be presented here are from non-state actors.

All these distinctions, however, do not change the underlying logic which is about “voting with your dollar” (Clough 2013, 615). For a boycott to work, one has to assume that a collection of individual choices can have an impact on the market.

On producers, these impacts are twofold. First, it sends a signal that the market is changing and they will have to adapt if they want to stay in business. Second, it encourages them to improve their practices since certified products can be sold at a higher price. The presupposition is that “the power of consumers is latent, but capable of being roused and used for good, even within existing capitalist systems, because of the collective power of consumer demand to hit commercial producers through buying less from them—or buying more from their competitors.” (Eden 2011, 175) Of course, this assumption remains highly criticized because it “prioritizes the individual over the collective” which clearly is problematic if one share the perception that “the power of big retailers and producers is often assumed to be huge, even insurmountable, but the power of consumers is assumed to be negligible, even illusory.” (Eden 2011, 175) In other words, the logic of buycotts could be said to underestimate the structural economic power of big corporations. As was seen in chapter 2, in the case of the meat industry, this power is considerable.

Considering all of this, what will be included in the humane meat discourse can be restricted. To do so, two points are important. First, even if buycotts do not require labels, only labelling schemes will be considered here. Indeed, not only do they remain very important in the ethical meat discourse-coalition, but also, the logic of buycotts without labels can be better understood with agrarian populist discourse since it usually involves direct relations with farmers. Second, for reasons that were implied above, only labels with certifications are worth analyzing. Indeed, since without certifications, they do not offer much guarantee, their political potential appears limited. Considering that, Stolle and Micheletti’s definition of buycotts will be used. In the next section, the humane meat labels will be presented through the lens of political consumerism.

2.2 Humane Meat Labels

As was said above, the rise of individualized responsibility-taking in the 1990s had an important impact on welfarist organizations. More precisely, it is at the start of the 2000s that a clear shift towards the boycott strategy became apparent with the emergence of many labels. The logic behind this change is perfectly captured by this quote from the Certified Humane Raised and Handled label's website about its creator, Adele Douglass:

As a veteran lobbyist and former congressional staff member, Ms. Douglass knew the limitations of the legislative process. She immediately saw how a certification and labelling program, that would be available to all producers, would enable consumers to vote with their wallets for more humane production practices. She has been working ever since to make that vision a reality. (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018b)

In the United States, many labels related to animal agriculture can be found. In its *Consumer's Guide to Food Labels and Animal Welfare*, the *Animal Welfare Institute* offers a list of seven certified labels. According to the logic of its classification, to be considered certified, a label needs to meet two conditions: (1) the "label claims are defined by a formal set of publicly available animal care standards" and (2) the "compliance with the standards is verified by a third-party audit." (Animal Welfare Institute 2016) *Humane Farm Animal Care* also provides a document comparing different labels and while they do not explain how they chose them (they only say that they are the "key welfare standards"), their list is similar (Humane Farm Animal Care 2015b). Considering these two documents, four labels seem important to explore. They are: (1) *Animal Welfare Approved*, (2) *Certified Humanely Raised and Handled*, (3) *Global Animal Partnership*, and (4) *American Humane Certified*. Each of their standards cover most or all farm animals and in all cases, their primary focus is on animal welfare.³⁶

³⁶ Three certified labels have been excluded since there have a more restricted focus: *American Grassfed Certified*, *Certified Organic*, and *Food Alliance Certified*.

Since the objective is to analyze the discourse associated with these labels, two things must be done for each of them. First, their rationale for the use of a certified label will be analyzed. Second, the presentation of their standards will be compared to the arguments from the previous chapter. As will be seen, it is not necessary to have an entire section on the arguments because the different associations do not discuss them much. The two steps of this analysis will be mostly based on the associations' websites and reports since they are not much discussed in the ethical meat literature.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that the analysis will not include a detailed discussion of their respective standards. Not only are these standards usually very complex, their audience is not consumers, but producers. As the above plan of analysis implies, what is important is how they are presented. In other words, from a discursive point of view, it is more important to analyze the way their standards are used as arguments than to focus on the technical details.

2.2.1 Animal Welfare Approved

The first certification that will be explored, *Animal Welfare Approved*, claims to provide the “most rigorous standards for farm animal welfare and environmental sustainability across the globe.” (A Greener World 2018b) It was initially founded by the *Animal Welfare Institute*. According to this organization's website, they started to experiment with pig husbandry standards in 1988, which subsequently lead to the creation of a label with a program they called *Pastureland Farms*. This program was, however, put on hold after pressure from the hog industry. It was resurrected in 1997 and gradually expanded beyond pigs to eventually lead, in 2006, to the program being renamed *Animal Welfare Approved* and a logo being

created. (Animal Welfare Institute 2018) It has, however, recently transferred to the organization *A Greener World*.

The *Animal Welfare Approved* certification presents itself as program “founded as a market-based solution to the growing consumer demand for meat, eggs and dairy products from animals treated with high welfare and managed with the environment in mind.” (Animal Welfare Approved 2016) They also justify the importance of labelling by noting that it is the best alternative “when you can’t visit the farm yourself.” (Animal Welfare Approved 2016) More generally, they highlight the importance of consumer decisions by noting that “Choosing the right food is one of the most important, everyday activities that can reduce our individual environmental impact – and help to improve animal welfare at the same time.” (Animal Welfare Approved 2016) Since they consider themselves to be the “gold standard”, it is not surprising that they are critical of other labels. On the one hand, they note that “Food labels are packed with information, but some of the common claims and terms found on food labels can be very confusing – if not downright misleading.” (Animal Welfare Approved 2017) On the other hand, they write that *Animal Welfare Approved* is “one of only two labels in the U.S. that require audited, high-welfare slaughter practices, and is the only label that additionally requires pasture access for all animals.” (Animal Welfare Approved 2016) While they do not articulate explicitly the mechanism through which consumption can influence the market, their presentation is for the most part consistent with the definition of political consumerism.

As for their arguments in favour of humane meat, they cover all three types. On the issue of ethics, they write that the “basic premise of all the standards is that animals must be able to behave naturally and be in a state of physical and psychological well-being.” (A Greener World 2018c) While this argument remains

fairly vague and clearly appeals to the sentiment that natural is necessarily good, the reference they use to criticize cruel practices is noteworthy: in 2008, they used a video showing animal cruelty on a farm released by PETA (A Greener World 2008). PETA's ambiguous position about ethical meat will be discussed in great detail in the next chapter, but for now, it is interesting to observe that the criticism of factory farming can equally be used to promote ethical meat and veganism.

The organization is much more voluble when it is time to talk about environmental and human health issues. It is on the topic of grassfed beef that they say the most. This is not surprising since, as was said in the previous chapter, the production and consumption of beef are the most debated issues in the ethical meat literature.

On the environmental front, they spend a lot of time refuting the proposition that grassfed beef actually emits more greenhouse gases than the factory farmed equivalent. One of their main arguments, besides the argument that grassfed beef can be produced on land that cannot be used for human food production (A Greener World 2016, 10), is based on the carbon sequestration capacity of pastures. At one point in one report, they appear nuanced as to the capacity of carbon sequestration: "Grassfed cattle can actually mitigate (or counter) their higher methane emissions by helping to capture atmospheric carbon dioxide"(A Greener World 2016, 11). They even recognize that carbon sequestration is problematic: "The problem is that accurately quantifying how much soil carbon contributes is difficult, and it can vary dramatically from place to place." (A Greener World 2016, 11) But then, they appear to accept Savory's argument about carbon sequestration: "many researchers now state that grassfed beef produces no net GHG emissions—and some argue that well-managed grassfed beef systems

may even capture more GHGs than they emit.” (A Greener World 2016, 11) Later, they also respond to the vegan argument saying that it would be better to eat no meat at all. Indeed, while comparing factory farming, ethical meat, and veganism, they write: “In fact, ceasing consumption of intensively raised meat and choosing pasture-based livestock products instead will actually have a far more positive effect on reducing climate change than either side of a raging battle would have us believe.” (A Greener World 2016, 15) In other words, they present their product as the best option between two unappealing positions.

On health issues, they argue that grassfed beef is healthier than factory farmed meat because it is less likely to harbour dangerous bacteria (A Greener World 2016, 11) and it contains more nutrients (A Greener World 2015, 14). Moreover, in at least two reports, they imply that people in the U.S. eat too much meat (A Greener World 2015, 13) and/or should eat less meat (A Greener World 2016, 17). In the 2015 report, they say that “While this does not mean we all have to stop eating meat, the reality is that we do need to decrease the amount of low-welfare, intensively reared feedlot meat that we eat,” but in the 2016 one they add: “the fact is that we can continue to eat meat and livestock products—and improve our environment, our health and the welfare of the cattle at the same time—by switching to grassfed meat and livestock products.” (A Greener World 2016, 17) In other words, they appear to support the idea that meat consumption has to be reduced but it is not an central element of their presentation.

One last point about the size of farms needs to be mentioned. Their standards include the condition that farmers have to be “independent farmers” which they define as: “This just means the farmer owns the animals, and is responsible for their day-to-day care.” (A Greener World 2018a) While it is not said explicitly, it

can be assumed that this definition only makes sense for farms of a limited size. As such, it conforms to the ethical meat storyline.

In sum, *Animal Welfare Approved* is original since, as will be seen, it is the only label to explicitly certify family farmers and because of its use of detailed environmental arguments. About them, two points are worth pointing out. First, they explicitly position themselves as an alternative to both factory farming and veganism. Second, while they mention the ecological leftover argument, they do not fully embrace its implications that people should eat less meat.

2.2.2 Certified Humanely Raised and Handled

The second association is *Humane Farm Animal Care*. It was founded by Douglass who was previously director of *American Humane Association* and who, while working there, initiated their certification program, which will be discussed last. Along with the creation of *Humane Farm Animal Care*, she created a new program, *Certified Humanely Raised and Handled*, in 2003. As was said above, she believes that labels “enable consumers to vote with their wallets for more humane production practices.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018b)

Despite this comment, their website does not provide much more information to explain why they support labelling schemes. Two additional elements can be found in their *2015 Annual Report*. First, they add that buying implies a support for a particular type of production: “When consumers see the Certified Humane label, they know they are supporting farmers willing to bring a higher quality of life to the animals in their care.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2015a, 5) Second, they insist on the fact that using the marketplace is the most efficient way to change the industry: “We have always believed the best way to help farm animals is through the marketplace. The more people demand humanely-raised food, the

more farms will become Certified Humane.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2015a, 6) This last point is particularly important because here, political consumerism is not only seen as one more way to help animals, but as the best one.

In the promotion of their label, *Humane Farm Animal Care* is critical of factory farming. However, they do not use detailed ethical arguments. The basic logic is that factory farming is wrong because it is inhumane, which implicitly mean that if animals are treated humanely, it becomes acceptable. They do not provide general guidelines that define what is “humane.” Only two elements have been found: (1) “Animals are never kept in cages, crates, or tie stalls,” and (2) “Animals must be free to do what comes naturally.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018c) One noteworthy point is that in their FAQ, they take the initiative to defend themselves against the argument that “the only way to be humane is to become a vegan.” They even say that the attacks from “animal liberation activists” represent one of the two “biggest challenges to farm animal work.” They reply that: “But there is something wrong with animal activists attacking the work animal welfare agencies do to relieve the suffering of farm animals. Sadly, these groups would rather see animals suffer now in order to promote their agenda than support compassionate standards and systemic change to the farm animal system.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018a) With a logic similar to the seat at the table argument, they argue that the best way to help animals is to promote humane meat.

They also briefly talk about the environment and human health. Regarding the environment, they note that the “U.S. Environmental Protection Agency blames current farming practices for 70% of the pollution in the nation’s rivers and streams.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018b) According to them, humane meat is better because “fewer animals on more space is better for the land, the air, and

the water.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018a) They, however, go beyond the argument that its certification is better than factory farming. Indeed, they add that “Studies that have suggested that free-range or pasture grazing (if managed intensively) can benefit the environment, rather than degrade it. Some of the work that has been done in this area is from the Savory Institute.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018a) In other words, they refer to the work of Savory to argue that ethical meat can have a net positive impact on the environment. About health issues, they simply note that: “Farm animals that are not raised humanely are fed diets of animal by-products, antibiotics (which causes antibiotic resistance in people), and hormones (which causes early onset puberty in our youth).” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018a) In other words, their only argument is that humane meat is better than factory farmed meat.

One last note about their position on the size of farms. In their FAQ, they include the question: “Is it possible for a giant factory farm to be lucrative and entirely humane?” They answer: “Yes, a farm can be entirely humane regardless of the size, as long as they meet all of our standards. It’s more challenging because more changes would need to be made than on a smaller farm, but a committed farmer can make those changes, regardless of his or her farm size.” (Humane Farm Animal Care 2018a) In other words, there is not fundamental contradiction between the size of a farm and its potential to be “ethical.”

In sum, this organization takes a proactive stance in its opposition to factory farming and its preemptive defence against veganism. Moreover, they explicitly use the language of political consumerism when arguing that people can change the system with their wallets. It remains that with their stance on the size of farms, it is not entirely clear to what extent they want to change current farming practices.

2.2.3 Global Animal Partnership

The third organization that will be explored is the most controversial one, the *Global Animal Partnership*. It first is controversial since when its predecessor, the *Animal Compassion Foundation*, was created in 2005 by *Whole Foods Market*, its *Farm Animal Compassionate Standards* were supported by many animal rights organizations and by Singer himself, as the then president of *Animal Rights International* (Singer 2005). It was then “converted to a public nonprofit known as the Global Animal Partnership” in 2008 (Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 136). Even though their website notes that “GAP also partners with several other US grocers (Roots Market, Elephant Grocers)” (Global Animal Partnership 2018), it remains mostly present at *Whole Foods Market*.

Another source of controversy is the fact that unlike the other labels, it does not work with an all-or-nothing certification. Instead, it proposes a 5-step program which they describe as a “5-Step Animal Welfare Rating Standards Program.” Here is how they justify the decision to have multiple levels of certification: “a multi-tiered standards program would be able to engage a broad spectrum of producers, expand markets for farmers committed to providing higher welfare for animals, and more effectively advance our goal of promoting continuous improvement in animal agriculture.” (Global Animal Partnership 2018) The logic is that by offering a less stringent standards to some producers, it will be easier to incite them to do better to get a better certification. This is a legitimate argument, but it also implies giving some sort of endorsement to farms that are far from what many would consider to be the humane standard.

Do they offer more justification for the creation of this program? On their website, they do not say much, but it is still very telling. On the page “Get

Involved,” they write: “As an informed consumer, we can literally shift the food industry by voting with our money.” They add that “By purchasing GAP Step-rated products, you can support farm animal welfare and contribute to changes in animal agriculture.” (Global Animal Partnership 2017b) These two sentences contain the core of political consumerism logic, that is, changing consumption habits can lead to social change.

More details can be found in the book *Conscious Capitalism* (2013), written by John Mackey, co-founder and currently co-CEO, of *Whole Foods Market*, with Rajendra Sisodia, professor of marketing at Bentley University. In it, the former talks about his business philosophy and gives more information about the logic behind the *Global Animal Partnership*. One of the first things he does in the book is declaring his faith in capitalism. He argues that one of the reasons why capitalism is constantly being attacked is because “regulations and the size and scope of government have greatly expanded, creating the conditions for the spread of crony capitalism” (Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 16). This statement is coherent with political consumerism on two levels. First, it can be understood as coherent with the rise of “individualized responsibility-taking” that appeared with a disillusion with the state’s ability to efficiently deal with social problems. Second, this faith in capitalism is also coherent with political consumerism’s idea to use capitalism marketplace to induce social change. It is, however, different since in general, political consumerism does not share their animosity towards state regulations.

More precisely, about labelling, after describing the atrocities of factory farming, Mackey writes that “Whole Foods Market considers this a serious ethical and environmental issue.” He then adds that “Whole Foods is strongly committed to helping create alternatives to the factory-farm methods of raising livestock”

(Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 145). It is following this logic that they decided to create the *Global Animal Partnership*. According to him, they have

created a system that has triggered a race to the top to improve animal welfare. Suppliers want better ratings because that leads to positive publicity, brand enhancement, and potentially higher prices for their products. Being naturally competitive, they want the best rating they can earn and strive to upgrade their animal welfare practices. (Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 145)

Regarding the arguments, the *Global Animal Partnership* provides a list of reasons to support their program: “farm and farmer advocacy, food safety, environmental protection, human health, rural communities, or animal welfare.” (2017b) About ethics, they give some general guidelines to explain the logic of their standards. They say that while there are many ways to define “animal welfare,” “at Global Animal Partnership, we believe that farm animal welfare isn’t just about minimizing stress, suffering, and coping in an environment or being kept well-fed and watered. We believe farm animal welfare refers to the animal’s quality of life.” (Global Animal Partnership 2017a) Overall, they remain vague which is understandable as each level has different standards. It remains that no detailed ethical argumentation is provided.

Regarding the environment, while he is not directly talking about the *Global Animal Partnership*, Mackey notes that “Whole Foods Market is doing a number of things to try to lessen the high environmental and human health impacts from heavy meat eating.” (2013, 144) Two elements are noteworthy here. The first is not directly related to humane meat and could even be understood in opposition to it. He says: “While we are not directly advocating a vegan diet, we are encouraging everyone to eat far fewer animal foods” (Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 144). The second is directly related to the *Global Animal Partnership*. Mackey writes:

We are continually developing sources of animal foods that have been raised in non-factory-farm conditions, especially 100 percent grass-fed beef and lamb and pasture-raised pork and poultry. We believe that animals raised in these ways cause far less environmental damage and are also better for human health. (2013, 144)

In other words, their environmental and human health arguments modestly say that humane meat is better than factory farming. It is, however, important to repeat that this is not written on the *Global Animal Partnership* website.

On their website, they also reply to the question: “What does it mean to be a family farm?” They first note that “The term ‘family farm’ gets tossed around a lot when talking about animal agriculture and is often used for marketing in ways that can be misleading.” They then add:

It’s important to know that ‘family farm’ is not a predictor of size, but nor should it be—and that size is not a predictor of good animal welfare. From our experience, big isn’t always bad, and small isn’t always wonderful. Good animal welfare really comes down to how the animals are managed, their nutrition, and their environment—all things the 5-Step® program focuses on. (Global Animal Partnership 2016)

In other words, a big farm can also be humane.

In sum, if it is assumed that Mackey’s position reflects the organization’s, which is a reasonable one, *Global Animal Partnership*, while having a similar critical stance against factory farming, is much more friendly towards veganism. It is also interesting that by both proposing a certification system with multiple levels and that arguing that the size of farms has nothing to do with their “ethicality,” it can become difficult to understand this in terms of ethical meat. As will be seen, this is also the case with the last certification.

2.2.4 American Humane Certified

The *American Humane Association* (previously known as the International Humane Association) is mostly known for its “No Animals Were Harmed”

program in Hollywood. In 2000, the association created the *American Humane Free Farmed* program along with animal welfare standards for farm animals. The program expanded and was eventually renamed *American Humane Certified* “to reflect the broader scope of the American Humane Association certification program.”

Surprisingly, the association does not explicitly explain why they decided to create a certified label. Looking at their websites and reports, two hints can be found. First, they say that they created the *American Humane Certified* program “to ensure the humane treatment of farm animals.” (2018a) Second, after referring to a survey concluding that about 95% of Americans are “concerned about the welfare of animals in U.S. agriculture,” they write that they “believe people should be able to follow their food preference and find humanely raised dairy, meat, and egg products that are both safe and affordable.” (American Humane Certified 2018b) Putting these two elements together, the motivation behind their label appears to enable consumers that want to buy humanely raised meat, to do so in confidence.

Besides this, two other elements are worth mentioning. First, its mission includes “Promoting the welfare of farm animals through our science-based standards” which is significant since their repetitive references to science indicate that in the ethical meat debate, they clearly put their trust in scientists, and not, as is the case for other discourses, in farmers. Second, a general lack of ambition is apparent throughout their documentation. Indeed, while they say that their welfare standards are built upon the *Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare*³⁷ and as was just

³⁷ The *Five Freedoms* refer to five recommendations to improve animal welfare in animal agriculture. They are (1) Freedom from hunger or thirst, (2) Freedom from discomfort, (3) Freedom from pain, injury or disease, (4) Freedom to express (most) normal behaviour, and (5) Freedom from fear and distress. As noted by Edward N. Eadie, there were developed in 1965 by “the Brambell Committee in Britain” in response to the publication of “*Animal Machines: The New Factory Farming Industry*” by Ruth Harrison published in 1964 (Harrison 1964) that

said, they regularly insist on the idea that their standards are science-based, they do not compare their conception of humane meat with factory farmed meat. Moreover, they do not say anything about the environment or human health. Considering that, there are not many arguments to analyze.

In sum, the way this label positions itself in relation to factory farming is not clear. It could even be argued that it does not belong in the ethical meat discourse-coalition. Indeed, not only do they write that “farms of all sizes are encouraged to join the American Humane Certified™ program as excellent animal welfare can be achieved on both small and large farms” (American Humane Certified 2018c), but they do not even use the “humane meat is better than factory farmed meat” argument. This ambiguity will be explored next.

2.3 Humane-Washing and the Internal Dynamic of the Humane Meat Discourse

Following this presentation of four humane meat labels, a few important points of agreement and disagreement appear. While it is much less clear for the *American Humane Association*, they all share the idea that certification systems can contribute, or are the best way, to change the current animal agriculture system. It is, however, where they disagree that has the most analytical potential. Two points are particularly striking. First, as was already said, the *American Humane Association* does not explicitly reject factory farming which was defined as a core element of the ethical meat discourse coalition. Second, *Animal Welfare Approved* is the only label that includes the “family farm” condition to its certifications, while the others all try to cast doubt on the idea that a farm has to be small to be ethical.

exposed the suffering inflicted on animals in modern factory" (2012, 2). They are now used as guidelines by many organizations such as the *American Humane Association*.

From this, it would be tempting to conclude that *Animal Welfare Approved* is the “best” label while *American Humane* is the “worst” as many people do, but that would be too simplistic of a conclusion. Indeed, since they all claim they are offering humane meat, it does not entirely matter if any label is “better.” More important is what can be called the internal dynamic of the humane meat discourse, that is, the internal discussion and contradiction within it. This dynamic will be explored through the concept of humane-washing, but before going any further, it is essential to first briefly define the concept that inspired it, that is, the concept of greenwashing.

Nick Feinstein defines greenwashing in the following way:

The term refers to false or misleading representation that products, brands, or corporation practises are beneficial to the environment. Scholars and environmental organizations define a broad range of practices as greenwashing, including false assertions and claims that exaggerate, misdirect, or mislead consumers as to the environmental qualities of a product. These organizations even level accusations of greenwashing against companies that issue environmental claims that are simply too vague or ambiguous. (2013, 233)

More specifically about labels, Stolle and Micheletti mention some of the possible impacts of greenwashing. They write that “activists fear that greenwashing will delegitimize all types of labels” and that consumers might end up “treating the labels as equivalents or substitutes.” This can in turn diminish consumers’ “willingness to pay for more expensive” products and/or push them to “simply opt for the least expensive one,” which most probably has the less stringent certification (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 226). This is why many organizations are publishing guides to classify labels. Like the two that were mentioned above about humane meat, their function is to help consumers find the “good” ones. All of this clearly indicates why it is important to consider all labels, even if very different, as a whole: not only do they affect each other, but they also are usually presented together and compared.

Using this definition, the concept of “humane-washing” started to appear. It has yet to be used extensively in the scientific literature, only a few examples can be found and they do not explore the concept extensively (Wrenn 2015, 3). That being said, one has to ask to what extent a concept similar to greenwashing makes sense for humane labels. A direct transposition of the concept in this specific case would imply that humane-washing refers to labels that falsely claim to certify humane meat. That can be argued in two ways. First, it can be done by saying, as the *Animal Welfare Institute* argued in the report *Humanewashed: USDA Process Verified Program Misleads Consumers About Animal Welfare Marketing Claims* (Mathews 2012), that the meat in question is not humane since it is not “from animals raised more humanely than those raised conventionally” (Mathews 2012, 1). In that case, it is easy to conclude that the claim is simply false. Second, it can also be done by arguing that since *American Humane Certified* standards are much less stringent than *Animal Welfare Approved* standards, they cannot be considered humane. While they do not explicitly say that, they do write in the *Food Labels Exposed* guide that “while this is a verified claim, the *American Humane* standards are so low that the label is not recognized as meaningful by consumer advocates.” (A Greener World 2017, 8) This kind of criticism is, however, not the norm. This is easily understandable since too much criticism would put humane meat labels in an uncomfortable position. On the one hand, they want to remain critical to emphasize their superiority, but if they go so far as accusing the other labels of humane-washing, they risk delegitimizing the whole idea of humane labels. On the other hand, if they say nothing, all labels could again be delegitimized since the “bad” labels can also freely pretend to offer humane meat. This situation is probably why, even if *Animal Welfare Approved* is critical of the *American Humane Certified* label, it does not go so far as to claim it constitutes humane-washing.

So far, it could be argued that this use of humane-washing is no different than the use of greenwashing, but humane-washing can also be interpreted in a different way. Indeed, animal rights activists attribute to it an entirely divergent meaning. For them, humane-washing is the process of distracting consumers from the idea that there is no such thing as humane meat. In other words, it is the claim that it is possible to raise and slaughter animals in a humane way that constitutes the humane-washing. What this alternative conception highlights is the assumption present in the first conception of humane-washing, that is, it assumes that the idea of humane meat is realistic. From that point of view, the differences between the labels appear insignificant.

Another way to present the difference between greenwashing and humane-washing is to consider their common conception, the first one, as a continuum. Whatever the “washing” is, a false or an exaggerated claim, it remains that the difference between that and an accurate claim is quantitative. In other words, what constitutes a green product or a humane animal product is open for debate, but whatever it is, if a product is considered to present inaccurate claims, the difference is only by degree, that is, the product is not green or humane enough. What the humane-washing second conception adds is one of qualitative difference. It does not matter what constitutes humane meat because it cannot exist. In other words, whatever the humane claim is, it can only be false. Such a rejection of any “humane” animal product would not appear to make sense in the case of green products. Indeed, it does not seem that anyone has ever argued that there is no such thing as a “greener” product. Sure, it could be argued that any form of consumption implies some environmental impacts, but in general, “green” claims only pretend to do better or to minimize one or more environmental impacts. Put differently, the logic of greenwashing only make

sense within a “greenness” continuum, while on top of having such a “humaneness” continuum, the logic of humane-washing can also be understood outside that continuum.

What all of this implies is that whatever the differences between all the labels, and there are important differences to be found, they are all part of the same discourse. All labels defend the basic idea that humane meat is possible. Within the logic of the humanness continuum, it could be argued with Stolle and Micheletti that the “washing” process delegitimizes all labels. It could also be argued that the diversity of labels legitimizes the whole by giving the impression that customers have choices. While from a vegan perspective, all of this is irrelevant as all labels end up being qualified as humane-washing and are usually criticized as a monolithic block, for the ethical meat coalition, this shows a noteworthy dynamic. Indeed, since the discourse-coalition is informal, there is no gatekeeping to keep “bad” actors out. As such, any organization can somehow attach to it, which can affect the overall political effect of the coalition. This will be explored at the end of this chapter.

3. Urban Homesteading Discourse

While the urban homesteading discourse agrees with the humane meat discourse on the idea that factory farming is unacceptable, they propose an entirely different solution. As was said in the previous section, the logic of certification and labelling is based on the idea that consumers usually are not in a position personally to verify the conditions of farm animals. One way to acquire ethical meat is, thus, to delegate this responsibility to a trustworthy third party. The urban homesteading discourse proposes a different solution: the best way to know about the production condition of animal products is to produce them yourself.

The name of this discourse comes from what more and more people call the urban homesteading movement, that is, the movement of people in urban or suburban areas wanting to be more self-sufficient and live more sustainably at the level of their household³⁸. While it also involves multiple techniques to reduce resource usages, looking at the various urban homesteading guides we can see that its main focus remains on food production (Kaplan and Blume 2011; Coyne and Knutzen 2010; Madigan 2009). More precisely, it is the production of vegetables that is the most discussed. Nevertheless, it is included here since it also often includes animals. These nuances will be explored later. For now, it is mostly important to note that the urban homesteading discourse is very critical of factory farming and as an alternative, it proposes that people raise their own animals to produce their own ethical meat.

To understand the classification of this discourse, it is important to note that the region of interest is the United States. This is significant since while it is no longer the case in most rich countries, a “wide range of livestock are [still] kept within city limits in many developing countries.” (Friends of the Earth Europe 2014, 50) As such, in rich countries, this discourse is considered imaginative because it proposes a dispersed system of production which is entirely different from the current concentrated animal agriculture system. Moreover, it is considered individualistic because it remains based on changes by individual families and lacks a broader vision of the food system.

38 This definition voluntarily excludes other practices that could be included in the category of urban farming. First, farming in urban settings is not relevant here if it does not include animals. Second, for the cases that included animals, such as a community gardens with chickens, the only difference would be in the form of property. Consequently, most of the analysis that will be done here could in theory could also apply to community initiatives. However, since most of the literature focuses on the level of the household where private property is assumed, only this situation will explicitly be discussed.

That being said, before the content of the discourse is explored, the ideological foundation of the urban homesteading movement has to be presented. As will be seen in the next section, it is based on Alvin Toffler's prosumerism concept. With the help of this concept, the urban homesteading discourse will be defined in more details. Next, to identify the arguments mobilized, the case of urban chicken will be presented and analyzed. Finally, a short conclusion about the ambiguous conception of chicken as both pet and livestock will be proposed.

3.1 Toffler's Prosumerism

Despite the increasing number of blogs and how-to books being published, a theorization of the urban homesteading movement could not be found in the scientific literature. In this section, it will be proposed to use Alvin Toffler's concept of prosumerism to make sense of that phenomenon.

The concept of prosumerism first appeared in his 1980 book *The Third Wave* (Toffler 1980). As Ritzer et al. note, "Over the ensuing two decades, some attention was devoted to these ideas, but they certainly did not become 'hot'. However, the 21st century has witnessed a boom in interest in, and work on, the prosumer and the process of prosumption" (2012, 378–80). This new interest has taken many different directions, but the most important appears to be the use of prosumerism to understand and analyze the Internet and Web 2.0: "The term prosumer, first introduced by Toffler in the 1980s, has been developed by sociologists in response to Web 2.0" (Paltrinieri and Esposti 2013, 21). Moreover, "prosumption was clearly not invented on Web 2.0, but given the massive involvement in, and popularity of, many of these developments (e.g. social networking sites), it can be argued that it is currently both the most prevalent location of prosumption and its most important facilitator as a 'means of prosumption.'" (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010, 20)

Despite this recent interest, the concept will not be used that way. It will be conceptualized in a simpler way, based on a 1986 synthesis from Philip Kotler (1986). His interpretation mostly focuses on the evolution of production and consumption practices. This understanding is based on three distinct waves will be presented with an insistence on the elements that are important to analyze the urban homesteading movement. Considering that, only a partial understanding of Toffler's idea is used here.

In his article, Kotler first presents Toffler's definition of "prosumers as people who produce some of the goods and services entering their own consumption." (1986) According to him, "in the First Wave, agriculture is the dominant institution. According to Toffler, the vast majority of people are prosumers. They hunt or grow their own food, make their own clothing, and create their own amusements." (Kotler 1986) About that, Toffler notes that "in all [First Wave civilizations], the economy was decentralized, so that each community produced most of its own necessities." (1980, 38) In other words, these communities were mostly self-reliant and independent.

Much later, "the Second Wave occurred with the Industrial Revolution in England. The factory became the dominant institution. An increasing number of people now spend their productive hours there. [...] Most people produce for exchange, not for use. The only prosumers are housewives who cook, clean, sew, knit and shop, while not getting paid for this." (Kotler 1986) In that process, "production and consumption activity became separated" (Kotler 1986). In the words of Toffler:

The Second Wave violently changed [the situation of the First Wave]. Instead of essentially self-sufficient people and communities, it created for the first time in history a situation in which the overwhelming bulk of all food, goods,

and services was destined for sale, barter, or exchange. It virtually wiped out of existence goods produced for one's own consumption—for use by the actual producer and his or her family—and created a civilization in which almost no one, not even a farmer, was self-sufficient any longer. Everyone became almost totally dependent upon food, goods, or services produced by somebody else. (1980, 55)

In other words, the vast majority of people are dependent on industrial production for the entirety of their consumption.

Regarding the Third Wave, according to Kotler,

Toffler sees the post-industrial age as moving towards a synthesis of First and Second Wave societies [...]. The dominant institution in Third Wave societies is the home [...] in which most people carry on their own production and consumption. For reasons which we will examine below, more people shift more of their time into prosumption. [...] Because people now produce more of their own goods and services, markets become less important, since they exist to meet exchange needs in those societies where most production is for exchange. (1986)

While the impact on the market is important for Toffler, what is significant here is the idea of synthesis of production for consumption (First Wave) and for exchange (Second Wave).

Why this shift to prosumerism? For the need of the urban homesteading discourse, two reasons appear important: environmental concerns and human health. According to Toffler, the Second Wave has caused major environmental problems. He talks about a “war against nature” and issues with nonrenewable energies (Toffler 1980, 138). Moreover he adds, “city dwellers by the millions yearn for the countryside, and the Urban Land Institute reports a significant population shift towards rural areas. Interest in natural foods and natural childbirth, in breastfeeding, biorythms, or body care has boomed in recent years.” (Toffler 1980, 307) This leads to the second reason, health. Kotler writes that “some people will feel that they can produce better goods and services than are

available in the market, especially if manufactured goods and services decline in quality.” (1986) If this last sentence is interpreted in the context of food production, it would be reasonable to assume that quality is associated with health.

In sum, prosumerism is presented as a reaction to the excess of industrial society and as a solution inspired by agricultural society. While some argue for total self-sufficiency and even a radical disconnect from modern society, as will be seen in the next section, the idea of synthesis of the first two waves implies that the objective is not to return to the first, but rather to find a new balance. In other words, the idea is generally not to become entirely self-reliant but to take back control over part of one’s consumption. As will be seen in the next chapter, one of the first places where people want more control is over what they eat.

3.2 The Urban Homesteading Literature

To understand the emergence of the urban homesteading movement, it is first important to describe how its proponents present the evolution of the United States food system. According to them, the starting point of this history is the colonization of North America. As Sarah B. Schindler writes, “prior to the modernization of refrigeration and food preservation technologies, communities relied on subsistence farming to feed themselves in ways that were both local and seasonal. Indeed, nearly all early residents of the Thirteen Colonies were subsistence farmers.” (2012, 246) In that sense, this was still the First Wave and most people were producing for their own consumption. Already here, the choice of historical point of reference can be understood as a key strategy to draw the reader into a sense of nostalgia about a mode of living that is now lost.

This picture changed with the development of new technologies in the 19th century. For example “technological advancements in farm equipment made larger farms practically and economically feasible, as well as necessary to stay competitive. As a result of improved technologies, farmers were able to farm larger acreages, obtain higher crop yields, and reduce their work force.” (Schindler 2012, 247–48) The author continues,

while farms were expanding, individuals were moving closer together—by 1920, a majority of Americans lived in cities or suburbs. Large manufacturing plants often were located next to temporary housing, making cities unsanitary and crowded. As urban areas expanded to meet the demand for businesses and residences, there was a clash between agricultural and residential land uses. (Schindler 2012, 248)

At the same time, “Disassembly lines created a less expensive product and the development of refrigerated train cars allowed meat to be processed and dressed in large centralised facilities and then efficiently distributed throughout the USA (Bartling 2012, 26). With all these changes, the relations of people “with the earth and its non-human flora and fauna took on a qualitatively different character during the nineteenth century as capitalism and industrialization began to radically reshape cities.” (Bartling 2012, 25)

The impact of this new urban dynamic on food consumption was dramatic. Indeed, “because larger farms could produce more food more quickly, and because supermarkets were available and sold many products, individuals were relieved of pressure to produce their own food. As a result, residential landscapes changed as yards replaced gardens.” (Schindler 2012, 248–49) Describing the same impact, Hugh Bartling notes that “grocery stores and restaurants provided foodstuffs for workers in the industrial or post-industrial economy who no longer had the time, need, or inclination to engage in direct food production.” (2012, 33) He further adds that “historians such as Beauregard (2006) and Baxandall and Ewen (2000) trace patterns in post-War culture that focus on the proliferation of

consumption over production and the ways in which urbanism (broadly defined) was configured to accommodate this consumptive ethic.” (Bartling 2012, 24; Beauregard 2006; Baxandall and Ewen 2000) In other words, as the food system industrialized and cities expanded, urban areas excluded food production and accordingly, changed consumption patterns. As such, the food system entered in the Second Wave where most people produce to buy food and were the production of food for consumption became marginalized.

To identify this new system, urban homesteading proponents use many of the same names that are used by other critics. For example: industrial agriculture system (Schindler 2012, 263), mainstream food system (Bartling 2012, 24), industrial food system (Bartling 2012, 29), international corporate agri-food system (Blecha and Leitner 2014, 88), industrial agri-food system (McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten 2014, 437)... Despite the different labels, they more or less refer to the same thing and share the same criticism. Most importantly, they claim that a centralized food system reliant on depleting oil reserves contributes to food insecurity (Schindler 2012, 263), that industrial food comes with health issues, that it is responsible for multiple environmental problems, that it causes dramatic harm to animals...

There is nothing original there. Indeed, as many authors note the awareness about those issues comes from mainstream publications: “Journalists writing to a large audience like Schlosser (2001) and Pollan (2006) have given mainstream audiences compelling critiques of the industrial food system.” (Bartling 2012, 29; Schlosser 2001; Pollan 2006) Nathan McClintock, Esperanza Pallana, and Heather Wooten go further by arguing that these publications not only identified problems, but also inspired solutions:

These findings reflect a growing public awareness of the detrimental impacts of the industrial agri-food system on the environment and human health and animal welfare, as highlighted in bestselling books such as *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (Pollan, 2006) and *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser, 2005) and high-profile films such as *Food, Inc.*, which have motivated many people to engage in urban agriculture. (2014, 437; Pollan 2006; Schlosser 2001)

In other words, the urban homesteading discourse identifies most of the same problems and these can be related to the issues that Toffler noted about the Second Wave. From that perspective, it is easy to understand how one solution is to take back control by personally producing food.

That being said, only problems with agriculture in general have been presented, but as was hinted above with a reference to animal welfare, the discourse is also concerned with the production of animal products. As Schindler notes, “the meat-industrial complex results in dramatic harm to animals and in turn to the humans who consume them and their products.” (2012, 278) Mary Wood, Jeremy Pyle, Naomi Rowden, and Katy Irwin again refer to Pollan to talk about the specific problems with factory farming: “As [he] notes in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, the industrialized meat and dairy industry impose deplorable conditions on animals raised for food. Factory farms that hold and manage thousands of pigs or dairy cows pollute valleys and waterways with appalling amounts of manure” (2010, 72). Just like the previous authors, they identify urban farming as a solution: “Responsible animal husbandry on private property is a viable alternative to this industrial system.” (Wood et al. 2010, 72)

In sum, the urban homesteading discourse, with its critique of the industrial food system and its proposition to produce food at home, seems to follow the logic of Toffler's waves. Indeed, as was said, this solution can be understood as prosumerism because it can be presented as a reaction to the excess of the industrialization of the food system, that is, of the Second Wave. The solution is,

thus, not go back to subsistence farming, but to take some control back. Put differently, self-reliance is presented as an ideal where every step in that direction is perceived as a form of progress. As will be seen in the next section, this idea of progression is clearly visible in the way the different farm animals are positioned in the urban homesteading literature and it is one of the main reasons why urban chickens are chosen as a case study.

3.3 Urban Chickens in the Urban Homesteading Discourse

While the urban homesteading discourse is concerned with everything food related, for the purpose of this analysis, it has to be restricted to its animal part. To do so, it is first important to note that not all urban homesteaders have animals, but in the literature, a sort of progression is implied in the production of food. This logic can be simplified by reducing this progression to three steps: (1) a garden for vegetable production, (2) chicken-keeping for eggs and possibly meat and (3) other animals for milk and/or meat. In Carleen Madigan's book, this progression is evident. It starts with four chapters about the growing of various plants. Then on chapter 5, she notes that "chickens are among the easiest animal to keep in a small amount of space." (2009, 221) Then, she starts chapter 6 by writing: "Perhaps the final step in completing a backyard homestead is the addition of animals for milk and meat." (Madigan 2009, 257) It can also be seen in Bartling's article when he quotes an opponent of urban chickens: "if we allow chickens in then what if someone asks for a pig or a lamb" (2012, 32). In other words, chickens are perceived as a "gateway animal".

The "next step after a garden" position of chicken-keeping also explains why it is the most popular practice and the most talked about in the literature. Not only is it the most talked about as a practice, but also from a legal point of view as there are still many legislative obstacles to urban chicken-keeping. This is the reason

why the arguments of the urban homesteading discourse will be explored through the practice of urban chicken keeping. Most of the analysis will also apply to other animals, but chickens remain unique because of their dual use as egg and meat producer. This duality implies an ambiguity about the role of chickens that provides a window to go deeper in the logic of the discourse. This will, however, be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Regarding the arguments, it is first important to note that the community building and the education arguments are very common in that discourse. As was already mentioned in chapter 4, they are often used in texts about urban farming. More broadly, these arguments could easily be related to nostalgia and the colonial historical framing that was mentioned in the previous section. While focusing on these arguments would probably help explain the attractiveness of this discourse, they will be ignored since, as was argued in chapter 4, they are not specific to ethical meat. As such, only ethical, environmental and human health arguments will be considered.

On the ethical front, obviously, it is assumed that urban chickens have a better life than factory farmed ones. Indeed, “from an animal-welfare perspective, nonhuman animals also benefit from urban homesteading as compared to life in a concentrated animal feeding operation; backyard animals typically have more room and are able to exhibit more natural behavior patterns.” (Schindler 2012, 279) Since this is not a particularly difficult standard to attain, some go further: “If you raise and slaughter your own meat you’ll know the animal was raised in the best conditions imaginable—with air and sunlight and stimulation and healthy food.” (Coyne and Knutzen 2010, 135) Whatever the claims, they describe similar conditions to justify them, that is, more room, access to outdoor, less stress, better food, access to medical care... Jennifer Blecha and Helga Leitner add that many

chicken-keepers refused to impose on their chickens an industrial rhythm of production: “Another way that some [chicken-keepers] tried to treat their chickens ethically was letting them rest from laying during the winter. As hours of daylight grow shorter in the fall, hens naturally stop laying until longer days return. In commercial operations, laying hens are kept under artificial lights year round to maintain egg production.” (2014, 93) The authors, however, imply in their text that not all chicken-keepers refrain from their use.

This last point is certainly one of the reasons why many chicken-keepers are in favour of the setting of welfare standards. In their study, McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten conclude that “the chicken owners we surveyed are largely in favour of some form of regulation (87%), but their support varies depending on what is being regulated.” Most importantly here, “respondents overwhelmingly expressed their support for such regulations [limits on the number of animals, minimum space requirements, and setbacks], mostly as a means of establishing humane standards.” (McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten 2014, 437) They, however, note that this support diverges according to traditional political opposition:

In regions of the country where libertarian ideals have more traction and in right-leaning suburban areas, for example, regulations may be less popular than they are in left-leaning urban centers such as the Bay Area, Portland, Seattle, or Minneapolis, where the role of government is often viewed more favorably. (McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten 2014, 437)

While this political divide is not surprising, the idea of standards can appear to contradict the premise of the discourse. Indeed, it implies that people cannot be trusted to take good care of their animals. This, however, appears to be a secondary issue since, being an individualist discourse, in the literature, people mostly care about their own animals.

From an environmental point of view, the analysis is much simpler. As was said above, the urban homesteader is highly critical of the environmental impacts of

factory farming. Considering that, they present various arguments to point out that urban chickens are much more environmentally friendly. As Blecha and Leitner note, these arguments can be divided into two categories: (1) food miles and (2) nutrient cycling (2014, 95). Firstly, they use the locavore argument claiming that imported food contributes to climate change with all the oil used in its transportation (Schindler 2012, 275). To this argument can be associated the one that transportation requires more packaging which involves even more energy expenditure (Blecha and Leitner 2014, 95). These two arguments are, however, not that important because they are not specific to animals, but concern all food locally produced.

Secondly, the argument of nutrient cycling is much more specific to animals. As will be seen, it can be understood as simpler version of the ecological leftover and mixed farming arguments that were presented in the previous chapter. It goes like this: not only can chickens be fed kitchen scraps, they also produce manure that can be used to fertilize the garden. So chickens can be fed leftover food “which reduces the amount of food waste thrown away.” (Schindler 2012, 275) On top of that, they provide a service with their manure: “All subjects used the chickens’ droppings as organic fertilizer for their vegetable gardens.” (Blecha and Leitner 2014, 95) Blecha and Leitner, thus, concluded that chicken-keepers “enjoyed seeing a productive backyard system at work, reducing their purchases of commercial feed and fertilizers by ‘recycling’ kitchen scraps and manure.” (2014, 95) This conclusion is, however, surprising because it implies that chicken-keeping does, in part, depend on the purchase of external feed and fertilizer. While this fact does not counter the environmental gain of urban chickens compared to factory farmed ones, it does go against the self-sufficiency objective of some urban homesteaders and can be in contradiction with the criticism of the

industrial food system if their purchase of feed and fertilizer comes from that system.

Lastly, from a human health perspective, urban chickens are also presented as providing a considerable improvement. The arguments mostly consist in the avoidance of health risks associated with factory farming. For example, Wood, Pyle, Rowden, and Irwin talk about “pollution-free and antibiotic-free food choices” (2010, 75) Some, however, add that their eggs are actually better: “In some cases, advocates also extol locally grown eggs as having nutritional benefits exceeding those of industrial eggs. Within the context of an industrial food system that many perceive as insufficiently regulated, backyard poultry advocates argue that they feel safer by having more control over their food supply.” (Bartling 2012, 31–32)

A point that might not be clear at first is how chicken-keepers conceive of “quality.” As was hinted before, it seems to be associated with both “health and safety,” and “taste.” The following quote clearly illustrates this point:

Performing another critique of the dominant food system, [they] were concerned about the quality of their food, and disliked the idea of it being produced in distant locations by unknown means. Participants believe their chickens’ eggs are far superior to grocery store eggs in terms of health, safety, and taste. [...] Respondents unanimously felt their own chickens’ eggs were both ‘healthful’ and ‘safe,’ in sharp contrast to how they perceived eggs produced by the dominant food system, believing that their quality also means better taste. (Blecha and Leitner 2014, 94)

What is striking about all the arguments that were seen is how they are individualistic in scope. Even if the motivation of urban homesteaders comes from a systemic criticism of factory farming, the proposed solution is mostly concerned about how individuals can take better care of their animals, how it helps them be more self-sufficient and healthy. The point is not to criticize these

arguments, but to note that their discourse focuses on how individuals can be more coherent with the values and less on how to transform the system. This is why the proponents of this discourse do not talk about reducing global meat consumption and do not wonder if this individualistic endeavour could scale up. It remains that a distinct focus on how individuals live and feel in relation to meat and farm animals can highlight an interesting dynamic within the urban homesteading discourse. In the last section about this discourse, this idea will be explored through the dual qualification of chicken as farm animals and as pets.

3.4 Pet or Livestock or Both?

Another way to argue that urban chickens are well treated is to argue that they are often considered as pets. As Bartling notes, “a common refrain in many public deliberations regarding poultry-keeping is what ‘kind’ of animals are chickens: pets, livestock, or some hybrid.” (2012, 31) Many chicken-keepers “often consider their animals more as pets than as livestock in the traditional agricultural sense” (McClintock, Pallana, and Wooten 2014, 437) and as such, since they are pets, they have a responsibility to treat them well (Blecha and Leitner 2014, 94). In a sense, this could be criticized from an animal welfare perspective since it implies animals classified as “livestock” do not deserve to be treated decently. Schindler argues otherwise: “many people who raise backyard chickens for eggs interact with these traditional ‘food’ animals on a personal level, often viewing them as pets. These interactions could lead to changed perceptions, and perhaps treatment, of traditional food animals.” (2012, 278) This can be illustrated by the example that many chicken-keepers “reflected a recognition or awareness of the animals as agents (if not subjects), with their own thoughts, feelings, and activities.” (Blecha and Leitner 2014, 99)

As hinted by the above quote from Schindler, the tendency to consider chickens as pets is particularly present for “people who raise [them] for eggs” (2012, 278). This is understandable since their egg production does not directly require their death. Yet, this dual use of chicken as egg producer and source of meat leads to important ambiguity. As Bartling notes: “Poultry ordinance reformers often contribute to this ambiguity, describing hens as both pets and sources of food; although in talking of the food potential of chickens, emphasis is usually placed on their egg-producing capacity, rather than on their meat.” (2012, 31) This ambiguity is furthered by the fact that in the scientific literature about urban chickens, their fate after their eggs production period, or when they do not produce enough, is rarely discussed.

This last point is important since it highlights a significant moral uneasiness. Indeed, when faced with a chicken at the end of her productive life, three options usually present themselves. First, some people decide to keep them and provide them a happy retirement. While this might be the most morally coherent choice, it is difficult to justify from an economic point of view. Second, killing the chicken for their meat suggests an inverse dilemma: getting more food while not having to pay to keep the chicken alive, but having to kill animals that were considered by many as pets. The fact that both these solutions come with serious compromise easily explain why the third one is often preferred, that is, sending the chicken in a farm sanctuary. There are multiple reports in the media of “city dwellers [that] dump unwanted fowl on animal shelters and sanctuaries.” (Aleccia 2013; Kankiewicz 2014) With this solution, both the bill and the responsibility is delegated to the sanctuary.

This uneasiness with the actual killing is understandable when one remembers that the people that decide to keep their own chicken, often do so because they

care about their welfare. This idea was confirmed by McWilliams in his 2015 book, *The Modern Savage*. After reading numerous blogs and forums about home slaughter, he writes: “These slaughter narratives demonstrate the convergence of three related sentiments: an awareness of animal sentience, discomfort with the idea of killing an animal, and the insistence that the killing was done to counter the influence of factory farming.” (McWilliams 2015, 129) In other words, since they know that animals can suffer, it takes a good motivation to overcome the discomfort of the killing. McWilliams also details how most urban homesteaders remain amateur in the sense that despite all their good intentions, they often fail to “properly” kill their animals which end up suffering more in the process.

In sum, while the ambiguous categorization of chicken as livestock and/or pet can be effective to argue that they are well cared for, this argument also has a flip side. Indeed, as amateur farmers, urban homesteader are personally confronted with the meat paradox. As such, just as vegan arguments are usually not enough to convince people to stop eating meat, ethical meat arguments are also most often not enough to ignore the discomfort associated with killing.

4. Agrarian Populist Discourse

As it was probably noticed, with the two previous discourses, an important point of view was ignored, that is, the farmer’s. The humane meat discourse explored how organizations could develop standards to guide their practices and with the urban homesteading discourse, the efforts of some people to partially replace the farmers were analyzed. Unlike those, the agrarian populist Discourse is firmly rooted in the rural perspective of the farmers.

The name agrarian populist can be explained as follows: it includes “agrarian” due to its celebration of agrarian and traditional values and “populism”³⁹ for the dichotomy at the centre of its discourse: hardworking farmers versus elites. As such, it is considered prosaic since it proposes a return to a form of traditional rural society. As will be apparent below, the historical framing is different here than with the urban homesteading discourse which only proposes the incorporation of some old practices into modern society. It is also systemic since the discourse proposes a complete vision of society with a very specific set of values.

In very general terms, what is particular with the agrarian populist discourse is not really its emphasis on family farms since that can also partially be found in other discourses. No, its originality comes from its proposal to return society to traditional/agrarian values and its suspicion of modern forms of authority. Indeed, the family farm is not just seen as an economic unit, but also as a political one. As will be seen, this has some impact on the solutions that are proposed as an alternative to factory farmed meat. In other words, its distinctive characteristic is its underlying values.

This section will be divided in four. First, the origin and the core values of the discourse will be explored. Second, Salatin’s take on the discourse will be presented. Third, the ethical meat arguments associated with this discourse will be described. Four, a short conclusion about the focus on Salatin will be proposed.

³⁹ In this section, agrarian populism is associated with conservatism. While some forms of populism associated with rural life and agriculture can also be found on the left, with for example José Bové in France (Birchfield 2005; Jones 2007), in its current form in the United States, as will be seen below, it is clearly situated on the right.

4.1 New Agrarianism

Before explicitly describing the agrarian populist discourse, it is essential to highlight its origin. In most of the US food politics literature, the “agrarianist vision” is first and foremost associated with Thomas Jefferson. Guthman notes that he “opposed the centralized power sought by the Federalists. He preferred a weak federal government and argued that only agriculture and land ownership could ensure independence and virtue, thereby providing the basis for a republican democracy.” (2004, 10) As Benjamin J. Bruxvoort Lipscomb writes, contemporary agrarianism is slightly different as can be seen in the writing of one of its most important figures, Wendell Berry. According to Bruxvoort Lipscomb, Berry has brought “together the political vision of earlier agrarians with [a] moral and specifically ecological vision.” (2016, 63) More precisely, “the conservation of land and the creatures who live from it depends in part on the very arrangement Jefferson [...] advocated” (Bruxvoort Lipscomb 2016, 58).

In his presentation of contemporary agrarianism, Bruxvoort Lipscomb refers to the seven natural laws proposed by Berry in his essay, “Conservation and Local Economy.” For the current analysis, they can be summed up as arguments in favour of small, rural and individual land ownership as a way to not only protect the environment, but also the nation. (Bruxvoort Lipscomb 2016, 63) Siddhartha Shome puts these ideas in context by describing where they come from. He says that Berry

has written about the goodness of a vanishing way of life in rural north-central Kentucky. His writing vividly celebrates the traditional way of farming as practised around the time of his childhood. Berry writes of the balance that existed in the small self-sufficient rural community. He portrays that community as being in harmony with nature and with itself. He describes the hard work involved in farming, and lauds the joys and contentment that come from working the land. (Shome 2013, 524)

In other words, Berry's agrarian vision is not only infused with nostalgia about how life used to be, but it is also presented as essential for the well-being of society.

Guthman calls this vision "new agrarianism" and defines it as seeing "the family-owned and-operated, small-scale farm as the locus of, indeed the key to, social justice and ecological sustainability (2004, 10) In her analysis of organic agriculture, she identifies the four assumptions supporting this. First, "freehold ownership is the desired form of land tenure" (Guthman 2004, 11). The classical argument is based on John Locke's political philosophy "positing that he who mixes his labour with land to put it to productive use is the rightful owner" (Guthman 2004, 11). Furthermore, land ownership is seen as essential to guarantee the independence of the people and thus, the perennity of the republican democracy. This also has environmental implication: "notions of individual ownership are also tightly coupled with notions of stewardship; only owners, it is presumed, have interest in the long-term viability of the land." (Guthman 2004, 11) This understanding of environmentalism is labelled by Dryzek as Economic Rationalism:

If we are to have markets in environmental goods, then we need private property rights here too. According to economic rationalism, specification and enforcement of these rights is the main task of the government. Why are private property rights and markets so desirable? Because people tend to care more for what they hold privately than for what they hold in common with others. (2005, 123)

In sum, the "agrarian imaginary [...] takes as axiomatic the idea that independent and egalitarian ownership of land is critical to democracy and stewardship." (Guthman 2004, 177)

Second, the "agrarian ideal is also an owner-operated farm, self-sufficient to the extent that family members provide all the necessary labour, and farm income is

sufficient to pay all farm and family needs.” (Guthman 2004, 11) Again, there are two versions of this idea. Guthman notes that Berry proposed an explicit Christian vision in which “the household is the last bastion against cultural estrangement.” (2004, 11) Alternatively, Marty Strange proposes a more secularized version where “farms are family centred because the family is the logical unit of production within which to transfer skills and to provide inter-generational continuity in the farm’s management” (Strange 1984, 118). Considering that, even if the explicitly Christian vision is ignored, it remains that the logic of the family farm is still based on a traditional conception of the family.

Third, the “small scale of such farms is equally critical to this vision.” (Guthman 2004, 12) The benefits of this small size are both social and environmental. Socially, as Berry puts it: “A healthy farm not only will have the right proportion of plants and animals; it will have the right proportion of people. There will not be so many as to impoverish themselves and the farm, but there will be enough to care for it fully and properly without overwork” (1977, 1977) Environmentally, a “farm with too many acres will also give way to simplification, the progenitor of ecological destruction.” (Guthman 2004, 12) According Wes Jackson, the issue is one of “eyes-to-crop ratio,” that is, if too few people take care of a farm, there is an “inevitable loss of biological diversity” (1984, 1984).

Fourth, speaking more generally about populism, Tom Brass notes that it “shares with Marxism a discourse-against that attacks big business, political injustice, and the effects of capitalism generally,” but it does so “in the name of individual, small scale private property.” (1996, 155) Furthermore, populism “perceives smallholding proprietors as socio-economically undifferentiated and thus casts them all in the role of ‘victims’, uniformly oppressed by large-scale institutions/monopolies located in the urban sector (the state, big business and

‘foreign’ capital).” (Brass 1996, 155) As such, “the problems and negative effects of capitalism are attributed by populism to the distortion” of markets by these institutions/monopolies “and not the structure of capitalism.” (Brass 1996, 155) That is why Guthman concludes that “the new agrarianism, like all agrarian populism, is deeply suspicious of state intervention, does not question the individuation of markets, and, most fundamentally, remains a defence of private property.” (2004, 12) She also adds that “deeply suspect of scientific and bureaucratic rationality precisely for its effect on the social aspects of farming, the agrarianist social vision could be construed as deeply conservative.” (Guthman 2004, 12)

In a sense, this is the logical extension of the previous assumptions. Indeed, if one assumes that the owners of a farm are the ones that have the biggest interest in its long-term viability and that they also are in the best position to know what is good for it, outside interventions are certainly not welcomed. Not only that, but they also perceive public intervention and science as influenced by disconnected urban elites and big business. This kind of logic hints that in the argumentative game, this discourse will probably assign trust in the concrete experience of farmers instead of science. Moreover, the defence of private property and the opposition to market distortion is also coherent with the logic of Economic Rationalism. Indeed, for example, from the agrarian populist perspective, farming is associated with pollution because the big industrial farms do not have to pay for their own pollution, hence giving a tainted image of the practice in general. It should also be clear how this vision is often characterized as anti-feminist, racist, heteronormative and even fascist. As was already partially mentioned in chapter 2, Stănescu provides a comprehensive critique. While it is indeed a very important to keep that in mind while analyzing this discourse, it will voluntarily be ignored here. On the one hand, it has already been analyzed by numerous

authors. For example, Guthman talks about “how a romanticized American agrarian imaginary erases the explicitly racist ways in which American land has been distributed historically, erasures that ramify today in more subtle cultural codings of small farming.” (2008, 388) On the other hand, what is intended here is to go beyond this to take the time to understand what agrarian populism implies for animals and meat production, an analysis that has yet to be done.

Considering all of this, it should be clear that like for the rest of the ethical meat discourse there is a focus on the idea of the small farm, but it is mostly presented here as the “family farm.” This distinction is important because it goes beyond the small farm ideal of ethical meat which mostly focused on the management of the farm. In the case of agrarian populism, on top of that, it involves the values and ideas that have been described here. As was said above, without those, this discourse could not be classified as “systemic.” That being said, it is now possible to see how these ideas propose an alternative understanding of ethical meat. The agrarian populist take on ethical meat will be discussed next.

4.2 Agrarian Populism and Meat: Joel Salatin

While the agrarian populist discourse can be found in many publications like *Stockman Grass Farmer* and organizations like *The Land Institute*, it is with the writings of Salatin that its understanding of the production and consumption of meat will be presented. The reason is simply that he is by far the most influential proponent of the agrarian populist discourse in the ethical meat discourse-coalition. As was said earlier, ever since Pollan described his *Polyface Farms* in *The New York Times Magazine* in 2002, it is one of the most common, if not the most common, example given of a small and ethical farm (2002b). Before, proceeding, it is important to note that Salatin is a colourful and controversial figure and as such, it could be argued that it is possible to have a much more

nuanced version of ethical meat compatible with agrarian populism. For example, Bruxvoort Lipscomb does exactly that in his *“Eat Responsibly”: Agrarianism and Meat* (2016). Yet, the rest of this presentation will focus on Salatin and his importance in the discourse-coalition will be explored in the last section.

While he says many things that can directly be related to the above definition, they are not all relevant to the issue of ethical meat. His relevant ideas can be regrouped into two categories: (1) a desire to return to “normalcy” and (2) an opposition to outside intervention.

While the idea of “normalcy” might sound like an unusual point of departure, it is a central concept for Salatin. This can already be seen before opening his most popular book: *Folks, this ain’t normal: A Farmer’s Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World* (Salatin 2011). In the introduction, he sets the stage for a conservative vision: “But a host of positive, wonderful cultural norms have existed that I submit provided a foundation for civilization’s sustainability and regeneration.” (Salatin 2011, xvi) It is from this logic that he praises the way things were before and remains very critical of modernity. For the current purpose, three elements are worth mentioning about this “normalcy”: (1) sustainability, (2) local food systems, and (3) a connection with animals.

Firstly, about sustainability, he notes that “no civilization has ever been in this state of environmental ignorance.” (Salatin 2011, 19) The example he uses to illustrate this point focuses on representations of cows:

To have a discussion about normal living, normal ecology, all my readers need to understand how ignorant we’ve become as a culture. With our frame of reference skewed, our perceptions about farming, and our notions of what is environmentally enhancing or not, we approach farming with prejudicial brain damage. As a result, we have environmentalists spouting the ignorant notion that cows are belching methane and causing global warming. The

scientific studies impugning the cow view her as taking, taking, taking, and not putting anything back. (Salatin 2011, 20)

The arguments about the environmental impacts of cows will be discussed later, but for now the important point is people these days are very ignorant about agriculture.

For him, the inclusion of cows in an agricultural system is “normal.” He notes that “the cow, perhaps more than anything else, represents civilization.” (Salatin 2011, 20) Why are they so essential? Because “not a single long-term tillage system on earth exists without an herbivorous component.” (Salatin 2011, 21) Again, the details will be analyzed below, but the underlying idea is that the inclusion of animals is normalized. He uses this idea to criticize both modern agriculture and vegan ideas about agriculture without animals: “You can’t just substitute tofu (made from tillage—soybeans) for the herbivore. It doesn’t work ecologically. Period. No matter how much you like tofu.” (Salatin 2011, 21) More details about this idea will be included in the next section.

Secondly, about local food systems, he writes:

You see, historically normal food systems were not only local; they were also diversified. The whole notion that a region grows only one thing has always doomed itself to fail. The Irish potato famine and King Cotton in the South were historical aberrations. Historically normal farming systems were highly diverse, with mixed animals and plants—such as we see in vibrant natural ecosystems.” (Salatin 2011, 97–98)

He details this with arguments similar to those of the previous section: “That is exactly what industrial monocropping systems can’t do as well. The unfair advantage, to use a business term, enjoyed by the smaller local producer is this ability to achieve higher productivity per square yard through synergistic crop variation. That requires lots of varieties.” (Salatin 2011, 97) In other words, the modern food system is presented as an aberration, a deviation from this normality.

Thirdly, in relation to animals, the deviation from the “normalcy” manifests itself by a disconnection: “Animals are not people. Unfortunately, we’ve entered a time in our culture when the only interaction most people have with an animal is with a pet.” (Salatin 2011, 23) The implicit idea here is that by staying away from farmed animals, people are forgetting that there is a fundamental difference between a pet and a farm animal. In other words, the former can be a friend, but the latter only exist to be eaten. Killing animals for food is, thus, normalized. It is also interesting to note that for him, unlike urban homesteaders, there is no ambiguity about the status of farm animals, they are not pets.

Two elements are worth noting about the way he mobilizes the idea of “normalcy.” First, on the first level of analysis, he constructs a vision of society that he presents as “normal” and since for him, “normal” equals “good,” his vision must necessarily be better than current society which is, by extension, abnormal. This could also be understood from a Gramscian perspective as way to argue that his ideas are part of the common sense. Second, and most importantly, this idea of “normalcy” is rooted in the tradition/modernity dichotomy. This is clear when he implies that things have always been a certain way and that it is only recently that they changed. Modernity is, thus, presented as an aberration in history.

The second category of ideas to explore is his opposition to outside interventions. More precisely, three ideas will be analyzed: (1) his opposition to governmental interventions, (2) his understanding of the relation between private property and the environment, and (3) his suspicion of science.

Firstly, he has a deep suspicion of state interventions. More precisely, he has two main issues with government. First, the “market-manipulative government

interventions masks the true costs of supermarket food.” (Salatin 2011, 81) Salatin not only refers to the “[s]ubsidies and corporate welfare [...] for the big guys,” but he notes that the “biggest subsidies are not direct payment to farmers, they are the tab society picks up for externalized costs.” (Salatin 2011, 259) For example, he says that the “collateral damage from concentrated animal feeding operations, pesticides, herbicides, and toxic manure lagoons has not even begun to be tabulated.” (Salatin 2011, 260)

His second problem is that government is stacking the deck in favour of the big food producers. On the one hand, he describes at length in the chapter “Disodium Ethylenediaminetetraacetate—Yum!” the complicated and long process he had to go through with the USDA to have the approbation to make sausages without MSG. His conclusions? “Truth is stranger than fiction—and people wonder why more local, small-scale, artisanal food is not available?” (Salatin 2011, 105) On the other hands, he argues that “[n]onscalable government regulations inordinately discriminate against smaller processing business (abattoirs, kitchens, canneries).” (Salatin 2011, 257) While talking about a small abattoir he co-owns, he gives the following example: “Inspector overtime, practically daily inspection changes from the food police, infrastructure requirements that must include a separate bathroom and office for the inspector—these are all prejudicial against smaller operations.” (Salatin 2011, 258) More directly, “Subsidies and corporate welfare are for the big guys, not the little guys.” (Salatin 2011, 259)

This is a common argument from the food movement, but Salatin is different because what he proposes is not different government interventions to favour small organic farms, but to get rid of them all. About food safety regulations, he says: “The way we create popular food literacy is to put people in the driver’s seat. Make them responsible. The way to create wellness literacy is to put people in

charge of their own health. Every time the government takes away decision-making power and choice risks, it dumbs down the populace in that arena.” (Salatin 2011, 314) In sum, “[q]uit asking the government to solve problems.” (Salatin 2011, 326)

Secondly, by looking at his understanding of private property, it is possible to analyze his conception of environmental protection. For him, private property is mostly a negative right (Wenar 2015). As a libertarian, Salatin says that he is also “extremely big on personal responsibility,” but as he describes, this responsibility is mostly about non-interference. (2011, 272) The example of environmental regulations is clear about that: “If someone sent pollution down my stream, I would fight to make sure that person cleans it up.” (Salatin 2011, 272) The key idea here is that he would personally lead the fight because he thinks the government cannot do it properly: “With regulatory bureaucracies enforcing fairness instead of courts, bigger businesses purchase concessions like Superfund status instead of being held personally liable for their misdeeds.” (Salatin 2011, 272) In other words, if someone is polluting, let him “be brought before a jury of their neighbors (peers) to assess a penalty.” (Salatin 2011, 272–73) His ideas can be summed up in the following way: “Nobody should need an Environmental Protection Agency to say that polluting the river is bad.” (Salatin 2011, 272) This, understandably, is directly related to Economic Rationality: if a person interferes (with pollution) on another’s property (like a river), she is liable. It also presents environmental issues as something that does not require expertise to assess, which leads to the last idea.

Thirdly, Salatin explicitly articulates a suspicion towards science. His argument starts by noting that “[s]cience is not objective.” More precisely: “The problem is, we are biased beings. Every one of us. We come to every situation with

predetermined ideas. How many times have people looked at the same data and come away with two completely different interpretations?” (Salatin 2011, 236) What are the implications of that? On the one hand, he recognized that he is biased and that he likes scientists that agree with him. (Salatin 2011, 236) On the other hand, and most importantly, he claims that “For every scientist I like, I can find at least one that takes the opposing view.” (Salatin 2011, 236)

From this, he argues that science is generally used by the government and big business to stack the decks in favour of big food producers, an idea that he explores in detail in another of his books, *Everything I want to do is Illegal* (Salatin 2007). To this, he opposes personal experience and common sense:

To interact with nature and food in this visceral functional way is foundational to developing common sense. When people lose touch with these cornerstones of existence, their thinking gets all screwy. Staying grounded, very literally, and staying anchored in sensibleness require relationships with food production. (Salatin 2011, 39)

Put differently, it is difficult to know anything if you haven’t experienced it. This is one of the reasons why, at one point, he asks: “Who would you rather trust with your food interests—your local farmers or a bureaucrat from Washington, D.C.?” (Salatin 2011, 53) This is not to say that he is anti-science. A better way to put it would be to say that he remains suspicious.

Following this presentation of his way of thinking, it should be fairly obvious that it fits very well with the logic of agrarian populism. With this general understanding, it is now possible to see what it implies for his conception of ethical meat. This will be analyzed through the arguments he uses.

4.3 Ethical Meat Arguments

Now that both the foundation of the agrarian populist discourse and Salatin’s worldview have been presented, it is possible to be more specific about how the

conception of ethical meat they imply. This will be done by looking at the arguments used by Salatin.

The first thing to note is how well the agrarian populism discourse fits in the ethical meat storyline. Not only does this discourse explicitly idealizes the past, what Salatin calls “normalcy,” but most importantly, it presents ethical meat as a third way between industrial meat and vegetarianism. As Salatin says: “I have no problem with vegetarians who choose to vote against industrial farming by eating that way. Teresa and I have always said that if we didn’t know somebody like us, we’d practically be vegetarians too.” (2011, 25) Another very popular way to put this is with the use of the stories of vegetarians that went back to meat after they had the opportunity to “reconnect” with farmed animals. Pollan quotes Salatin recounting such a story:

Salatin told me the story of a man who showed up at the farm one Saturday morning. When Salatin noticed a PETA bumper sticker on the man’s car, he figured he was in for it. But the man had a different agenda. He explained that after 16 years as a vegetarian, he had decided that the only way he could ever eat meat again was if he killed the animal himself. He had come to look. (2002b)

The underlying message here is that, as was said above, urbanites are disconnected from animals and it is this disconnect that makes them question the normalcy of meat eating.

That being said, by comparing the agrarian populist discourse to arguments presented in the previous chapter, it is possible to identify the most important ones. Again, the presentation will be organized around the same three categories: animal ethics, environmental concerns and human health.

About animal ethics, Salatin uses two main arguments, one that can be used for any system of meat production and another which is specific to ethical meat. The

first one is simply to argue that eating/killing animals is just normal. For example, he argues that a food system with “no livestock whatsoever” is “highly abnormal historically” (Salatin 2011, 32). He also uses a much rarer religious argument. As quoted by Pollan, Salatin says: “People have a soul; animals don’t [...]. Unlike us, animals are not created in God’s image, so when they die, they just die.” (Pollan 2002b) This can be interpreted as just another way to say that killing animals is normal and, as such, should not be questioned. As was just said, both these arguments could also be used by proponents of factory farming, but Salatin has more to say.

Indeed, his most interesting argument is specifically about ethical meat. The starting point of his reasoning goes as follows: life requires death. As he says: “The fact that life requires sacrifice has profound spiritual ramifications. In order for something to live, something else must die.” (Salatin 2011, 24) This food chain logic is according to him “regenerative” and to “see it as violence that must be stopped is both abnormal and juvenile.” (Salatin 2011, 24) It is important to note here that he is implicitly saying that the life and death of animals and plants are equivalent in this chain. He continues by saying that while sacrifices are inevitable, there are not all equal: “To take this one step further, I would even suggest that the sacrifice is elevated to sacredness based on the respect and honour bestowed on the sacrifice during its life.” (Salatin 2011, 24) What does that imply for animals?

Too often, factory farming detractors—of which I am one—fail to differentiate between animals raised well and those that are not. Their abhorrence of the industrial abuses swings their pendulum all the way over to a prejudicial view towards all animal consumption. At that point, the charges become disingenuous. To refuse to admit that systems exist that honour and respect the animals shows the true agenda—no livestock whatsoever. (Salatin 2011, 32)

In other words, this argument goes back to the core of the ethical meat storyline: yes, industrial meat is disgusting, but it is possible to treat animals well and thus, produce morally acceptable meat.

According to him, what exactly does it mean to “raise well” an animal? While he does not say it explicitly, the most probable hypothesis is that one can honour and respect animals when they are allowed to live according to their nature. While defending his practices, he often refers to the chickenness of the chicken or the pigness of the pig. For example, while explaining why his chickens are in a shelter and not outside, he says: “To think that these birds would rather be outside their ‘cages’ indicates a profound lack of understanding regarding chickenness; a profound ignorance about predator and weather protection.” (Salatin 2011, 27) This reasoning, of course, assumes that animals have a fundamental nature and that by discovering it, farmers can determine what is good for them.

Despite that, he does recognize that his practice might not always be perfect. One example is particularly striking. When defending his rabbit enterprise, he recognizes that it “pushes the envelope as hard as anything we do here at Polyface.” (Salatin 2011, 30) As he explains:

We certainly have our rough spots. But the trade-off of providing a stress-free life, with a natural forage-based diet, certainly offers some positives. And the fact that these rabbits are healthy without antibiotics and other props indicates their happiness in this environment. With that said, we are always looking for ways to do better. (Salatin 2011, 31)

While his honesty is refreshing, it remains that this argument basically says that doing better than factory farming is sufficient to render a practice morally acceptable. His book also contains another such example. At one point, he argues that since “God designed chicks [...] with a unique ability to survive just fine without feed and water for three days,” they can “be shipped through the mail without hurting them.” (Salatin 2011, 31) To the people that argue against this

practice, he replies that they “are actually hurting the alternative to chicken factories.” (Salatin 2011, 31) In other words, since the objective of this practice is to trump factory farming, it should not be criticized.

On the environmental front, the arguments are much more explicit since the agrarian populist discourse is mainly an environmental one. Three arguments can be identified: (1) animals are an integral part of any farming system, (2) herbivores are not responsible for climate change and (3) animals products can be produced with ecological leftovers.

First, Salatin’s main environmental argument can be summed up by a quote from Sir Albert Howard: “Mother earth never attempts to farm without livestock” (1940, 4). In his book, Salatin spends a lot of time explaining all the benefits that a mixed farming brings. It is, however, the one that was presented in the previous section about the necessity of having herbivores in any farming system that is the most interesting. It is important to note that by “system”, he means “closed system” because he later adds that it is only possible to avoid herbivores with the “injection of biomass from outside the system” (Salatin 2011, 21). This is an important precision, because in that section of his book, he refers to Fairlie’s book *Meat a Benign Extravagance* (2010) and as was noted in the previous chapter, that author recognizes that agriculture without livestock is possible, it is just less efficient. Salatin, much later, does recognize that it is possible to grow vegetables without animals, but since it requires the injection of “copious amount of forage into the system via mulching, fallow years, green manuring, or imported compost,” it remains that “by far and away the most productive systems involve herbivores.” (Salatin 2011, 203–4) Either way, whether it is impossible or much less efficient to farm without herbivores, from a sustainability perspective the conclusion is the same including herbivores is for him a no-brainer.

Despite that, he nevertheless goes further by spending a few pages describing how grain production is an environmental catastrophe. His argument is that grain production requires tillage which in turn brings “ecological devastation”. More precisely: “It superoxygenates the soil, exposes it to the weather, and burns out organic matter.” (Salatin 2011, 189) According to him, “This is one of the big flaw in vegetarianism, which tends to replace perennials with annuals. Annuals require tillage to prepare seedbed to plant and germinate the seeds.” (Salatin 2011, 189) In other words, not only are animals essential to agriculture, but the production of the alternatives to animal products are themselves an environmental catastrophe.

On that topic, Salatin answers an objection to his argument. When asked “just because we use the cow to graze the soil-building pasture component, does that mean we have to eat her?”, he replies: “Are you willing to pay a hundred dollars for a loaf of bread in order to finance the cow component necessary to rejuvenate the soil?” (2011, 22) In other words, since, in theory, it is not necessary to eat the herbivores to benefit from their ecological services, he uses an economical argument to justify his practice. This kind of argument gives the impression that ethical arguments are subordinated to current economic constraints. Indeed, this is not that different from saying that animals have to be well treated as long as it remains compatible with the economics of livestock.

Second, not only are cows essential to agriculture, they also have a positive impact on climate change. His argument is exactly the same as the one defended by Savory in the previous chapter. It is, thus, not necessary to repeat everything. For Salatin, “Clearly, cows aren’t causing global warming. That junk science is sponsored by a thought process that blames the cows for ecological degradation.”

(2011, 194) Not only are they not the cause, they can be the solution. Referring to *Holistic Management International* and *Carbon Farmers of America*, he claims that: “And if every farm and ranch that has cows in the United States would practice this biomimicry, in fewer than ten years we would sequester all the atmospheric carbon generated since the beginning of the industrial age.” (Salatin 2011, 195) As was said in the previous chapter, this is a controversial argument and Salatin uses it in its most controversial form.

Third, considering his opinion on grain production, Joel Salatin is obviously a partisan of the ecological leftover approach. As he says, “Throughout history, grain has been too expensive to waste on animals.” (Salatin 2011, 188) Throughout his book, he defends various practices that consist in feeding omnivore animals what can be considered leftover food. As he says, “chickens have historically converted kitchen scraps into eggs. Pigs have historically scavenged domestic waste products as varied as whey, offal, forest mast, and spoiled grain. That a large percentage of landfilled material is animal-edible food waste should strike us as criminal.” (Salatin 2011, 32) The example he spends the most time on is the proposition of having “a couple of chickens” to “dispose of kitchen scraps” because it can be done in an urban environment (Salatin 2011, 114). The way he presents the idea, however, suggests that environmental issues are for him much more important than ethical ones. Indeed, he claims that the chickens “wouldn’t require any more space than a fifty-gallon aquarium.” (Salatin 2011, 114–15) While it would seem reasonable to inquire about the well-being of chickens inside an aquarium, he does not feel he has to justify this proposition from an ethical point of view.

Finally, Salatin talks a few times about health issues. Here, he only considers the most controversial arguments. Two of them are worth mentioning. First, he refers

to the *Weston A. Price Foundation* and its founder Sally Fallon to defend the consumption of animal fats (Salatin 2011, 86–87). Second, he refers to Keith and her book, *The Vegetarian Myth* (2009), to claim that “soy products induce infertility, make boys effeminate, cause serious digestive disorders and a host of other maladies.” (Salatin 2011, 203) These arguments were not included in the health arguments of the previous chapter because of their marginality and their lack of scientific backing. But in the context of agrarian populism and Salatin, they appear important to note. Indeed, just as is the case with his support for Savory, the use of these health arguments is coherent with the agrarian populist suspicion towards institutionalized science. This is particularly striking for his reference to the *Weston A. Price Foundation* as it draws heavily on bucolic imagery and nostalgic sentiment to convey the message that food used to be better. It is, thus, not surprising that they propose the “Wise Tradition Diet” that relies heavily on animal products (The Weston A. Price Foundation 2000).

In sum, Salatin uses a mix of typical ethical meat arguments as well as certain controversial arguments. Considering this, it can be difficult to assess his position within the coalition. Is he just an exception and should not be considered? In the next section, it will be argued that on the contrary, his controversial status puts him in the perfect position to learn more about the structure of the coalition.

4.4 Conclusion

As was noted above, following this presentation of Salatin, it could be argued that he represents an extreme case and as such, that it is unfair to only refer to a libertarian and religious farmer to present the agrarian populist discourse. Indeed, the more nuanced version of the agrarian populist discourse of Bruxvoort Lipscomb could have been presented. There are, however, two important reasons why the focus was on Salatin.

First, if the colourful language is ignored for a moment, it can be seen that Salatin mostly used standard arguments: killing animals is acceptable if they were given a good life, the ecological leftover arguments, and the mixed farming arguments. Not only that, but the resulting account is close to Bruxvoort Lipscomb's. Indeed, he also talks about the importance of letting animals live according to their nature and about how "the appropriateness of various uses of a kind of animal depends on that animal's role(s) in a responsible agricultural ecology." (Bruxvoort Lipscomb 2016, 64) Considering that, Salatin cannot be excluded from the rest of the ethical meat coalition. What differentiates him and agrarian populism from the other discourse is the set of conservative values and their impacts on the solutions they propose. As such, even if most progressive proponents of ethical meat would disagree with the agrarian populist discourse, they would find it difficult to argue that it is fundamentally different than the rest of the ethical meat discourses.

This last point leads to the second reason. Salatin is interesting since, even if he could be qualified by some as "extreme," he still fits within the ethical meat storyline. In other words, that such a colourful character can somehow fit in a discourse-coalition with vastly different proponents of ethical meat highlights the federative power of that storyline. Put differently, these proponents, that would certainly disagree with him in every other context, find themselves effective allies. This can easily be seen in the ethical meat literature when some authors that clearly are progressive still refer to Salatin, but only after having taken his words out of the context of the agrarian populist discourse. Pollan, who clearly is a progressive writer, is a good example of that. While he does take a minute to mention that Salatin is "a self-described 'Christian-conservative-libertarian-environmentalist-lunatic farmer'" (Pollan 2006, 125), he is still a central figure of

his book. The point is not to argue that there is a contradiction, but to highlight how the discourse-coalition, with its storyline, creates unlikely alliances. As will be seen in the general conclusion of this chapter, this has some important consequence for the understanding of ethical meat, but for now, it is time to talk about the last of the four discourses, the permaculture livestock economy discourse.

5. Permaculture Livestock Economy discourse

As the name implies, this discourse is based on the permaculture concept as developed by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. It is, however, an adapted version, mainly based on Fairlie, that is more centred on livestock. Before going into the details of the discourse, a general comment has to be made to put it in context.

While the agrarian populist discourse was characterized by its traditional values, its proposition to return to the traditional way of life remained vague and as such, was not central to its discourse. The permaculture livestock economy discourse does the opposite by focusing less on the underlying values and more on the organization of society that would permit ethical meat production. As such, it can be said to propose an entire reorganization of society and to really understand it, it has to be considered as a whole.

Considering that, it should be obvious that this discourse is both imaginative and systemic. The former since it proposes a new way to organize society and a radically different food system. Even if parts of the discourse propose going back to the old ways, it is not based on an idealization of the past but on environmental arguments, as it considers industrial meat as a holistic problem that can only be solved with a systemic solution.

One last point is important to note. As was just said this discourse is mostly based on the writings of Fairlie and if one recalls, he was one of the main sources of environmental arguments in the previous chapter. Considering these two elements, a question could be asked: considering that fact that Fairlie's arguments are proposed in the context of a reorganization of society, to what extent do these arguments make sense without his overarching vision? This is a very important question since he is quoted by many ethical meat proponents that do not share his permaculture ideals.

This point will be explored at the end of this section, but first, three other parts are needed: (1) a presentation of permaculture in general, (2) a description of Simon Fairlie proposition for a “Permaculture Livestock Economy” and (3) the identification of his main arguments.

5.1 Permaculture

While Fairlie does not present his book as one about permaculture, his main proposition, a permaculture livestock economy, is explicitly based on it. The point of departure of this section will, thus, be permaculture.

The concept of permaculture was first developed by Mollison and Holmgren and was made public in 1978 with the publication of *Permaculture One: A Perennial Agriculture for Human*. At the time, they defined it as “an integrated, evolving system of perennial or self-perpetuating plant and animal species useful to man.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 1) The concept expanded from agriculture to an overall design philosophy with Mollison’s subsequent publications, *Permaculture Two: Practical Design for Town and Country in Permanent* (1979) and

Permaculture: A Designer's Manual (1988). This change can be seen in the 1988 definition:

Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. Without permanent agriculture there is no possibility of a stable social order. (B. Mollison 1988, ix)

As such, it proposes a vision of society that goes beyond agriculture.

While this is explicit in the latter publications, it was already hinted at in 1978. Indeed, in the first permaculture publication, the authors explain their motivation by arguing that “restructuring agriculture is an essential part of any attempts to deal with the environmental crisis with which man finds himself faced.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 4) After briefly describing some of the changes necessary to agriculture, they note that “these changes involve a revolution of lifestyles and society in general.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 4) This can be clearly seen in the way they refer to Kropotkin: “In line with Kropotkin’s far-sighted views of the last century, we believe it is socially and ecologically desirable for all regions to be self-sufficient in food, and for all people to have some contact with the process of food production.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 9) In other words, drastic changes in the way food is produced cannot be done in isolation to the rest of society. This is an important point since the other discourses, especially the two individualistic ones, assumed otherwise.

That being said, it is essential to have a look at the way they envision the “environmental crisis” mentioned in the previous paragraph. The reference they used at the time was *A Blueprint for Survival*, the January 1972 special edition of the journal *The Ecologist*. It was in part written by Edward Goldsmith (with Robert Allen), the journal’s founder and editor from 1970 to 1990 and 1997 to

1998. Fairlie was also coeditor of *The Ecologist* from 1990 to 1994. The initial permaculture publications share the catastrophic tone of *A Blueprint for Survival*. The blueprint starts its description of the environmental crisis by writing that “The principal defect of the industrial way of life with its ethos of expansion is that it is not sustainable. Its termination within the lifetime of someone born today is inevitable—unless it continues to be sustained for a while longer by an entrenched minority at the cost of imposing great suffering on the rest of mankind.” (Goldsmith and Allen 1972, 2) One of their relevant recommendations was a “decentralisation of policy and economy at all levels, and the formation of communities small enough to be reasonably self-regulating and self-supporting” (Goldsmith and Allen 1972, 8).

Central to their environmental diagnostic is the question of energy. Indeed, they describe the Western agribusiness system as “energy-expensive, mechanistic, and destructive of soil structure and quality.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 1) About energy, they “find that the energy sustaining the system does not come from the sun via photosynthesis as in pre-industrial times, but mostly from fossil fuels via the industrial systems. As [Howard] Odum demonstrates, the high yields of today are not due to efficient or even sustainable methods, but to high external subsidies.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 3) As such, ending these subsidies is a central aim of the permaculture project. They argue: “A shift towards people-intensive agriculture, with long-term aims of improved productivity and lower energy consumption is necessary.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 4) In other words, the main unsustainable characteristic of the agricultural system is its reliance on unsustainable energy.

Now, since the original permaculture books, a lot has been written. Two main dividing lines can be traced. Firstly, there is the question of scale. Is permaculture

possible at the level of a household? Or does it have to be done at the level of a community? Or a region? While the original permaculture publications seem to imply that it has to be done on a higher scale, it is not always clear. Indeed, the subtitle of the second book is “Practical Design for Town and Country in Permanent Agriculture” and there are many publications applying the philosophy at the level of a household. For example, *Permaculture Home Garden: How To Grow Great Tasting Fruit And Vegetables The Organic Way* (Woodrow 1996) with a foreword by Mollison and *Gaia’s Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture* (Hemenway 2009). In some ways, permaculture at the household level is not that different from the urban homesteading discourse that was previously discussed. Yet, it remains that it still is more than that as Holmgren wrote in 2002: “Permaculture is much more than a form of organic gardening.” (2002, xi)

Secondly, there is the rural-urban divide. Again, the original permaculture publications appear to have a rural bias. For example, the authors write: “At present, cities are ‘energy sinks’, hence vulnerable and wasteful. Thus, their very existence is in balance in a future of expensive energy and reduced transport. Cities must act to justify their existence and diminish their parasitic dependence on rural areas.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 90) Just before saying that, they had already proposed one way to do this: “The city could, at little expense, provide a great deal of its food and in so doing, use much of its own wastes as mulch and compost.” (B. Mollison and Holmgren 1978, 90) One famous example of permaculture in an urban setting or at the level of a town is the concept of Transition Town described in Rob Hopkins’s *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (2008).

Out of all these possibilities, from the permaculture household, to the transition town and the sustainable country, only this last level will be considered. The

reason is that what makes Fairlie's proposition original is his systemic perspective. In that sense, there is an essential distinction between the discourse that will be presented here and the urban homesteading one that could be used to make sense of part of the permaculture household. As was said in the urban homesteading discourse section, this discourse is very individualistic in the sense that the focus is the ethics/sustainability at the level of the household. At the intermediate level, with transition towns or sustainable neighborhoods, a systemic perspective can be obtained, but it is still not large enough to understand Fairlie's arguments.

Now that permaculture has been briefly presented and that the scope of the analysis has been defined, it is possible to develop a better understanding of how Fairlie proposes a version that focuses on livestock.

5.2 Permaculture Livestock Economy

Fairlie's proposition is detailed in a book named *Meat: A Benign Extravagance* (2010). Despite its name, it is much more than a book defending the consumption of meat. While the author definitively does so, it is done within the framework of a blueprint for an alternative economy, which is mostly described in its last chapter, *Towards a Permaculture Livestock Economy*. This proposition will be described in this section with a focus on its "livestock" part. It is also important to mention that it is a proposition for England. As such, many of the examples are specific to this region and not all of his ideas can be generalized.

Fairlie writes that the "defining characteristic" of this "post-industrial rural economy" is "that it is in a state of 'energy descent'" (2010, 257). This means that "most of its energy is derived from biomass, muscle power and other renewable sources such as wind, water and solar, and there is not very much of it, though

enough, let us say, to manufacture, maintain and operate serviceable computers and a reduced amount of machinery” (Fairlie 2010, 257). He further adds that “This is a society which can only afford default levels of livestock” (Fairlie 2010, 257). Much more will be said about this default livestock later, but for now, it is first essential to talk about the implications of this “energy descent.”

One of the most important consequences of this economy lies in its implications for the distribution of human settlements. Indeed, if fossil fuels are a thing of the past, as Fairlie assumes, most of the energy has to come from biomass, the most obvious source being wood. Since in a low energy economy the transportation of wood would be a major waste, it follows that human settlements have to remain close to forests. As he explains: “The rural location of most forests makes them ideally placed primarily (but not exclusively) to serve rural communities. There is an opportunity to link biomass energy policy with rural regeneration and fuel property strategies” (Fairlie 2010, 268). His vision is not, however, only about piecemeal rural regeneration, but about ruralization as a way to make biomass the primary source of energy. As he writes: “The need to bring humans back close to their biomass is not the only reason for dispersing human settlements more evenly around the country, though it is, probably, the primary reason.” (Fairlie 2010, 269)

As was said above about permaculture, this does not mean that there would be no cities, but their size would be conditional: “How large they are will depend upon two things: how much energy there is available to support the demands of industry and an urban lifestyle; and how many people wish to live there?” (Fairlie 2010, 257) It remains that globally, Fairlie is arguing for the decentralization of society. On that issue, like Mollison and Holmgren, he refers to Kropotkin: “The first proponent of post-industrial decentralization was perhaps Peter Kropotkin,

who as early as 1901 noticed that the replacement of steam power by electricity was resulting in lighter machinery more accessible to smaller communities, which ought to have been leading the reintegration of industry with small highly productive farms.” (Fairlie 2010, 286) However, Fairlie’s rationale is not so much related to the idea that cities are energy sinks as to the idea that people have to be dispersed to optimize the use of forests’ biomass. Put differently, it is about regional energy self-sufficiency.

The question that follows this proposition is: what surface of forest is needed? To answer that question, it is more important to analyze food production than energy production. Indeed, the way Fairlie presents his reasoning is to oppose woodlands and grasslands. In other words, the questions becomes, how should the land be divided between woodlands and grasslands? He first notes that there appears to be a bias in UK permaculture literature in favour of trees: “Why do so many permaculturists in the UK shun the virtues of grass and focus on trees, forest gardens and horticulture as a means of producing food?” (Fairlie 2010, 244) He provides many possible explanations to this bias while arguing that grass should be given more importance: “Besides being 100 per cent edible to animals, grass has numerous other advantages that one would have thought would commend it to permaculturists” (Fairlie 2010, 245).

One possible explanation is of particular interest here. He writes: “But while it is hard to see why many permaculturists accord such a low status to grass, it is easy to see why vegans are not interested. Perennial grass is absolutely useless as food for someone who doesn’t eat animal produce. If a vegan wants to grow anything edible on non-arable land, it has to be trees or shrubs.” (Fairlie 2010, 245–46) According to him:

But the sheer volume of vegans at the radical end of the UK spectrum seeking an agricultural expression for their dietary beliefs has, I fear, skewed permaculture in a graminophobic direction. If this is the case, the alliance between the vegan movement and the permaculture movement is potentially helpful to veganism, but doesn't offer anything to permaculture—the one is parasitic upon the other. (Fairlie 2010, 246)

For him, from this influence of the vegan movement follows that “there sometimes seems to be a gentleman's agreement within the permaculture movement that differences between meat-eating and vegan permaculturists should be glossed over.” (Fairlie 2010, 246) Consequently, since grasslands are “inseparably linked to livestock production” (Fairlie 2010, 248), more importance is given to the consensual woodlands.

This is the reason why the issue of livestock was not discussed in the general presentation of permaculture. There are versions of permaculture, like Fairlie's, that give an important place to animals, but there are also vegan versions. The author actually discusses one of the latter, that is, Graham Burnett's *Permaculture, A Beginner's Guide* (2008). After saying that Burnett is an “active campaigner against meat-eating,” Fairlie notes that the book indeed talks about “vegan permaculture,” but without actually saying it. His point is, however, not to claim it is being deceptive, but to highlight that “as it stands the book gives the beginner a distorted picture of what permaculture is or could be.” (2010, 247)

So, what exactly could permaculture be? As was already discussed in the previous chapter, Fairlie argues that organic farming is more efficient with livestock and as such, he is in favour of giving more place to grasslands. Considering that, one of the objectives of his proposition is to “restore the balance of timber and grass which humans and animals, and indeed the full biodiversity of nature require to flourish in any environment” (Fairlie 2010, 269). That being said, it is now possible to understand the role animals can play in his permaculture system. To

do so, the agricultural component of Fairlie's permaculture system has to be presented.

The first thing to note is that his agricultural proposition goes beyond the requirements of organic farming. Indeed, not only does it reject pesticides and artificial fertilizers, but since he proposes a society in a state of energy descent, the use of machinery is difficult to justify. Obviously, in a carbon free society, gasoline tractors would be inadmissible. He, however, says that there would be sufficient renewable energy to "operate [...] a reduced amount of machinery" (Fairlie 2010, 257). For example, "farm traction could be provided by a biomass powered tractor or cultivator; or, alternatively by draft animals. On larger farms both might be used." (Fairlie 2010, 278) Despite this possibility, his agriculture proposition does not rely on any mechanization.

This constraint leads to one of his main arguments for the inclusion of livestock and at the same time, for the preservation of some grasslands. As was already discussed in the previous chapter, Fairlie argues that "whenever there are livestock there is the opportunity to garner and concentrate fertility from the wider environment" (2010, 270). According to him, this is essential to the improvement of the land that will actually be cultivated. Concretely, this is how he describes the process:

We employ plants to extract nitrogen from the atmosphere into the land, and we employ animals to move nitrogen and other nutrients from one bit of land to another. More importantly perhaps, plants cannot extract phosphorus from the atmosphere, so the role of animals in importing surplus phosphorous from outlying areas could be crucial. (Fairlie 2010, 273)

To illustrate this idea, he proposes an example for England: "There are a number of reasons for keeping a sizable population of sheep in the country; in particular to bring surplus phosphate and nitrogen from outlying areas onto arable land, and to supply wool when the cost of importing fossil fuel dependent plastic

fleeces from China rises.” (Fairlie 2010, 269) In other words, not only can animals transport nutrients more effectively than machinery, they also produce products than can further reduce energy consumption.

According to him, there is another task that animals can perform better than machines: “Only livestock can engineer the balance that any society seeks between the realm of light and the realm of shade on any scale beyond the arable.” (Fairlie 2010, 273) This equilibrium has two benefits. First, according to him, it constitutes an environmental good in itself since a “balance of timber and grass” is required for “the full biodiversity of nature [...] to flourish” (Fairlie 2010, 269). Second, he notes that wind turbines “are reliant on grazing animals to keep the area around them clear” (Fairlie 2010, 105). This can be performed without animals, but it is much easier with them: “Where livestock are allowed to roam they bring grass, and where they are excluded trees grow, and it is a relatively effortless matter for humans to calibrate their performance to our will or whim.” (Fairlie 2010, 273) Again, animals are not essential, but they are more efficient.

He sums up this whole idea in the following way: “Finally, the role played by animals in a low carbon permaculture economy to a large extent revolves around the fact that they can walk. God gave them legs, so they might as well use them. No other industry can be operated quite so easily without the use of fossil fuels, but that does depend upon how everything is arranged.” (Fairlie 2010, 277) Put differently, while it is not simple for every industry to get rid of their dependence on oil, for farming, there is an obvious alternative agricultural system.

With this global picture of Fairlie’s proposition, it should be clear why it is understood as a systemic discourse. On the one hand, agriculture and livestock production are understood in a holistic fashion. As he says: “the number and the

species of animals is a function of the system as a whole; overemphasis upon one species, or upon livestock as a whole, will cause waste, inefficiency and stress.” (Fairlie 2010, 43) On the other hand, and most importantly, it only makes sense to take about decentralization, energy descent and of the organization of the landscape from the perspective of a big enough region. With this overall understanding, it is now possible, even if it has already been partially done, to pinpoint exactly the arguments on which he bases his proposition.

5.3 Ethical Meat Arguments

Contrarily to some of the other discourses, the arguments of this one are explicit and clearly formulated. Considering that, it does not seem essential to analyze them in great detail. What is, however, much more important is to consider if they can serve as arguments in favour of ethical meat in general or if they are merely arguments supporting Fairlie’s very detailed proposition for a permaculture livestock economy. Before tackling this question, the arguments will be briefly presented.

At the start of his book, Fairlie clearly indicates what arguments he will use:

There are a number of other matters relating to animals which I have tried to steer clear of. I am not overly concerned with questions of dietary health, nor do I take any interest in the diet and dentition of our remote ancestors. I do have views about the ethics of killing animals and animal welfare, but as far as possible I have tried to keep them out of this book. However I see no reason to disguise the fact that I find factory farming and laboratory experiments upon animals a good deal more reprehensible than killing an animal competently with a knife. (Fairlie 2010, 3)

In other words, he mostly cares about environmental arguments as it should have already been clear. Despite this, it is still possible to analyze some of his ideas related to ethical and health arguments.

About animal ethics, for him, it appears to be mostly a second order benefit of certain environmental arguments. His basic argument goes like this:

In a ruralized agricultural economy, where less meat is produced, the value of farm animals is enhanced, and so, therefore, is the amount of attention that can be devoted to them. We might see a return to the folding of flocks at night, and even their shepherding by day, which would allow more care to be devoted to the welfare of animals, and reduce or eliminate losses from predators. (Fairlie 2010, 273–74)

Later, he adds: “Most important of all to many people, farmers will have more time to devote to the care of each animal, and to employ labour intensive rather than chemical methods of ensuring that they stay healthy.” (Fairlie 2010, 277) In other words, animal welfare is not an end in itself, but it would improve with smaller farms and different agricultural model. It, however, also implies that it can be ignored when another issue appears more important.

This can indeed be seen in his proposition to use animal automotive power. In fact, he says this power is an important component of a low-carbon economy: “In a ruralized society, where decentralization prioritizes proximity, and where human settlement is more attuned to the cycles and rhythms of nature, animal automotive power is more likely to be economically viable. And in a low carbon society where energy is at a premium, it makes no sense to waste it.” (Fairlie 2010, 278) He then goes on to use this argument to lump together veganism and factory farming in a part worth quoting at length:

The energy which animals expend on movement, digestion and reproduction is an unnecessary waste to the vegan, and an unavoidable cost to the industrial farmer—both of whom share a similar reductionist logic. The permaculturist, on the other hand, views animal energy as part of the natural cycle and tries to integrate it into the farming system, rather than using it as a reason for shutting the beast up in a factory, or ejecting it from the system altogether. Farmers have lived and worked like this with plants and animals for centuries, and it is arguable that advocates of permaculture have had to coin a new name only because industrial farmers have brought the term agriculture into disrepute. (2010, 278)

How does that relate to animal welfare? There is no clear answer to this, since it depends on how this automotive power is used. Indeed, not many ethical meat proponents would see a problem with animals walking from a grassland to a farm to carry nutrients in their gut. However, using draft animals as Fairlie proposes is much more controversial. Indeed, from an ethical point of view, it is not clear to what extent the use of working animals, like horses for transportation or oxen for plowing, can be justified. On the one hand, it could be argued that forcing animals to do hard labour is equivalent to inflicting pain or that is difficult to reconcile with the image of a happy animal. On the other hand, it would be easy to provide many examples of animals that do not appear to mind doing work. Whatever the conclusion, the important point here is that Fairlie does not discuss these ideas, which confirm the above point about animal ethics being a second-order concern. Moreover, and most importantly, his proposition is based on the idea that animals have to be used to replace machinery. In other words, animal ethics is only one marginal element in his overall utilitarian ethics to find the most efficient agricultural system.

About environmental arguments, Simon Fairlie is much more explicit. As was said above, this is not surprising if one remembers that he is proposing a low carbon society which would have massive environmental implications. Moreover, considering the number of times he was referred to in the previous chapter, it should also not be surprising that he has something to say about all three types of environmental arguments that were presented (in a different order): (1) mixed farming, (2) ecological leftover approach and (3) the holistic planned grazing approach.

First, the mixed farming arguments are omnipresent. Indeed, as should be clear from the above discussion, animals are important on farms since they both provide manure and can move nutrients. However, being based on permaculture, it could even be argued that he pushes the logic of mixed agriculture much further. As he says:

I view permaculture as an agricultural, ecologic and social system whose efficiency, like Nature's, relies on a maximum of connectivity between different but complementary components, so that the byproduct of one is easily available to provide the feedstock of another. Monoculture does not exist in nature, nor does waste, for whatever is waste to one species is food or habitat to another. (Fairlie 2010, 43)

What this implies is that the system is most efficient when in equilibrium and in that, animals are an essential part.

Second, Simon Fairlie's most important environmental argument remains the one about default livestock which is related to the "ecological leftover approach." As was said in the previous chapter, they both argue that most of the environmental problems associated with animal agriculture are a consequence of production exceeding the limit of ecological leftover food. A direct consequence of this argument is that this limit can only be respected if meat consumption is drastically reduced. Contrarily to most authors, Fairlie tackles this question and even provide some numbers. Again, as was said in the previous chapter, he estimates that using his definition of default livestock, it would be possible to produce 18 kg/person/year of meat and 39 kg/person/year of milk (Fairlie 2010, 39). As such, contrarily to the other discourse, he explicitly recognizes an inconvenient consequence of his proposition.

Third, as was noted in chapter 4, Fairlie remains skeptical about all the benefits of Savory's Holistic Management. He describes it as "a permaculture approach to livestock management which is attracting some interest, and which, though it yet

has to prove itself, deserves an airing in this book.” (Fairlie 2010, 191) After reviewing the literature and seeing that this theory indeed still “has to prove itself,” he concludes that “the results of all these studies are depressing for anyone who (like me) finds Voisin’s and Savory’s theories inspiring.” (Fairlie 2010, 195) In other words, he remains open-minded, but is still not convinced. But, in a way, it seems to him that this does not really matter since, while talking about sheep grazing, he notes:

Whether or not we agree with the theories of Voisin and Savory about pulse grazing, the advice of pastoral authorities always seems to be the same. Allowing flocks promiscuous access to pastures tends to weaken the grass because animals will always head for the tender bite; better to allow flocks intensive access to restricted areas in a timed sequence, allowing grass to grow back. (Fairlie 2010, 274)

In other words, even if Holistic Management does not sequester carbon as some claim, its method of pulse grazing remains, according to Fairlie, the way to go for other reasons.

Finally, he also mentions some human health arguments, but they are not accorded much importance. Two can be identified. First, he notes that animal products would be healthier in the society he proposes: “Being predominantly grass fed in the case of ruminants, and somewhat so in the case of monogastrics, the quality of meat, milk and eggs would be superior in taste and nutrition, and higher in Omega 3 oils.” (Fairlie 2010, 283) In the same vein, he argues that it would reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases and also, the need for antibiotics: “Livestock, kept outside and on grass for longer, would become hardier and less dependent on antibiotics. Diseases associated with factory farm conditions would disappear, and when diseases did occur they would endanger far fewer animals.” (Fairlie 2010, 283) In other words, he only refers to the most conservative human health arguments and does not go into much detail.

In sum, clearly, Simon Fairlie's permaculture livestock economy is fundamentally an environmental proposition. Indeed, both the ethical and human health arguments are second-order benefits and were in no way relevant in the design of the system. Considering that, it is not surprising to notice that he is mostly referred to for his environmental arguments. But, to what extent is it possible to refer to his work outside of the whole context of his systemic proposition? This is the question that will be considered next.

5.4 About the Use of Fairlie's Arguments

Looking back on the previous sections, what Fairlie argues is that in the context of a low-energy economy, the production of ethical meat is more efficient than veganism given that society undergoes a massive decentralization and reduction of meat consumption. In case it was not already clear, the storyline of ethical meat is omnipresent in this. Not only does he propose a third option between factory farming and veganism, but it is done in the context of a ruralization where, obviously, farms would have to be small.

That being said, his argument that is the most often repeated (by ethical meat proponents) is the one concluding that ethical meat is more efficient/environmentally-friendly than vegan agriculture, but this argument has many caveats. On the one hand, there is the issue that his proposition aims for a low-carbon economy. This one will be ignored since, even if they would be less convincing, his ideas would still hold in the current economy. On the other hand, the conditions of ruralization and of reduction in meat consumption are much more important. The point here is not to argue that his conclusions are wrong, but to note that this particular way of deducing that ethical meat as more efficient could be invalid without the above conditions. One extreme case of the use out of context of his conclusions will be provided here.

Since its publication in 2010, Fairlie's *Meat: A Benign Extravagance* was widely quoted. It is famously known for convincing Monbiot to put in doubt his veganism, as he admits in his article *I was wrong about veganism. Let them eat meat—but farm it properly* (2010). This U-turn was significant because while discussing the two environmentalists, Cole describes the latter as having “a position of authority and influence in public discourse” (Cole 2016, 121). Indeed, it did not take long for the *Daily Mail*, “a politically and socially conservative national newspaper in the UK”, (2016, 121) according to Cole, to publish its own article with the unequivocal name *Carnivores rejoice! Eating meat is good for the planet (and that's according to a militant vegan)* (Renton 2010).

In 2013, Monbiot changed his mind again and published an article named: *Why I'm eating my words on veganism—again* (2013). In it, he says: “I should have seen it coming, but I watched in horror as the meat industry used my article to justify the consumption of all meat, however it was produced, rather than just the meat raised on food that humans can't eat.” (Monbiot 2013) In other words, his words and Simon Fairlie's work were used to justify meat produced in conditions vastly different from what Permaculture Default Livestock Economy proposes. That leads to the following question: to what extent can Fairlie's arguments and conclusions be taken out of his systemic proposition? As was said above, two important elements of his proposition are critical here and have to be considered: (1) the importance of ruralization and (2) the drastic reduction of meat consumption.

Firstly, Fairlie's system requires a minimum level of ruralization to be functional. Even if the main reason for doing so, to bring people closer to biomass, is ignored, it remains an essential part of his default livestock strategy. Indeed, one of the

benefits of dispersing people on the land is not only to bring them closer to their source of food, but also bring the animals closer to people. The latter is important because it is only with this proximity that it makes sense to feed leftover food to animals. Without this proximity, the usable leftover food produced in cities would have to be transported to rural areas which might not make much sense from an environmental point of view, especially in a low carbon economy. This is also a problem with vegan organic agriculture that Fairlie is happy to point out (Fairlie 2010, 79–80). The point is not to say that ruralization is essential to the use of leftover food, but to note that, while trying to reduce fossil fuel consumption, the use of leftover food can only be maximized with ruralization. In other words, it is not fair to assume that all of the leftover food can easily be used to feed animals when part of it is produced in a dense urban zone. This, in turn, implies that the full benefits of Fairlie’s proposition are not entirely relevant without a certain degree of ruralization.

Second, another essential component of his proposition can be identified: the need for a drastic reduction in meat consumption. As was noted above, Fairlie recognizes that the quantity of meat that could be produced using the default livestock strategy is much lower than current consumption. Considering that, according to him, since the default livestock is the only one that can be produced with minimal environmental impact, it does not make sense to talk about the best way to produce meat while the level of production is way over the prescribed limit. Put differently, it could be argued that a reduction in consumption is essential before “green meat” can even be considered, but this idea rarely is a central element of the ethical meat discourse. On the contrary, in the *Daily Mail* article discussed above, Fairlie is quoted as saying that meat “is too cheap and we eat too much of it,” but it refrains from mentioning the extent of the prescribed reduction. (Renton 2010) In other words, the way his conclusions are usually

presented gives the impression that meat can be environmentally friendly, whatever its level of consumption/production.

Again, the point here is not to argue that Fairlie is wrong or that most proponents of ethical meat are dishonest when they use his work. From a discursive perspective, what is striking is how once an argument in favour ethical meat is deployed within the discourse-coalition, it can be disconnected from its source. The *Daily Mail* example is an extreme case, but it is not an exception. As was said earlier, Fairlie is quoted by many authors and the context of his conclusions are rarely given. What this highlights is how, when an argument in favour of ethical meat is constructed, it becomes loosely included in the discourse-coalition for every proponent to use as they please. But doesn't that implicate that the ethical meat coalition is understood as a coherent whole? Isn't the point of this chapter to explore its internal divisions? This tension is critical to understand the functioning of the discourse-coalition and will be analyzed in the concluding section.

6. Conclusion: Power from Division?

Now that all four discourses have been presented, it seems essential to return to the reason why a typology was developed in the first place. As was said at the end of the previous chapter, with a variety of arguments and an apparent lack of internal consistency, it appeared more useful to consider the ethical meat discourse not as a coherent discourse, but as a discourse-coalition founded on a simple storyline. It was, thus, possible in this chapter to identify four discourses based on it. While they all respect the logic of the storyline, it should now be clear that they do not all talk about the same things and sometimes contradict themselves. This is not surprising since some contradictions were already apparent after presenting the arguments. Yet, despite these important internal

divisions, the various discourses somehow still appear related to one another, which further confirms the pertinence of using the concept of discourse-coalition. In other words, the ethical meat coalition appears united in its disunion or coherent in its incoherence. While this might appear contradictory or a sign of weakness, to conclude this chapter, it will be argued that it is precisely this ambiguity that gives political power to this coalition.

Before proceeding, however, it appears important to clearly highlight both its coherence and incoherence. To do so, the discourses will be briefly compared. For the coherence, it obviously stems from their common root in the ethical meat storyline. Indeed, they all more or less present themselves as the third option to avoid choosing between factory farming and veganism. Moreover, the symbol of this alternative solution remains for the most part the metaphor of the small farms that can produce meat while avoiding all the ethical, environmental and human health problems associated with industrial meat. Beyond that, many of the arguments are compatible in the sense that they do not contradict each other. For example, in many places Salatin recommends that people keep chickens at home in a way that is not very different from the urban homesteading discourse (2011, 114–15). Similarly, partisans of that discourse often recognize that they cannot always be self-sufficient and agree to buy ethical meat from other producers. Those producers can be certified by a third party or not, the discourse does not seem to favour one or the other. The overall impression is that they do all talk about the same thing and that ethical meat is indeed a reasonable way to keep eating meat, but with a clean conscience. In other words, it is mostly when looking at their political effect that the discourse appears coherent.

The coherence, however, stops there since when one takes a closer look at what they propose and at some of their arguments, things are not that simple. A few

examples are noteworthy. First, Fairlie's idea to use animals as draft power would be difficult to accept for humane discourse proponents who aspire to see happy animals and even more difficult for the urban homesteaders who often see their animals as pets. Second, about the environment, the various levels of analysis are not necessarily coherent. Indeed, for Fairlie, the only way to assess the environmental impact of an agricultural proposition is from a systemic perspective, while for the others, it only has to be achieved at the level of the farm or the household, which can lead to the omission of some externalities. For example, both Salatin and urban homesteaders talked about buying external chicken feed.

Another important difference is the way the various discourses mobilize "history". As was clearly seen in both the urban homesteading and agrarian populist discourses, a historically-inflected storyline is deployed, while the humane meat discourse is mostly presented in an ahistorical way. The permaculture livestock economy discourse could also be read as being deeply historical, but this kind of argument is not used by Fairlie. For the discourses with such a perspective, their historical narrative could arguably be understood as way to draw the reader into a sense of nostalgia for a lost mode of living that needs to be recreated. Moreover, they could also easily be related to the community arguments that were presented in the last chapter.

More could be given, but what is interesting here is how these issues are for the most part ignored by all authors. Again, as was mentioned in the literature review, there are not many internal debates within the ethical meat literature. The only exception, which was not talked about much, is the issue of labelling. Some authors argue that it is essential, while other disagree.

That being said, the above argument was that it is precisely from this tension between coherence and incoherence that the coalition derives its political power. This can be deduced from three points: (1) the coalition has multiple entry points, (2) the diffusion of criticism and (3) the transferability of arguments.

First, the idea that the coalition is composed of very different discourses provides it with a corresponding number of ways to convince people. Put differently, in the logic of the argumentative game, each discourse provides a different way to present ethical meat as attractive. For example, for an individual or family, the humane meat discourse is a very easy way to buy into the logic of ethical meat. An environmental organization could, however, be more attracted to Fairlie's ideas as he proposes a more systematic environmental argumentation. But if a person or an individual is attracted to ethical meat, they all end up, as was said above, with the impression that it is the best solution. It is worth repeating this since it is precisely this impression that for the most part nullifies this issue of incoherence or, using Hajer's concept, that bring about discursive closure. In other words, the fact that the discourse can be packaged in various ways gives the coalition considerable attractiveness because it can easily be adapted to different audiences.

Second, the ambiguity at the heart of the coalition also provides a convenient way to defuse criticism. The case of Salatin is perfect to illustrate this dynamic. As was seen in the animal rights literature review, many authors focus on him and the agrarian populist discourse to criticize the idea of ethical meat as a whole. Indeed, from the point of view of a progressive animal rights activists, this discourse appears as the weak spot of the whole coalition. But as was seen throughout this chapter, Salatin's vision is only one of many. Considering that, for ethical meat proponents, it is easy to disregard arguments criticizing him for the simple

reason that they do not concern them. More generally, since this is a loose coalition, there is no reason to assume that the criticism of one of its discourses affects the other. In other words, coherent/incoherent tension enables people to distance themselves from part of the coalition when it suits them while benefiting from the fact that they all support the same storyline.

Third, an inverse dynamic can also be observed. As was said at the end of the permaculture livestock economy discourse section, Fairlie's arguments are often used out of their context. The underlying idea that makes this transfer of arguments possible is that the coalition is somehow coherent, and as such, they can be used in many ways to support ethical meat. Put differently, by assuming that there is some coherence in the coalition, it no longer appears necessary to question this transferability. The result of this is that the ethical meat coalition ends up with multiple arguments that are not all compatible since they have been developed in entirely different contexts, but that are all used as if they were associated directly to the idea of ethical meat. An important consequence of this is that ethical meat can be very effectively defended since, in the argumentative game, it can perfectly adapt its argumentation to the context and the people. Again, this is only possible by having a coalition that is simultaneously coherent and incoherent.

The overall picture of the ethical meat discourse that is drawn here is one of a polymorphic coalition. One that can attract people by presenting itself in an adapted way. One that can diffuse criticism by temporarily rejecting one of its parts when it is convenient. One that can freely draw from a set of arguments that are not always coherent to develop a convincing case in favour of ethical meat. As was just argued, this is only possible with a coalition that is both coherent, with its storyline, and incoherent, with its multiple discourses.

While this explains why the ethical meat discourse-coalition is so influential, its flexibility can be a double-edged sword. Indeed, while its adaptability makes it more attractive, it also opens the door to co-optation. As was already seen in the context of the humane meat discourse, when faced with various labels with different ambitions, it can be easy to just conclude that they are all equal and just go with the cheapest option. This is precisely the kind of dynamic that can be analyzed by focusing on the process of passive revolution and this is what the next chapter will do.

CHAPTER SIX: The Ethical Meat Passive Revolution

The two previous chapters focused on the arguments used by proponents of ethical meat as well as on the way different discourses could be identified within the discourse-coalition. As such, it could be said that it was inward focused, that is, that it was more concerned about the internal dynamics of the coalition than in its impacts on the rest of society. While, as was argued multiple times in this project, this was necessary to have a clearer picture of the ethical meat phenomenon, it does not provide much information about the passive revolution it is part of. Indeed, to analyze this process, we have to explore how the coalition interacts with other actors involved in the meat eating debate.

To that end, it was proposed in chapter 3 to focus specifically on the way three types of organizations engaged with the ethical meat discourse. It was noted that to analyze the process of passive revolution, it was sufficient to only have a look at key actors in the debates. It was then proposed to focus on the meat industry, animal advocacy organizations and environmental organizations. Since it is already known that these organizations engage with the coalition, the question is to see how they do so and it was suggested that this is precisely where the discourse typology would be useful. Indeed, by identifying the discourse through which these organizations relate to the ethical meat storyline, it is believed that the process of passive revolution can be analyzed.

However, it is not entirely true that nothing about the passive revolution can be learned by looking at the internal dynamic of the ethical meat coalition. Indeed, by going back to all the previous chapters, a few key hints can be identified and it is important to highlight them here since they will be needed to guide the analysis

of these organizations. More precisely, the two mechanisms of passive revolution that were presented in chapter 3 are already apparent, that is, depoliticization and absorption. As was said then, the former is best understood as sidelining the debate about the legitimacy of meat eating or presenting it as irrelevant, while the latter implies the adoption of the ethical meat discourse by organizations that used to be, or could have become, critical of meat consumption. Before proceeding to the analysis of the organizations, the hints about these processes will be presented.

On the one hand, broader aspects of depoliticization can already be found within parts of the discourse-coalition. Indeed, it should not be surprising that individualist discourses, the humane meat discourse and the urban homesteading discourse, all focus more on daily practices than on transforming animal agriculture. This is not to say that they are not political, but that their political aspects are best understood as consequences of changes in individual consumption/production patterns than as their main objectives. Another aspect of depoliticization can also be seen specifically in the case of the humane meat discourse. As was seen in chapter 5, the logic behind certification implies a codification of farming practices which can be easily be understood as being part of a process of technicalization of the debate. In other words, the debate about the legitimacy of meat eating is replaced by a technical debate about the acceptability of specific practices.

On the other hand, a process of absorption was also partially visible. This was seen already in chapter 2 when the animal rights literature was presented and this is why it is proposed in this chapter to have a look, not at the literature, but at the actual practices of animal advocacy organizations. For instance, while the new welfarist authors were in favour of abolition, they were nevertheless

sympathetic to the idea of ethical meat. Another potential absorption process could also be visible with environmental organizations. Indeed, in both chapters 4 and 5, not only were environmental arguments very important, but they were also the most divisive ones. Put differently, it is with these arguments that ethical meat and veganism were the most vigorously opposed. As such, it should be particularly important to see how environmental organizations react to this.

All these elements will be discussed in great detail in the fourth section of this chapter when the process of passive revolution is analyzed. For now, the important point is that the analysis of the organizations will focus on identifying the two key processes of passive revolution, that is, depoliticization and absorption. To that end, each type of organization will be presented in the following sections.

1. Meat Industry

The first place to look for engagement with the ethical meat coalition is in the meat industry itself. However, before such an analysis can be done, it is necessary to define what the industry is. Surprisingly, while this is a difficult exercise because of its vastness, its key players are very easy to identify. As DeMello writes, “In the past several decades, virtually every aspect of the meat industry has become increasingly consolidated,” with a “small number of powerful chicken, pork, and beef producers and processors dominat[ing] the U.S. market.” (2012, 136) While this accurately describes the consolidation of the industry, it does not clearly distinguish meat producers and meat processors, but it turns out that this is not important for the present analysis. Indeed, with the emergence of “supply chain production”⁴⁰ in the past decades, the key players clearly are the processors.

⁴⁰ While the consolidation of the meat industry has lead “toward fewer and larger farms and ranches”, in 2001, “a new trend” was already visible, supply chain production. As Barkema et al. were already writing at the time, “Supply chains by-pass traditional commodity markets and rely on contractual arrangements among the chain participants.” (2001, 36) Hendrickson

As such, in this section, it is the engagement of the meat processors⁴¹ that will be explored by assuming that they reflect the whole industry.

Looking at the statistics for the United States, four key players can be identified: (1) *Tyson Foods*, (2) *JBS USA* (a subsidiary of *JBS S.A.*, a Brazilian company), (3) *Smithfield Foods* (a subsidiary of *WH Group*, a Chinese company), and (4) *Cargill*⁴². *JBS USA* will, however, be mostly ignored because at the time of writing this, their website did not provide much information and they had not published an annual report. Despite the fact that these companies clearly have international operations, the analysis will focus on the perspective of the United States.

As will be seen, not surprisingly, their positions and discourses do not vary much. Indeed, while they are competitors, they share a wide range of interests, most importantly, their reliance on factory farming. Considering that, they will all be analyzed together and notable differences will be pointed out along the way. This analysis will be divided into two steps. Since factory farming is the target of a lot

et al. defines it in the following way: "In supply chain production, livestock is grown and sold under contract. While this guarantees a market for the product in much the same manner as commodity crop programs, the independent production decisions are removed from the control of the producers, and are instead the purview of major food companies. This has resulted in a shift in many livestock market segments from open markets to contract sales." (2008, 316)

41 It would also have been pertinent to research the position of the various trade associations and/or lobbying groups. As DeMello notes, "The National Cattlemen's Beef Association is one of the most powerful such groups in the country." (2012, 137) After a quick survey, it was, however, noticed that they all, more or less, share the same positions. As such, for the current purpose, looking at the key industrial players should be sufficient.

42 According to the *Meat & Poultry's* annual top 100 of meat and poultry processors, these four companies are the biggest in the United States based on net sales (Meat & Poultry 2017). Moreover, according to a compilation by Philip H. Howard, in 2016, the first three controlled "63% of pork packing," and the first two controlled "46% of beef packing and 38% of poultry." (2017) Also noteworthy, *Tyson*, *JBS*, and *WH Group* are also the world three largest meat processors (P. Howard 2017). It would be possible to go into more details, but not only is it not entirely relevant, it is also particularly confusing since with the continuing consolidation of the industry, the statistics keep changing. For example, *Cargill Pork* used to be one of the biggest pork processors in the United States, but it has since been bought by *JBS USA* in 2015 (Singh 2015).

criticism, the first part of the analysis will investigate the way they justify and legitimate their current practices. The second part will look at the initiatives they take to prevent subsequent criticism. In other words, it could be said that both their defensive reactions and their offensive reactions will be analyzed.

1.1 Defensive Reactions

For the first part of this analysis, most of the observations are fairly obvious in the sense that the industry has been defending its practices for decades. It is nevertheless necessary to look at the way they do so since this analysis is interested more in the way they formulate these reactions than at their substantive content. Their reactions will be analyzed by looking at their response to four issues: (1) the industrial aspect of their operation, (2) animal welfare, (3) the environment and (4) human health.

An important part of their response is concerned with the justification of the “industrial” aspect of their practice. An obvious way to start the exploration of this justification is through the expression “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation” (CAFO), a practice directly related to factory farming. As should not be surprising, this expression is negatively connoted in the ethical meat literature, but it is still used as a technical term by the animal industry. They justify this kind of operation with two simple arguments: CAFOs are there to fulfill the demand and are needed to feed the world. *Cargill* presents this logic with a surprising transparency: “To provide protein⁴³ on the scale required by current market demand, and future needs to feed a growing global population, [CAFO] represent an important tool used to optimize the supply of wholesome, nutritious, abundant and affordable protein.” (Cargill 2018c) A similar acceptance of the expression

⁴³ Beyond the basic argument, two further points are noteworthy about the process of abstracting animals to “proteins”. First, it can be understood as a way to hide the ethical implications of eating meat. Second, it implies that animals are the only source of proteins.

“factory farming” could, however, not be found. Here, *Smithfield Foods* provide a clear example. In their *Corporate Social Responsibility Summary Report 2010/11*, they present a long quote from Janeen Salak-Johnson, an Associate Professor in the *Department of Animal Sciences* of the *University of Illinois*. About factory farming, she has the following to say:

Thanks to the Internet, many young people today think of animal production as barbaric and cruel, and they toss around the term ‘factory farming’ to describe production systems. I dislike the term ‘factory farming’ because that is not what it is. The term ‘factory’ makes one think of an assembly line, where everything is automated and no individual attention is paid. That couldn’t be farther from the truth. (Smithfield Foods 2011, 24)

In other words, she tries to counter the argument according to which in industrial farms, animals are reduced to the level of natural resource input.

Between their positions on CAFO and on factory farming, it appears the companies are trying to walk a fine line. Indeed, they do not deny that there are some industrial aspects to their practices since these are associated with productivity and efficiency, but not so much as to be presented as factories since that would imply that the animals are poorly treated. In one sense, it could be argued that they try to have it both ways, but they prefer to talk about a balancing act. *Cargill* perfectly sums up this idea: “Animals in our care are raised and harvested in a way that is balanced to achieve optimum benefits for animals while addressing societal needs.” (Thoni 2018) Here, just like in the previous quote from *Cargill*, “social needs” refer to an external meat demand. In other words, the meat industry is forced to use industrial practices to fulfill its social responsibility.

Beyond general comments about their farming practices, they also respond, just like the ethical meat discourse, to the three pillars of veganism: animal ethics, the environment and human health. Broadly, they all argue that their animals are

treated well, that their production is sustainable, and that their meat is not unhealthy. Again, it is the way in which these ideas are presented that is important here.

About animal welfare, they usually remain vague about what that actually means. The same can be said about the expression “humane” which is often used, but rarely elaborated upon. For example, they use formulations like: “We strive for sustainable practices in all business areas, including animal well-being.” (Hayes and Whitmore 2017) and “We are committed to leading our industry by developing and implementing best practices in the area of animal welfare.” (Cargill 2018d) To give some legitimacy to these claims, they use two recurring references: the “internationally-recognized Five Freedoms for animal well-being” (Hayes and Whitmore 2017) and the “internationally renowned animal welfare expert Dr. Temple Grandin.” (Cargill 2018e) It is important to note that both of these references were also used by proponents of humane meat standards and that the latter is also presented as a reference by Pollan (2002a).

While their conception of animal welfare certainly is not clear, the actual guidelines they follow are. They obviously claim that they respect the United States laws, for example the *Humane Slaughter Act* (Tyson Foods 2018c), but they also claim to do more: “Our programs comply with, and often exceed, legal requirements.” (Cargill 2018d) These further requirements are usually based on the guidelines provided by trade associations/lobbying groups like the *National Cattlemen’s Beef Association*, the *National Chicken Council*, the *National Turkey Federation* (Tyson Foods 2018c), and the *North American Meat Institute* (Smithfield Foods 2018, 26). They also refer to voluntary certifications provided by governmental institutions like *Pork Quality Assurance Plus* by the *National Pork Board* and *Process Verified Program* by the *U.S. Department of Agriculture*

(Smithfield Foods 2018, 26). In both cases, it can, however, be said that these constitute self-regulation. As was argued in chapter 2, the animal industry has an immense influence on the legislative process. Moreover, some of these certifications, like the *Process Verified Program*, are being criticized as humane-washing by the *Animal Welfare Institute* (see chapter 5).

Regarding the environment, they have a slightly different approach. While not explicitly recognizing the problems, they all argue that they are improving their practices by referring for the most part to three environmental issues: water conservation, climate change and energy. They usually present their improvements and objectives in technical terms without talking about the context or explaining why they are important. For example, in a paragraph about water conservation:

Cargill beef processing facilities have improved water use efficiency by more than 20 percent since water reduction goals were first established in 2001. Our award-winning water conservation efforts at our Friona, Texas beef processing plant, for example, have reduced water use by 19 percent over the past six years, saving more than 125 million gallons when comparing 2008 water usage to 2014. Treated water from the plant is provided to local farmers for crop production, reducing their need for water from an underground aquifer. The plant team has created methods for capturing water used in heat exchangers and other equipment that can be reused for exterior plant cleaning.” (Cargill 2018b)

While these achievements look impressive, the lack of context makes them difficult to appreciate. They tend to give the impression that they want to respond to some criticism without actually explaining the problems they want to address.

A similar dynamic can be seen when they argue that other issues have to be included when considering environmental problems. For example, in its *2013 Sustainability Report*, *Tyson Foods* writes the following, again, about water:

Our first priority is to ensure the wholesomeness and safety of our food products, and water is essential to producing safe food. We recognize water

of suitable quality and volume is a finite resource. We also understand the important balance between protecting product quality and conserving a natural resource. (Tyson Foods 2014)

In other words, while the environment is important, it has to be balanced out with other important considerations. Another example from *Smithfield* highlights the relation with meat demand. In its *2016 Sustainability Report*, *Smithfield Foods* writes: “For more than a decade, *Smithfield* has worked to significantly reduce our water and energy use and the amount of waste we send to landfill. We’re continuing to pursue challenging targets that call for even greater improvements, all while our business expands in response to increasing global demand for pork.” (Smithfield Foods 2018, 52) In both cases, they appear to try to improve their environmental bottom line, again, without actually saying what the problems are, by arguing that there is a limit to what they can do since they have to find a balance to also address other issues.

When it comes to human health, the companies mostly focus on antibiotic use. Here, they partially recognize the problems, that is, that the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms can lead to the breeding of drug-resistant bacteria. In its 2016 sustainability report, *Smithfield Foods* writes: “We understand, however, that potential antibiotic resistance is a public health concern.” (Smithfield Foods 2018, 35) *Cargill* is a bit more nuanced by saying: “There is ongoing scientific debate whether the use of antibiotics in animals can adversely affect human health by increasing the resistance of disease-causing microbes.” (Cargill 2018a) Some of them even propose antibiotic-free brands (Cargill 2018a; Tyson Foods 2018b). In general, their publications give the impression that they are doing a lot to solve the problem. For example, “In 2016, Cargill eliminated 20 percent of antibiotics that are also used in human medicine from its beef cattle feed yards and those of its partner Friona Industries. The move affects approximately 1.2 million animals per year.” (Cargill 2018a) In other words, just as they did with the environmental

issues, they provide impressive numbers yet they are mostly out of context and do not explain the underlying problem.

From this short review of the industry's defensive reactions, three conclusions can already be drawn. First, while they do not explicitly recognize the problems identified by their critics, the fact that they take the time to respond to them is a form of implicit acknowledgment. Second, a recurrent line of defence is that there is a limit to what they can do for animal welfare, the environment, and human health since they have to find a balance between these three considerations as well as other "social needs." Third, the most important social need is the meat demand that is naturalized as an external factor to which the industry has to respond. It is because of this demand that they need industrial methods to produce enough "proteins." Putting all these elements together, it appears that the industry adopts an almost powerless position where they argue that they are doing their best, but it is not their fault if the demand for meat keeps going up. From that perspective, it is relatively easy to understand this position as part of a process of depoliticization where meat demand is not problematized. This, however, is not directly related to the industry's engagement with ethical meat. Indeed, it could be argued that it has been using this kind of argument in response to criticism a long time before the emergence of ethical meat. This engagement should become clearer when discussing the industry's initiatives.

1.2 Proactive Reactions

Now that the way the industry presents and justifies its current practices has been detailed, it is possible to have a look at the part of their discourse that is more relevant to the passive revolution analysis, that is, the initiatives that they are taking to prevent further criticism. The first thing to note is that even before ethical meat became popular, the meat industry was already taking initiatives to

present its practices as animal-friendly and sustainable. For example, in 2000, “Tyson Foods became one of the first companies in the meat industry to create an Office of Animal Well-Being” (Tyson Foods 2018a) and in 2004, they “developed a new, comprehensive environmental policy.” (Tyson Foods 2006, 25) Similarly, in 2001, *Smithfield Foods* “established an active research and development unit dedicated to identifying environmentally responsible and economical technologies for our operations” (Smithfield Foods 2003, 8) and in 2002, they created an “Animal Welfare Management System.” (Smithfield Foods 2003, 3) If it is remembered that the inception of the ethical meat discourse was positioned with the publication of Pollan’s *An Animal’s Place* in 2002, most of these happened before. As such, they can be understood as reaction to more general criticism of factory farming that was already present at the time, in part from the animal advocacy organizations. Considering that, they are not the best to understand the process of passive revolution.

There are, however, two much more recent initiatives that are directly engaging the ethical meat discourse: (1) the *Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef* (GRSB) and (2) *The Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply* (CSES). Not only do they involve the four big companies that were discussed in the previous section, but also various actors that can be considered as having vested interest in the perpetuation of animal exploitation. As such, they also provide a unique opportunity to explore the inner workings of the Animal-Industrial Complex. Both of them will be presented and then analyzed.

The GRSB was formally launched in 2012 (p. 3) (GRSB 2014, 3). Its website presents its vision the following way: “We envision a world in which all aspects of the beef value chain are environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable.” (GRSB 2017) As for its mission: “The GRSB mission is to

advance continuous improvement in sustainability of the global beef value chain through leadership, science and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration.” (GRSB 2017) While this sounds like a reasonable environmental mission, Mother Jones argues that it “is not so much an environmental organization as a meat industry group.” (Liebelson 2014) To have a better idea, an analysis of its members and of its discourse appears necessary.

Looking at the organization’s list of members, only one idea comes to mind: Animal-Industrial Complex. As it was presented earlier, the Animal-Industrial Complex is constituted by organizations and institutions that have interests in continued animal exploitation. The list is divided into six categories. For each, the most relevant names from a US perspective will be listed. In “Producer and Producer Group Constituency,” the *National Cattlemen’s Beef Association* and the *National Livestock Producers Association*. In “Commerce and Processing Constituency,” two of the previous companies, *Cargill* and *JBS USA* (only *Tyson Foods* is missing since *Smithfield Foods* does not process beef) as well as chemical and pharmaceutical companies *Bayer Animal Health*, *Dow AgroSciences*, *Merck Animal Health* and *Zoetis* (“the world’s largest maker of medicines for pets and farm animals” (CBS News 2013) in 2013 and previously a *Pfizer* subsidiary). In “Retail Constituency,” *McDonald’s* and *A&W*. In “Civil Society Constituency,” the *Savory Institute*, the *Department of Animal Science* of *Texas A&M University*, and environmental organizations such as *Rainforest Alliance*, *The Nature Conservancy* and *World Wildlife Fund for Nature*.

From this sample of the organization’s membership, three observations can be made. First, the entities in the first three categories not only have an interest in the continuation of animal exploitation, but also in the continuation of factory farming. For the big meat producers, meat processors and their representative

organizations, this is easily understandable as this is the foundation of their current business model. For the chemical and pharmaceutical companies, it is important to remember that factory farming depends on industrial agriculture and that “approximately 70% of medically important antibiotics sold in the US are sold for livestock use.” (Kar 2015) Second, it could be argued that environmental organizations do not fit in the Animal-Industrial Complex, but it happens that, as will be seen on the section on these organizations, the three mentioned are actually not very critical of factory farming. Third, the presence of the *Savory Institute*, an organization that was mostly associated with the ethical meat discourse, is interesting. Indeed, so far, only Grandin was used by both sides. The fact that these two actors are referred to by both the industry and the ethical meat coalition is puzzling and would merit further investigation that goes beyond the scope of this research.

Now that the structure of the organizations is understood, its discourse can be investigated. At the most basic level the GRSB defines “sustainable beef as a socially responsible, environmentally sound and economically viable product that prioritizes Planet; People; Animals; and Progress” (GRSB 2018b). Their website then presents five principles of sustainable beef: (1) Natural Resources (managing “natural resources responsibly” and enhancing “ecosystem health”), (2) People & The Community (protecting and respecting “human rights”...), (3) Animal Health & Welfare (respecting and managing “animals to ensure their health and welfare”), (4) Food (ensuring “the safety and quality of beef products”...), and (5) Efficiency & Innovation (encouraging “innovation”, optimizing “production”, reducing “waste”, and adding “to economic viability”) (GRSB 2018b). About these various criteria, two observations can be made.

First, as Mother Jones noted back in 2014, in the organization's definition of sustainable beef, the "guidelines are short on specifics." (Liebelson 2014) The magazine identifies some issues where this lack of specificity is problematic: working conditions, climate change and antibiotics uses. The GRSB, however, argues that it voluntarily focuses on "the levels of Principles and Criteria and deliberately avoids the equally important, but more context-specific levels of indicators, metrics or practices." (GRSB 2014, 14) Since "context-specific elements including indicators and metrics are only applicable in a narrow range of environments and systems," they "need to be developed at the local level." (GRSB 2014, 14) That is why a United States branch was founded in 2015, the *U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef* (USRSB). In their foundation announcement, they indeed said that "they will identify sustainability indicators, establish verification methodologies, and generate field project data to test and confirm sustainability concepts for use throughout the United States." (USRSB 2015) As of 2017, that has yet to be done, but nothing surprising should be expected since they mention that "similar to GRSB, the USRSB will not mandate standards or verify the performance of individual beef value chain participants." (USRSB 2015) In other words, while the logic is similar to humane meat certifications, it is not put into practice in the same way.

Second, in the principle of Efficiency & Innovation, the first criterion goes as follows: "Cattle are selected and managed to continually optimize available resources and suit their environment, while meeting market demand and consumer preferences." (GRSB 2018a) In this, just like in the previous section, they present the demand as an external and uncontrollable force. The same assumption can be found in its Announcement News Release where in less than two pages it is mentioned twice: "play a key role in meeting the global challenge of feeding the world in a sustainable manner" and "balancing social, economic

and environmental demands to feed a growing world while conserving natural resources, reducing waste and preserving biodiversity.” (USRSB 2015) In other words, meat demand is presented as an independent factor that will necessarily increase and from that perspective, the meat industry appears as a responsible actor trying to respond to it. However, as was said in the section about their defensive reactions, this can be used to justify questionable practices.

In sum, putting these two elements together, they propose loose guidelines while pointing out that they nonetheless have to fulfill the global demand for beef. It is difficult to imagine how this could lead to significant improvement in the industry practices. However, the point here is not to criticize this initiative, but to highlight how, while adopting language that could also be seen in the ethical meat discourse, most notably the idea of sustainable beef, the overall argument to justify their practices remains mostly the same as in the defensive reactions. Moreover, the idea of developing indicators and methodologies is not that different from the idea of humane meat certifications and can easily be understood as part of the technicalization of the debate.

The CSES is both very different and very similar to the previous organization. It is different because it was created to fulfill a specific mission which is now over. Its objective “was to evaluate various laying hen housing systems by considering the impact of multiple variables on a sustainable system.” (CSES 2018) In other words, it does not have an ongoing mission and it is now mostly used to publicize its final research results. It is, however, similar when looking at its members. Briefly, it includes two of the four companies, *Cargill* and *Tyson Foods* (*Smithfield Foods* and *JBS USA* do not deal with eggs), one producer association, *United Egg Producers*, one retailer, *McDonald’s*, and five universities. It was also advised by the *American Veterinary Medical Association* and the *USDA Agricultural Research*

Service. Despite the presence of universities, it can also be assimilated to the Animal-Industrial Complex.

Considering its missions, CSES has a different approach, but the final logic is similar. As was said above, its objective was to produce research comparing the sustainability of “various laying hen housing systems” (CSES 2018). While they do not directly define “sustainability,” they also present a very wide understanding of the concept. Indeed, they note that their “research assessed five areas of sustainability: Animal Health and Well-Being, Food Safety and Quality, Environmental Impact, Worker Health and Safety, and Food Affordability.” (CSES 2015c, 1) While all these considerations are without a doubt important, the simple fact that they are simultaneously considered implies that they have to be balanced. The presence of “food affordability” is particularly interesting. While it is an important consideration from a food accessibility point of view, it can also be easily used to excuse lower animal welfare and greater environmental impacts. It is worth remembering that even if in the ethical meat literature some authors talk about balancing various considerations, they rarely include the price in these. On the contrary, they usually recognize that ethical meat is necessarily more expensive. Considering that, from an ethical meat point of view, it seems reasonable to be suspicious when seeing “affordability” as a goal in itself.

This is confirmed when looking at the actual details of their research. Its starting point is revealing:

Today, society is scrutinizing agriculture and demanding increased accountability that practices used to produce animal products are sustainable, ensuring a wholesome, safe, environmentally—and socially—responsible, and inexpensive food source. Some non-governmental organizations have used legal means to set standards for farm animal welfare, specifically focusing on regulating or eliminating certain kinds of housing, particularly housing for egg-laying hens. However, the potential

impacts of these changes on the overall sustainability of egg production in the U.S. have received limited research attention. (CSES 2015a, 4)

While they never say what “set of standards for farm animal welfare” they are talking about, considering that there are not that many in the United States, it is reasonable to assume that they include in their critique some of the organizations that were presented in the humane meat discourse. Bluntly, they are saying that these standards are not rigorous since they are not based on research.

While this could be considering insulting for the proponents of these standards, it would be difficult to argue against more research comparing “various laying hen housing systems“. However, when looking at what systems are actually compared, there appears to be something missing. Indeed, the three considered systems, conventional cage, enriched colony and cage-free aviary, are all industrial systems in the sense that they are compatible with the concentration and mechanization needed for factory farming. In other words, if it is assumed that they are indeed criticizing humane meat labels, it is quite surprising to notice that they do not include in their comparison the systems they were arguing were not based on research. It appears that the organization anticipated this criticism since in the FAQ section of their website, they reply to the question: “Why wasn’t free-range or pasture-based researched?” The answer:

Since fully indoor housing systems were the most common systems used in commercial egg production in the U.S. at the time the research was planned, that was where we focused our efforts. This also had the benefit of reducing variability by providing a relatively similar level of environmental control (light, temperature) in all three systems. (CSES 2015b, 2)

While from a practical point of view, this justification makes sense, it still ends up favouring the status quo, that is, factory farming. Put differently, from an industrial perspective, this is a reasonable answer and the results of this research might indeed be used to improve industrial practices, yet it remains that from an

ethical meat point of view the “real” sustainable production systems would appear to have been ignored on purpose.

Another way to look at this would be to understand this selection of systems to compare as part of an inclusion/exclusion process within the meat industry. The three compared systems are included as relevant practices, while the ones that are associated with small farms are excluded. In other words, the industry defines itself in such a way to exclude *a priori* any production systems that are proposed by most versions of ethical meat. Again, this can be interpreted as a continuation of its attempt to present ethical meat as not rigorous or not serious. From that perspective, the selection of systems is not as innocent as they pretend.

Here as well, even if the ethical meat discourse is partially adopted, the idea of having to balance multiple considerations remains central. There is, however, a new element. With this initiative, the industry engages in a process of legitimization of its own practices by arguing that they are based on research while simultaneously excluding ethical meat from the boundaries of the industry. However, even if they end up not considering current certifications, the way they present their own research shows that it is through the humane meat discourse that they engage with the ethical meat coalition.

1.3 Conclusion: An Ongoing Process of Depoliticization

Based on the above presentation of the meat industry, two general observations can be made. First, as was mentioned multiple times, they are arguing, using expressions similar to those used by the ethical meat discourse, that they are improving their practices without actually recognizing that there were problems to begin with. Again, this can be understood as an indication that for the industry, the criticism it faces is important enough that they feel they need to reply to it.

While this criticism can come from multiple fronts, including animal advocacy organizations, CSES explicitly replies to ethical meat certifications. Second, as this last point indicates, it is mostly through the humane meat discourse that the industry engages with the ethical meat coalition. This point is fairly obvious for CSES but it can also be seen with the GRSB. Indeed, in the way it presents its mission, it is mostly concerned with defining “sustainable beef” and then to develop guidelines to improve their practices. While this is not the same as certifying humane meat, the logic guiding the mission is not that different.

That being said, it should not be surprising that the meat industry participates in the process of passive revolution mostly by depoliticizing the issue of meat consumption. More precisely, this can be seen in two elements of the industry's discourse. First, as was noted multiple times in the above analysis, when presenting what it is doing to improve its practices the industry repetitively states that it has to find a balance between multiple issues. In one sense, this is a reasonable idea that was also mentioned by ethical meat proponents. There is, however, a key difference between the way the industry and the ethical meat discourse use it: the former includes an external and independent meat demand. Obviously, with this additional factor in the balance, it becomes easy to justify compromises that would be unacceptable for ethical meat proponents. At the first level of analysis, the idea of presenting meat demand as an external force participates in the process of grounding meat consumption in common sense and rejecting any debate about it. It also, as was said above, permits the industry to present itself as a responsible actor doing their best to respond to that demand. What is noteworthy is that while it was pointed out that these arguments were used by the industry before the emergence of ethical meat, it keeps on using them even when it engages with this new discourse. In any cases, it can be understood as depoliticizing the issue meat consumption.

However, while the meat industry is explicit about its understanding of meat demand, as was seen in chapter 4 and chapter 5, the ethical meat discourse has an uneasy relationship with this idea. In these chapters, it was not presented as the question of meat demand, but through the related idea of the reduction of meat consumption. It was seen in the ethical meat literature that while reducing meat consumption is a recurrent proposition, it is rarely a central one, except with, for example, the ecological leftover approach. Considering this, ethical meat cannot be understood as an important force in countering the industry's narrative. This finding leads to wonder to what extent the ethical meat discourse is also an active participant in the process of naturalization of meat demand. Of course, many authors do mention that people in rich countries eat too much meat, but they rarely go so far as to note, like CAS authors, that it is the meat industry itself that constructs meat demand. Again, the point is not to criticize ethical meat, but to note that in the process of depoliticization of meat consumption, the idea that meat demand is an external force goes beyond the industry and can easily be related to the ethical meat discourse. Put differently, while they do so at different degrees, both the meat industry and ethical meat are depoliticizing the debate over meat consumption by presenting meat demand as natural.

Second, another form of depoliticization could be identified. As was said above, just like the humane meat discourse, the meat industry approaches the process of improvement of its practices through a technical lens. In that sense, it can also be understood as a form of technicalization of the debate. However, in response to such a rapprochement, ethical meat proponents could easily reply that the industry is humane-washing. Indeed, it is using the vocabulary of ethical meat without significantly changing its practices. Considering that the industry nowhere gives the impression that it is willing to abandon the "industrial" aspect

of their practices, this is indeed a reasonable criticism. There is, however, an important issue with this kind of accusation since it assumes that the industry is misleading consumers while the ethical meat producers are honest. Such a Manichean understanding of ethical/unethical meat implies a clear distinction between the two, but as was seen chapter 5, no qualitative differentiating criteria exist and as such, the situation can be better understood with a humaneness continuum. In other words, the same argument that was used in that chapter when comparing the various labels can also be used to relate industrial practices to ethical meat. They are only quantitatively different.

Considering these two observations, two points are important here. On the one hand, a focus on differences of humaneness is itself a form of depoliticization since it ignores the vegan option. Indeed, the debate is restricted to the boundaries of the continuum. On the other hand, in that debate, despite ethical meat proponents efforts to differentiate themselves from factory farming and the industry attempts to exclude ethical meat with, for example CSES research project, they remain intimately linked. While this last point is not entirely related to depoliticization, it is nevertheless important to understand the larger process of passive revolution. It will, however, only be expanded on later as it involves more than just the meat industry. For now, animal advocacy organizations will be analyzed.

2. Animal Advocacy Organizations

As was hinted in the introduction of this chapter, animal advocacy organizations are involved, not in a process of depoliticization, but in one of absorption. To understand this, it appears essential to go over the way various animal advocacy organizations engaged with the ethical meat discourse. The starting point of such an analysis has to be what Jeff Melton, a *Direct Action Everywhere* activist, called

the “Tale of Two Letters.” As was already mentioned in chapter 5, on January 24, 2005, Singer, who was president of the organization Animal Rights International at the time, sent a letter to MacKey, the CEO and co-founder of *Whole Foods Market*. It went as follows: “The undersigned animal welfare, animal protection and animal rights organizations would like to express their appreciation and support for the pioneering initiative being taken by Whole Foods Market in setting Farm Animal Compassionate Standards. We hope and expect that these standards will improve the lives of millions of animals.” (Singer 2005) The letter then lists the names of 17 animal advocacy organizations, the most important being: *Animal Welfare Institute*, *Compassion over Killing*, HSUS, PETA, and *Mercy for Animals*⁴⁴. As was explained in chapter 5, the *Farm Animal Compassionate Standards* can be understood as the predecessor of the *Global Animal Partnership* program. In other words, a wide variety of organizations with very different strategies and objectives agreed to “express their appreciation and support” for what is basically a set of humane meat standards.

For some organizations, this support is not surprising. For example, the *Animal Welfare Institute* was at the time in the process of expanding its own certification program. The support of others was, however, very surprising, notably *Compassion Over Killing* and PETA. At first sight, this list gives the impression that explicitly vegan organizations are supporting ethical meat. But then, on January 28, 2016, almost exactly 11 years later, *Direct Action Everywhere* published a similar letter again addressed to *Whole Foods*, but with a different conclusion: “We therefore ask you to end fraudulent ‘animal welfare’ marketing and your financial support for violence against animals.” (Direct Action Everywhere 2016)

⁴⁴ The complete list: *Animal Rights International*, *Animal Welfare Institute*, *Animal Place*, *Animal Protection Institute*, *Association of Vets for Animal Rights*, *Bay Area Vegetarians*, *Christian Vegetarian Association*, *Compassion Over Killing*, *Doris Day Animal League*, *East Bay Animal Advocates*, *Farm Sanctuary*, *Humane Society of the United States*, *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*, *Mercy for Animals*, *Northwest In defense of Animals*, *Vegan Outreach*, and *Viva! USA*.

It was co-signed by 25 animal advocacy organizations, included three that had also signed the previous letter: PETA, Animal Place, and Christian Vegetarian Association. These two letters perfectly capture the ambiguous relations between animal advocacy organizations and ethical meat. The objective of this section is to make sense of this ambiguity and to highlight how many of them are involved in a process of absorption.

To do so, key animal advocacy organizations in the United States will be classified into three categories: those explicitly supporting ethical meat, those that explicitly reject ethical meat, and those that keep an ambiguous relation. For each category, the exact way they engage with ethical meat will be analyzed.

2.1 Organizations Supporting Ethical Meat

Firstly, not surprisingly, most of the animal advocacy organizations that support ethical meat are considered welfarist organizations. As was said in the literature review (chapter 2), welfarist organizations consider that animals deserve moral consideration and, thus, strive to increase their “welfare,” but without also promoting the abolition of animal agriculture. Considering that, it should already be clear that this mission is entirely compatible with the ethical meat discourse, which sees the consumption of meat as acceptable as long as the animals were treated ethically. Put differently, the ethical meat discourse fits naturally with the objectives and campaigns of welfarist organizations. This is why it is possible to find detailed information and even guides about humane meat on some welfarist organization websites. Two organizations are particularly explicit about their position in favour of ethical meat: the *American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (ASPCA) (2018b) and *The Humane Society of the United States* (HSUS) (2018b, 2018c). They will, thus, be considered as representative of welfarist organizations and analyzed.

The HSUS as a unique history. It was founded after a scission with the *American Humane Society* in 1954. In the last chapter, this association was presented in the context of the humane meat discourse as having the most industry-friendly standards, that is, *American Humane Certified*. About these standards, it is noteworthy that the ASPCA does not recommend them while the HSUS largely ignores them. That being said, as far as could be found, the HSUS has been explicitly opposed to factory farming since at least 1993 with its “Good for you: Choosing a Humane Diet” campaign (1997). Since then, while it supports what looks like ethical meat, it is not presented as the only solution. Indeed, already back then, it was also promoting reduction and veganism, without actually naming the latter, as other solutions.

While they adapted their message through the years, their solution was and is still summed in what they call “The Three Rs.” In their 2005 *Statement on Farm Animals and Eating with Conscience*, they define them in the following way:

reducing the consumption of meat and other animal-based foods; refining the diet by eating products only from animals that have been raised, transported, and slaughtered in a system of humane, sustainable agriculture that does not abuse the animals; and replacing meat and other animal-based foods in the diet with plant-based foods⁴⁵. (HSUS 2018d)

In other words, humane meat is one of three solutions. The fact that it is not taking the centre stage can also be seen by the fact they provide much more information about plant-based food than about ethical meat (mostly the guides). In sums, while the HSUS clearly adapted their discourse to fit with the ethical meat discourse, it does not appear to have changed their strategy.

⁴⁵ The expression “plant-based diet” is usually used for two reasons: (1) to refer to the consumption of food that does not include animal products, that is, the eating aspect of veganism, and/or (2) to refer to veganism without its political implications.

At the ASPCA, the integration of the ethical meat discourse was a long process. While the organization had been lobbying for years to improve animal welfare regulations, it is in 2003, that they appear to have started to be interested in ethical meat by supporting the “development of Humane Farm Animal Care.” (ASPCA 2018a) In 2007, they started to provide financial support (ASPCA 2013) and since then, it is one of its most important supporters as can be deduced from the fact that it is one of the two logos on the *Certified Humane* homepage. Despite this support, the ASPCA did not talk much about it in its own publications. Starting in 2009, they presented this label as a way to Fight Farm Animal Cruelty. In 2013, they started to talk about other labels as “Welfare-Conscious Choices” (ASPCA 2013).

It is, however, only in 2016, that they explicitly adopted the humane meat discourse with the launch of the “Shop with your Heart” campaign. This campaign occupied the centre stage of the solutions they propose to “Help Farm Animals.” They say:

Given consumers’ high levels of concern about animal welfare and misperceptions about common food product labels, the ASPCA today launched ‘Shop With Your Heart,’ a new campaign to educate consumers and encourage anyone who buys meat, eggs, and dairy to seek out products that carry third-party-verified certifications including ‘Animal Welfare Approved,’ ‘Certified Humane’ and ‘Global Animal Partnership’ (Step 2 and above). (ASPCA 2016)

In their press release, they quote the director of their ASPCA Farm Animal Welfare Program, Daisy Freund: “Our goal is to help consumers help farm animals by aligning their purchases with their values [...]. We hope that consumers will vote with their wallets and show the food industry that the only sustainable business model is one that accounts for animals’ welfare.” (ASPCA 2016) In other words, they are explicitly repeating the humane meat discourse.

In sum, unsurprisingly, this short analysis shows that ethical meat is perfectly compatible with the welfarist agenda. It could be said that the HSUS is a bit more radical since it talks positively about veganism and meat consumption reduction, but that does not change the overall impression. As such, it would not seem pertinent to talk about absorption for the organizations since it could be argued that they have always been part of the meat eating hegemony. One element that stands out, however, is how—and this is particularly apparent for the ASPCA—they specifically support the humane meat discourse by focusing on the various certifications. While, as was seen above, the humane meat discourse is involved in a larger process of depoliticization, this overall dynamic will be explored later since the focus here is on animal advocacy organizations.

2.2 Organizations against Ethical Meat

It should also not be surprising to note that organizations explicitly against ethical meat are usually abolitionists. As was presented in chapter 2, put simply, abolitionist organizations believe that welfare reforms are counterproductive. As such, they advocate in favour of veganism and against all forms of animal exploitation. There are, of course, nuances amongst the different organizations, but the important point here is that they can hardly support ethical meat since it works according to the same logic as welfare reforms, that is, they argue that they just end up making animal exploitation more acceptable. It is also important to recall that according to the definition of new welfarism, some organizations also aim to end animal exploitation, but want to believe that this can be done through welfarist reforms. Considering that, the significant characteristic of abolitionist organizations is not their support for abolition, but their rejection of welfarist reforms. Two organizations are obvious cases to analyze here: *Friends of Animals*, which was one of the few to publicly criticize the publication of the first letter,

and *Direct Action Everywhere*, which was behind the publication of the second letter.

On January 19, 2005, *Friends of Animals* published a press release entitled *Whole Foods Promotes 'Responsible' and 'Compassionate' Flesh Foods*. It noted that the idea of caring for the welfare of animals was not coherent with their killing and announced the organization of a vigil “on behalf of the animals in agriculture whose flesh this company peddles.” (Friends of Animals 2005) On the same day, Mackey sent a public letter to Priscilla Feral, President of *Friends of Animals*, defending *Whole Foods'* Animal Compassion program according to new welfarist logic:

I agree with you that it is not ideal or perfect. I agree with you that it would be better if human beings would stop killing, eating, enslaving, and exploiting animals and I'm personally committed to that very philosophy. However, until everyone becomes a vegan (and that seems highly unlikely to me) we still have to deal with the reality of farm animals' lives and how they live while they are alive. What Whole Foods is doing is going to help improve the quality of life for millions and perhaps eventually billions of farm animals. That will be no small accomplishment. (cited in Feral 2005)

The next day, Feral replied with a letter that can be summed up with the following quote: “Animal exploitation—no matter how pretty the package and how high the mark-up—perpetuates the concept that dominating other animals is our right.” (Feral 2005) This exchange is a perfect example of new welfarist/abolitionist debate but, most important for the current analysis, it also clearly shows the reason why abolitionist organizations oppose ethical meat.

This rejection of ethical meat can also be seen on the rest of the organization's publications. Looking at the archives of its website, it can be found that they added a paragraph about *The Myth of 'Humane' Meat and Eggs* in their argumentation in favour of veganism around June 2002. The paragraph that still is exactly the same goes as follows:

Many products hype the fact that their eggs are free-range or that the livestock are allowed to roam freely and treated ‘humanely.’ The reality is not the rosy picture people are asked to believe. [...] These animals don’t escape the slaughterhouse. Just because living conditions might be marginally better doesn’t make the industry acceptable—or worthy of support. (Friends of Animals 2013)

Around the same time, they also added on their page about veganism:

Friends of Animals is against the use of animals for human consumption. Campaigns to make the public believe that the grisly business of meat-production can be done in a ‘humane’ fashion send the wrong message. There is no such thing as ‘humane’ meat-based agriculture. Whether animals are factory farmed or raised ‘free-ranged’ for slaughter, the life of the farm animal is hell from the moment of birth to the moment of slaughter. The ‘improvements’ pushed by some welfare-oriented animal advocacy groups will do nothing to alleviate animals’ suffering. Friends of Animals takes a stance of abolition, not amelioration. (Friends of Animals 2002)

The timing of both these additions is important as this research situates the emergence of the ethical meat discourse at around that time.

It is not possible to have a similar historical perspective about *Direct Action Everywhere* since it only exists since 2013. This organization is original mainly for two reasons. First, they are critical of what they call “traditional vegan education” : “Veganism is not just a diet or a lifestyle, but also the philosophy that exploiting animals is always wrong. Traditional vegan education emphasizes the promotion of a vegan lifestyle. But if we take seriously the proposition that exploiting animals is wrong, we must also be outspoken advocates of animal liberation.” (Direct Action Everywhere 2018a) Put differently, they do not want to “create” new vegans, they want to “create” activists. This is why, unlike most abolitionist organizations, their website does not include a dedicated section on veganism. They have been criticized for this, most significantly by Francione himself. During a debate between him and *Direct Action Everywhere*’s cofounder Wayne Hsiung, in response to the former’s saying that “veganism is the moral baseline,” the latter

stated that “activism, not veganism, is the moral baseline.” (Linden, Hsiung, and Francione 2015)

Most importantly for the current analysis though is the centrality of the criticism of ethical meat to their activism. Not only are they critical of it, their activism explicitly targets farms and organizations that try/pretend to do better. In other words, it could be argued that they target the “best” instead of the “worst,” that is, the opposite of what animal advocacy organizations have been doing for decades⁴⁶. In the past, many “humane farms” have been investigated, but as far as it is known, *Direct Action Everywhere* is the only large organizations that explicitly focuses on those. The rationale behind this is worth quoting at length:

The existence of these companies shows humans care about other animals. While these companies—such as Whole Foods and Chipotle—may be vegan-friendly, they are not truly animal-friendly, and this is a movement for oppressed animals. Our message is that there is no humane way to exploit and kill someone who wants to live and be free. Most people already oppose factory farms, so the idea of ‘humane meat’ is the wobbly linchpin holding together all of animal agriculture. If we can topple that, then the whole system will come crashing down.... (Direct Action Everywhere 2018a)

Here, it is important to note that they refer to an interview with Sanbonmatsu who was seen as holding a similar position in the literature review. Moreover, and most interestingly, they try to formulate militant strategy based on the animal rights literature.

Yet, from the kind of investigation lead by *Direct Action Everywhere*, something about the way ethical meat is criticized is worth noting. While it was just said that they target the “best,” it could also be argued that they target the “worst of the best.” Indeed, these investigations try to show that ethical meat is not really ethical by pointing out that in some cases, its production still involves

⁴⁶ As was said already in chapter 1, the most common animal rights argument has been showing the abuse of factory farming and this usually means exposing the practices of the worst farms.

unacceptable practices as reported by *The New York Times* (Strom and Tavernise 2018). While this kind of activism is essential to condemn “bad actors,” it could be argued that it does not do much more than that. Indeed, looking at the logic of the ethical meat discourse, most of its proponents would also condemn ethical farms that turn out not to be so ethical. Again, they could argue that these farms were doing humane-washing, leaving the ideals of ethical meat untouched. Put differently, the metaphor of the small farm at the centre of the ethical meat discourse-coalition is unaffected by what they can simply present as “bad apples”. This is not, however, the only thing they say or do. Going back to the above quote, it also says: “Our message is that there is no humane way to exploit and kill someone who wants to live and be free.” (Direct Action Everywhere 2018a) In this case, the idea that any kind of animal agriculture is unacceptable is proposed. Their “It’s not food it’s violence” campaign sends a similar message (Direct Action Everywhere 2018b). To make sense of the difference between this and the above critique of some farms, it is useful to go back to the humaneness continuum of the previous chapter. Indeed, by condemning specific farms or practices, the debate is situated on that continuum. More precisely, by arguing that one farm is not really “ethical,” the possibility that an ethical farm can exist is not contested. In other words, this strategy plays right into the hands of the ethical meat discourse. On the contrary, by rejecting all forms of animal agriculture, the entire humaneness continuum is rejected. The two arguments operate according to two entirely different logics. Despite that, *Direct Action Everywhere* uses both. *Friends of Animals* does the same: they simultaneously criticize the principle of animal exploitation and the reality of ethical meat production.

In sum, abolitionist organizations appear to have adopted an intransigent stance towards ethical meat. As such, their position against ethical meat can best be described as one of resistance, that is, as a push back against absorption. Again,

this is not surprising, but as will be seen later, this rejection of ethical meat has some important implications for the way these organizations are perceived in the context of the broader debate about meat consumption.

2.3 Organizations Ambiguous about Ethical Meat

As was seen in the previous two sections, the position of welfarist and abolitionist organizations in relation to ethical meat is not surprising. For the most part, they fit the old reformist vs abolitionist animal rights debate where ethical meat is associated with the reformist position. As such, their analysis did not provide that many insights about the process of absorption. New welfarist organizations, on the other hand, present a more complex picture. Indeed, despite the fact that, as was seen in chapter 2, new welfarism is not opposed to ethical meat from a theoretical perspective, these organizations have a complicated relationship with it. Indeed, as will be seen in this section, they often hold ambiguous positions and as such, they present a unique analytical opportunity: they capture the innate tension between being in favour of both welfarist reforms and the abolition of animal exploitation. Most importantly for this project, they provide a unique opportunity to explore how the discourse-coalition operates in the process of absorption.

For many reasons, the PETA's case is the most important to analyze. Not only was it one of the cases used by Francione to develop the concept of new welfarism, but more recently, it is the only major animal advocacy organization⁴⁷ that signed the two letters discussed above. As such, it would indeed be very difficult to deduce where they fit in without more investigation. This organization will, thus, be analyzed in depth and after that, a quick look will be given to *Mercy for Animals* which proposes similar positions.

⁴⁷ The two others are much less important: Animal Place is a sanctuary in California and Christian Vegetarian Association is an niche international organization.

At the moment and since they started talking about it on their website around 2001 (PETA 2001), PETA has a particular way of discussing ethical meat. Indeed, they barely use the most common denominator, humane meat. Instead they talk about “The Organic and ‘Free-Range’ Myths.” This is not surprising because, in fact, they only discuss these two and other labels (PETA 2018) that are not considered serious according to analysis of humane meat certifications from chapter 5. PETA criticizes them by saying that they are not really humane: “Animals on organic and ‘free-range’ farms often endure the same cruel mutilations—such as debeaking, dehorning, and castration without painkillers—as animals on conventional factory farms.” (PETA 2014) They conclude that “The only truly humane foods are those that don’t come from animals.” (PETA 2014) An example of this rhetoric can be found about a farm they investigated in 2015 that was certified by the *Global Animal Partnership* at Step-2, the second-lowest level. After exposing the animal suffering, they write: “Sign our petition urging Whole Foods to stop duping consumers with dubious ‘humane meat’ claims. Avoid all animal-derived foods, even so-called ‘humane,’ ‘organic,’ and ‘free-range’ meat, eggs, and milk. As long as profit is involved, animal welfare always takes a back seat.” (PETA 2015) This can be analyzed using the two strategies to criticize ethical meat that were identified in the previous section. While PETA offer some criticism of ethical meat in general, it appears that their argumentation is mostly based on the practices of particular farms that pretend to be ethical.

The same logic can be found in a 2012 blog post by Ingrid Newkirk, president and co-founder of PETA, called *Is There Such a Thing as ‘Humane’ Meat?* (2012) and in a video also by her (the transcript has been published in 2013 in the Huffington Post (2013)). These two publications are the closest thing to an official position on ethical meat that could be found on their website. The argumentation is similar to

the one from the previous paragraph, with quotes like this: “There’s nothing humane about the flesh of animals who have had one or two or even three improvements made in their singularly rotten lives on today’s factory farms.” (Newkirk 2013) She does present what she calls an “absolute” position by saying: “there is no such thing as humane meat.” (Newkirk 2013) Also, the second text ends with: “So anyone who asks us to support any animal farming and slaughter is working against the just and compassionate world that most of us wish to create, and we can’t go along with something so needless and wrong.” (Newkirk 2013) While that does look like a principled opposition to ethical meat, the vast majority of the argumentation consists in saying that ethical farms are not really “humane”.

So far, it could be argued that their position is not that different from abolitionist organizations, but the next quote from the first text should dispel this impression. It says:

We’ve stopped PETA protests outside Burger King or McDonald’s restaurants when those companies agreed to reforms, but that doesn’t mean that we would ever suggest eating meat from Burger King or anywhere else—because we know that massive suffering still goes into every bite. Yes, it’s better to pay extra for an egg from a chicken who had a marginally less hideous life than one who suffered more, but we must do better by animals. (Newkirk 2012)

In other words, PETA is critical of ethical meat, but they do not campaign against organizations claiming to have the intention to reform their practices. This is the exact opposite of *Direct Action Everywhere’s* strategy which specifically targets the organizations claiming to be in favour of “better meat.” Put differently, to refer back to the expression that was used in the previous section, they prefer to target the worst and not the best. In the case of PETA, while their strategy is defensible, it remains that the impression left is that ethical meat is both “wrong” and “better.”

This position does not necessarily present a contradiction. On the contrary, it makes perfect sense from a new welfarist perspective whose adherents usually like to present themselves as pragmatic. In general, any animal agriculture is “wrong” since the end goal remains abolitionism, but while people are still consuming animal products, ethical meat remains the “better” kind. What this highlights is how, from a new welfarist point of view, it is much harder to attack the foundation of ethical meat. Clearly, from a strategic and organizational perspective, for PETA, it makes sense to use its resources to keep attacking factory farming and the “bad” ethical farms. These are the actors that are almost unanimously condemned. Put differently, what would they have to gain, both in terms of concrete gains for animals and in terms of donations, by targeting the small farms?

Mercy for Animals presents a similar approach. However, unlike, PETA, they are not as clearly new welfarist. They are clearly in favour of welfare reforms (this is mostly what their Legal Advocacy and Corporate Outreach programs do), but their position in favour of abolition is not that clear. This is, however, not important since this section is interested in organizations with an ambiguous position about ethical meat and they clearly fit in that category. Indeed, as was said earlier, *Mercy for Animals* signed the first letter in 2005, but now, they appear to oppose ethical meat. It is on their site chooseveg.com that their position is the clearest. To the question: “Is ‘humane’ meat ok?”, they say:

Hardly. The extremely small percentage of animals raised on small-scale farms may be treated a little better, but the reality is that many of these animals are still separated from their families and mutilated without painkillers, and their deaths are always the same: bloody, violent, and completely unnecessary. (Mercy for Animals 2014)

They propose the same kind of answer about “cage-free” eggs: “Almost anything is better than the nightmare of factory farming, but sadly, cage-free doesn’t mean

cruelty-free. The truth is that cage-free and free-range hens are usually crammed in overcrowded sheds, debeaked, and all killed once their egg production declines.” (Mercy for Animals 2014) In both cases, the argument is basically that ethical meat is not really ethical since ethical farms are not that different from factory farms. Again, like PETA, while they say they oppose ethical meat, they do so by criticizing current practices and not the foundation of the coalition.

In sum, while these organizations are officially against ethical meat, a closer look at their positions paints a more nuanced picture. Indeed, despite their position according to which “there is no such thing as humane meat,” the way they criticize ethical meat systematically implies that it remains a possibility. This, as will be seen in the next section, leaves the door open to absorption.

2.4 Conclusion: From nuance to recuperation

In this overview of animal advocacy organizations, it was seen that the various positions about ethical meat can be understood using the traditional divisions of the movement: welfarists, new welfarists and abolitionist organizations. This, in itself, is not that telling since their respective positions are not surprising and appear coherent with what they have been defending for years. This analysis, however, allowed us to identify a key question to understand the process of absorption: what is the essential difference between abolitionist and new welfarist organizations that lead to entirely different positions in relation to ethical meat?

As was already noted, while they are both in favour of ending animal exploitation, they have opposed opinions about welfare reforms. It appears that this difference leads to a different focus in their respective criticism. Indeed, even if they both condemn ethical meat as a whole and criticize the practices of specific

farms, abolitionists focus on the former and new welfarist on the latter. This important difference was seen in the way *Direct Action Everywhere* targets the best farms while PETA criticizes the worst one.

As was already discussed above, the difference between these two strategies can best be understood using the humaneness continuum that was introduced in chapter 5. The key point here is that it appears that any criticism short of the whole condemnation of ethical meat can be recuperated by the coalition. Indeed, by focusing on the practices of particular ethical farms, the idea of ethical meat is not touched. As was said above, not only does it imply that ethical meat remains a possibility, but it also offers an easy way out for the coalition which can just agree that it was not really an ethical farm. This can be related to the capacity of the ethical meat coalition to adapt its discourse to diffuse criticism that was presented at the end of chapter 5. The same can be said about arguments insisting that ethical farms are not really different than factory farms. It could even be argued that the simple recognition that ethical meat is better than factory farming, as PETA does, can also be recuperated. Looking back to ethical meat arguments that were presented in chapter 4, this idea was omnipresent. In other words, in the context of animal agriculture, noting that it is possible to do better than factory farming brings back the debate on the humaneness continuum.

Considering that, it appears that the only possibility left is to criticize the idea of ethical meat by rejecting animal exploitation as a whole, with arguments like, as was quoted about *Direct Action Everywhere*: “Our message is that there is no humane way to exploit and kill someone who wants to live and be free.” (Direct Action Everywhere 2018a) The inconvenience here is that this kind of argument is also critical of the idealized small farm, of the sympathetic farmer who cares about his animals. Since it appears reasonable to assume that this sympathy is

part of the common sense and that the ethical meat discourse contributes to cultivating this ideal, the resulting picture is that ethical meat is particularly difficult to criticize.

This leads back to the process of absorption. Indeed, as was noted above, abolitionist organizations adopted the intransigent position of entirely rejecting ethical meat and recognizing its importance in the debate over the legitimacy of meat eating. New welfarist organizations on the other hand, with their ambivalent position, left a door open for their absorption within the meat eating hegemony and it is precisely in that space that the process of passive revolution operates. The implications of this will be discussed in detail later.

3. Environmental Organizations

Just as was seen previously with animal advocacy organizations, environmental organizations are involved in the process of absorption. To understand how they situate themselves in the debate, it is essential to go back to the organic crisis faced by factory farming. As was discussed in chapter 4, while the relations between animal agriculture and the environment have been discussed since at least the 1970s, it is only in the 2000s that it became an inevitable environmental issue in the United States. Again, it is particularly with the FAO's report *Livestock's Long Shadow* that the environmental impact of animal agriculture became widely discussed and difficult to ignore. As Michiel Korthals writes: "That report powerfully inserted meat eating and vegetarianism into the debate on climate change and sustainability" (2013, 245–46). More recently, the debate further intensified with the publication in 2014 of the documentary *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* in which filmmakers Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn accuse the big environmental organizations in the US of ignoring the environmental impacts of cattle (2014).

To make sense of this debate, in this section, the way environmental organizations started to talk about animal agriculture will be explored with a particular focus on the extent to which the ethical meat discourse has been influential in the process. Looking back at the arguments from chapter 4, it is reasonable to assume that the ethical meat discourse has had a considerable influence. Indeed, it appears that between the growth of the awareness of the environmental impact of animal agriculture and a discomfort with the prospect of rejecting meat consumption altogether, the ethical meat discourse has provided the ideal win-win solution. If environmental organizations end up supporting ethical meat, it could be concluded that they have been “absorbed.” It is also important to remember that in the context of animal agriculture, environmental arguments do not lead to an abolitionist conclusion, but only to prescribe a drastic reduction in meat consumption. As such, a key analytical element will be investigating the extent to which they prescribe such a reduction.

More precisely, to explore the impact of the ethical meat discourse, a two-level analysis will be done. First, an overview of the positions of the important environmental organizations in the US on animal agriculture will be presented. The analysis will focus on the way they relate to the ethical meat discourse and on their position about the reduction of meat consumption. Second, a more in-depth analysis of the evolution of the *Worldwatch Institute* will be done to see how, over time, the ethical meat discourse was integrated in that particular organization.

3.1 Overview of Positions

A quick look at the big environmental organizations in the United States clearly shows that there are great variations in the way they talk about meat and animal agriculture. About this, two conclusions can already be reached. First, there are

some environmental organizations that just do not talk about these subjects. The most important are *Wildlife Conservation Society*, *Ducks Unlimited*, *The Conservation Fund*, *Trust for Public Land*, and *National Audubon Society*. For some of them, like *Ducks Unlimited* and *National Audubon Society*, it could be argued that they do not talk about animal agriculture since it is not related to their mission. It could, however, also be argued that in the United States, the production of meat is such a colossal endeavour that it affects all environmental issues. Either way, these organizations will be ignored since such a lack of position offers us nothing further to go on and there are many other organizations that do have elaborate positions.

Second, some organizations are not critical of the meat industry which is intriguing considering the environmental damages attributed to factory farming. The most obvious example is the *World Wildlife Fund* (WWF). They say that it “is committed to working with the global beef industry to address production issues in ways that are socially responsible, environmentally sustainable and economically viable.” (WWF 2018) Presented as “production issues”, the problems are reduced to technical issues to be fixed and avoid a systematic criticism of factory farming. Keeping in mind that WWF was involved with the GRAB, this position is not surprising.

The same can be said about *The Nature Conservancy*, which also supports the GRAB. While its website does not provide an official position, the content of its blog posts could hardly be associated with the ethical meat discourse. One says:

And while small family farms alone likely can't meet all future food demands, this example shows the potential for relatively low-impact agriculture to provide food for many people. Beyond small farms, all forms of agriculture can work to improve their practices and reduce impacts, and The Nature Conservancy is working with a broad range of agricultural interests to find these solutions. (Opperman 2011)

They also have another that discusses reduction and *Meatless Monday*, but its argumentation is mostly based on water consumption and does not criticize the industry (Opperman 2013).

A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the *Environmental Defense Fund*. Here again, their website does not offer an official position, but the content of their blog posts is pretty clear. Two examples should suffice. In one post, they are arguing that to make meat production more sustainable, effort should be made to make corn production more efficient (Shaw 2015). Another argues that the size of farms is not important (Friedman 2015). In both cases, these arguments are clearly not enough to associate their position with the ethical meat discourse.

Before talking about the environmental organizations that actually use the ethical meat discourse, it is important to note that all the organizations that were just referred to are, according to data from Forbes, the richest “U.S. Charities” in the Environmental/Animal Category. They occupy positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, and 12 (Forbes 2011). In other words, the richest environmental organizations either do not talk about animal agriculture and if they do, they are not critical of the industry. This already says a lot the way environmental organizations engage with animal agriculture and also shows that it is not within the biggest organizations that the ethical meat discourse resonates.

That being said, the remaining environmental organizations all use the ethical meat discourse to some extent. They are: *Environmental Working Group* (EWG), *Natural Resources Defense Council* (NRDC), *Greenpeace*, *Sierra Club*, *Friends of the Earth*, *Rainforest Action Network*, and *Worldwatch Institute* (which will also be analyzed in more detail in the next section). It remains that they have very different positions and that the only ethical meat idea they all agree on is the

general conclusion that people should “eat less and better meat.” To explore their other positions in more details, five issues will be explored: (1) the degree of criticism toward industrial meat, (2) their prescribed level of reduction of meat consumption, (3) the importance of political consumerism, (4) their relation with labels and (5) their opinion of veganism.

Firstly, following the logic of the ethical meat discourse, they all start their discussion of meat and livestock with some criticism of factory farming. However, the degree of criticism varies from one organization to the others. One of the most critical is *Greenpeace*: “A greedy elite are industrializing, commodifying and controlling every aspect of our food system—from genome to grocery store. They’re growing our food on huge monoculture farms, spraying genetically modified crops with obscene amounts of chemicals and feeding these crops to factory-farmed animals.” (Greenpeace USA 2018b) An example at the other end of the spectrum would be the *Sierra Club* which mostly talks about factory farming in technical terms to describe its environmental impacts (2015). While these divergences are noteworthy, they remain within the logic of the discourse of ethical meat.

Secondly, as was already said, they all talk about the reduction of meat production and consumption. However, here as well, there are considerable variations. There is *Greenpeace* which, in a report about *Ecological Livestock* talks in great detail about reduction scenarios, including those presented in chapter 4 (2012). Then there is *Friends of the Earth* that says that “we must dramatically reduce meat consumption”. For the most part, however, they remain vague and not very ambitious. This is symbolized in recurrent references to *Meatless Monday* (2011b), *Friends of the Earth* (2018a) and *Worldwatch Institute* (Nierenberg 2005, 66)). So far *Meatless Monday* has not been discussed since it is not clear whether it should

be included in the ethical meat discourse-coalition. Indeed, not only it does not have much to say about animal welfare, but it is also not very critical of factory farming. Regardless of their classification, it remains that they propose “to reduce meat consumption by 15%” (Meatless Monday 2018) which puts them, and the organizations supporting them, at the lower end of the spectrum.

Thirdly, inherent in the idea of eating “less and better meat” is a focus on consumption practises and such a perspective can easily be related to political consumerism. Indeed, the solutions proposed by the various environmental organizations mostly belong in the humane meat discourse. While it is the main proposed strategy to change animal agriculture, it is not the only one. Some organizations mention that individual actions are not sufficient. The most obvious example comes from the *Rainforest Action Network* which calls itself a “corporate campaigning organization.” With this focus on corporations, they offer a systemic understanding of what they call the “industrial meat sector” (Rainforest Action Network 2018) with a description not that different from the understanding of the Animal-Industrial Complex. Obviously, from that perspective, consumption practises aren’t sufficient, which is certainly why, in an authorless blog post, they argue that “Sustainable Meat is not the Silver Bullet” (Rainforest Action Network 2015). For the *Sierra Club*, while they do not have an explicit position on the issue, political consumerism appears to represent only one of many solutions (2015). For the rest, it remains the main solution. For example, on the one hand, the EWG notes that “it is clear that making significant cuts in US emissions will not come solely from individual action” and that “reducing meat production’s negative impact on soil, air and water quality will require better policies and regulatory enforcement as well as curbing meat consumption.” (2011b) But on the other hand, they mostly talk about consumption practises. Similarly, while *Friends of the Earth* encourage people to pressure Congress (2018b), but they also writes

that: “we must produce and eat ‘less and better.’” (2018a) In other words, while other strategies are included, the one constant is the presence of political consumerism as a solution.

Fourthly, for the environmental organizations that do accord central place to political consumerism, their relations with labelling varies. Both the EWG and *Friends of the Earth* provide guides to the different labels. They describe all the labels (and more) that were presented in chapter 2 in an uncritical way. The only exceptions are *Friends of the Earth*’s precision that only the step 4, 5 and 5+ of the *Global Animal Partnership* provide a meaningful way to avoid factory farming and its omission of the *American Humane Certified* label. In other words, they implicitly say that not all labels can really send a clear market signal. The only other analyzed organization that talks about labels is the NRDC. Specifically about beef, they write that after having “completed an exhaustive scientific and market-informed analysis of the main independent beef production standards, [...] they concluded that there is currently no comprehensive distinguishing mechanism with broad stakeholder support available to U.S. beef buyers and producers.” (NRDC 2018) The key word here is “comprehensive” because they do not argue that current certifications have problems, but only that they do not prescribe “responsible practices through every step of the supply chain.” (NRDC 2018) This is why they propose their own certification, in collaboration with the *Food Alliance* and the *Rainforest Alliance* (Grasslands Alliance 2014), named the Grasslands Alliance. This label was not discussed in chapter 2 for the simple reason that despite its ambition, it is not discussed by any authors or organizations. This might be because it is fairly new: they released their first certification standard in October 2016 (Buck 2016). It should also be remembered that one of its creators, the *Rainforest Alliance*, is also collaborating with the GRSB.

Fifthly, while discussing the reduction of meat consumption, some environmental organizations mention vegetarianism and/or veganism in mostly positive terms. The EWG writes that “while vegetarian diets are not for everyone, some research suggests that eliminating all or most meat from one’s diet may be good for health.” (EWG 2011a) *Greenpeace* writes defensively: “We’re not advocating that everyone adopt a ‘meatless’ diet tomorrow. But we all must develop ‘meat consciousness’ and reduce the level of meat in our diets.” (Greenpeace USA 2018a) In other words, while they acknowledge that not eating meat at all is also a solution to the excesses of factory farming, they assume that it will remain a marginal one since meat consumption is here to stay. This way of presenting the issue goes back to the root of the ethical meat discourse: while veganism is not bad in itself, it is not a viable option since people want to keep eating meat. Consequently, even if there is no hostility towards veganism, it remains that it is framed as an option bound to remain marginal. From that point of view, ethical meat is *de facto* the natural alternative to factory farmed meat. It could also be added that this kind of comment contributes to the normalization to meat eating, and as such to the depoliticization of the issue.

In sum, while there are some important variations between the various environmental organizations, they all agree with the general idea that it is best to “eat less and better meat.” Considering that, it is reasonable to conclude that with these positions these organizations are aligning themselves with the ethical meat coalition and as such, that they are involved in a process of absorption. More concretely, it implies that from their environmental perspective, they participate to the legitimation of meat eating. Moreover, by mostly using the humane meat discourse, they also contribute to the depoliticization process in which it operates. While these conclusions are important, they remain only based on a snapshot at a

specific time. This is why the next section will explore how the position of one particular environmental organization evolved over time.

3.2 Case Study: The *Worldwatch Institute*

To get a better understanding of the way animal agriculture has started to be considered by environmental organizations and how their position has evolved over time, a case analysis of the *Worldwatch Institute* will be done. This choice is based on two reasons. First, they were the first environmental group, as far as could be found, to adopt the ethical meat discourse with various reports authored or co-authored by Danielle Nierenberg as early as 2004. It is, thus, possible to see the evolution over a longer period. Second, with all these reports, it is one of the only environmental organizations that has left numerous traces of its previous positions. In that sense, it provides a unique case to analyze the process of absorption. Considering that, the analysis will be presented in chronological order.

In its *2004 Annual Report*, the *Worldwatch Institute* recognizes that animal agriculture is a new issue:

Worldwatch has responded to the current wave of popular interest in animal farming as well—a topic that has made headlines recently as a result of massive meat recalls, investigative reporting on meat in the popular press, and nascent coalitions between environmentalists, animal rights groups, and public health officials. In late 2004, the Institute initiated a research project on the far-reaching environmental, social, animal welfare, and public health consequences of meat production. Led by research associate Danielle Nierenberg, the project aims to raise awareness of alternative approaches to raising meat and to foster a new attitude towards meat as part of the human diet. Among the goals are educating consumers about the benefits of vegetarianism and drawing attention to small-scale livestock projects, organic and grassfed livestock, and improved animal welfare standards. (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 6)

With this quote, the organization confirms the idea that something changed in perception of animal agriculture in the early 2000s. It is also noteworthy that they present both vegetarianism and what sounds like ethical meat as alternatives to factory farming.

Part of the result of this research project was published in the *Worldwatch Institute State of the World 2004 Report*. In the chapter *Watching What we Eat* (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 72), Brian Halweil and Nierenberg spend some time discussing the issue of meat. After noting some problems with the food system and what people are doing to fix it in the very first section titled *A Revolution in Every Bite*, the authors clearly situate themselves in the logic of the political consumerism by writing: “While these may look like isolated consumer actions, they are aimed at grabbing control of how food is produced and steering the global food system away from its current trajectory.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 72) This is what they call “food democracy.”

The title of the next section, on meat, is just as revealing as the first: *From Farm to Factory—And Back*. It implies, just like the ethical meat storylines, the idea that animal agriculture used to be fine, that it was corrupted by industrialization, and that the solution is to go back to pre-industrial methods. To illustrate this, they use the example of Paul Willis, owner of a pig farm in Iowa:

Along with the grain that Willis’s hogs eat on a daily basis, they graze outside on pastures and are not confined in the concrete factories that dominate American pork production. Not only do Willis’s animals get the chance to exhibit their natural and instinctive behaviours, like rooting for food, playing, and nest-making, but the meat they produce is healthier and tastes better than the pork produced on factory farms. (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 73)

Not only that, but they note that he does not have to use “antibiotics and growth promoters” and that his pork is distributed “through the Niman Ranch, a

California-based company started in 1982 to distribute humanely raised meat products to consumers and restaurants.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 73) In this example, not only do they refer to the ideal of the small farm, they also use each of the three categories of arguments.

They then go on to say that

Willis is part of a growing movement of farmers and consumers helping livestock go back to their roots. Although the shift might seem old-fashioned, farmers that raise animals outside—and the consumers who buy this meat, which might be labeled as ‘pasture-fed’ or ‘free-range’—are helping clean up what has become the most ecologically destructive and unhealthy sector of global farming—industrialized animal production. (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 73)

With this image, they clearly situate themselves within the logic of political consumerism where small farmers and the consumers that buy their products can transform the industry.

Moreover, they also talk about how organizations can pressure corporations with many examples of successful campaigns such as one against McDonald’s: “In 2002, bowing to pressure from animal rights and public health groups, McDonald’s announced that it would stop buying eggs from chickens confined in battery cages and forced to lay additional eggs through starvation—practices already banned in Europe but still permitted in the United States.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2004, 76–77) In other words, while they spend considerable time discussing political consumerism, they also talk about more traditional forms of activism.

Similar content can be found in the report named *Happier Meals: Rethinking the Global Meat Industry* (Nierenberg 2005, 53–54). Although the text is a bit longer, it mainly repeats the same arguments. Parts of the text are even exact reproductions. It still uses the example of Willis to illustrate what a small ethical

farm looks like (Nierenberg 2005, 53–54). It is also worth mentioning that while many references are the same, Nierenberg added references from some authors from the canons of ethical meat, most importantly, Pollan and Salatin. This shows that the author was aware of these authors and their ideas. This in itself is an important hint of absorption.

Despite the similarities between the two texts, two differences are worth noting. First, Nierenberg consecrates three paragraphs to the defence of meat in general by arguing that “livestock are an essential part of human existence.” (2005, 7) She writes that globally, “nearly 2 billion people worldwide rely on livestock to support part or all of their daily needs” and that “livestock are indispensable for income generation and nutrition in the developing world. They act as living banks.” (Nierenberg 2005, 8) This is clearly not an argument specific to ethical meat, but it shows that right from the beginning, the question of ending animal agriculture is not considered a pragmatic alternative. Second, she talks much more about the reduction of meat consumption. While she does not state the order of the required reduction, she presents veganism and *Meatless Monday* as two alternatives to proceed (Nierenberg 2005, 66).

The ethical meat discourse can be found again in the chapter *Meat and Seafood: The Global Diet's Most Costly Ingredients* of the *State of the World 2008* (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 61). As the title implies, this chapter argues that “meat and seafood are the two most rapidly growing ingredients in the global diet. Yet in terms of resource use, these are also two of the most costly.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 61) This idea is not that different from what was found in the previous texts. This chapter is, however, different because it is much closer to the humane meat discourse. Indeed, the authors start the section “Embracing the Ethical” with a clear example of political consumerism: “Governments and

policymakers can shift policy and enact regulations on food, but it is consumers and big buyers who can rapidly reshape the market and make the most impact by voting with their food dollars.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 69) After giving a few examples of ways to do so, they go on by noting that “these markets for ethical meat and seafood cannot grow without clear labels and certification programs that ensure that one farmer or fisher is different from another—and that consumers are really getting what they pay for.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 69–70) They do not, however, talk about specific labels. They also recognize that labels are not always necessary because consumers can “connect directly with livestock producers.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 71)

As in the previous text, they are also more voluble about meat consumption reduction: “Under this new food paradigm, people will need to reconsider the place of meat in their diets. Raising animals outdoors on grass will necessarily mean that there are fewer of them to eat, and higher prices for sustainably and humanely raised meat will mean shifting this from the centre of each meal.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 71) Going meatless is seen as an option as they note: “Many consumers are giving up meat altogether as the health and environmental benefits of doing so become clearer.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 72) Ethical meat, however, remains the main solution: “For meat, eating fewer animal products in general and eating eggs, beef, pork, and chicken from animals raised on a natural diet of grass is healthier for people, for the animals, and for the environment.” (Halweil and Nierenberg 2008, 72)

Until now, Halweil and Nierenberg have mostly used the most common arguments to defend ethical meat. However, starting from 2009, the *Worldwatch Institute* started to use more controversial ones in an apparently contradictory way. Indeed, they published in their *World Watch Magazine* the controversial

article *Livestock and Climate Change: What if the key actors in climate change are...cows, pigs, and chickens?* by two former employees of the World Bank Group, Robert Goodland and Jeff Anhang (2009). The controversy comes from the fact that since the publication of the 2006 FAO's report *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (Steinfeld et al. 2006), the scientific community appeared to agree at least on the order of magnitude of the GHG contribution of the livestock sector. This report concluded that it was around 18%, while a subsequent 2013 revision reduced this number to 14,5% (Gerber et al. 2013). Goodland and Anhang's article criticizes the 2006 one to conclude that the contribution is actually much higher, that is, 51%. This figure was widely publicized by the documentary *Cowspiracy* where it was used as one of its main arguments against livestock.

Despite the controversy, Nierenberg, this time with Laura Reynolds, refers to their 51% in a 2012 report named *Innovations in Sustainable Agriculture: Supporting Climate-Friendly Food Production* (2012, 13). After referring to many environmental issues related to livestock in a sidebar named *Meat and Climate Change*, they note that "as a result of these direct and indirect forces combined, farm animals contribute anywhere between 18 and 51 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions." (Nierenberg and Reynolds 2012, 13) This way of presenting the data is misleading because it gives the impression that both figures should be considered as having the same credibility and as such, that the truth is somewhere in the middle. After repeating arguments similar to the 2005 report about the importance of livestock for the poorest farmers, they note that "consumers can easily help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by lowering their meat consumption or sourcing their meat from environmentally sustainable producers" (Nierenberg and Reynolds 2012, 13) They then propose a series of solutions on the production side, which is the focus of this report.

The most relevant solution to the issue of livestock they propose concerns “Building Soil Fertility.” After proposing some obvious solutions to reduce the climate impact of agriculture like “using organic manure as fertilizer” (Nierenberg and Reynolds 2012, 19), they go into controversial territory again by devoting another Sidebar to *Farming Grass and Livestock*. While referring both to Savory and Salatin, they describe the logic of grass farming. Even though, they do not repeat the argument according to which holistic management by itself could stop climate change, they end with another of Savory’s controversial ideas:

Overgrazing of livestock contributes to much of the world’s land degradation and even desertification; as a result, many people believe that any form of raising livestock is environmentally destructive. But grass farmers such as Salatin and Osmond Mugweni, Director of the Njeremeto Biodiversity Institute in Zimbabwe, believe otherwise. According to Mugweni, ‘the management of animals is the problem, not the animals.’ (Nierenberg and Reynolds 2012, 20)

Put differently, they are putting in doubt the idea that overgrazing is an important environmental problem. It is worth remembering that one of the conclusions of Savory’s ideas was that for the environment, more cattle could actually prove beneficial.

In other words, in the same text, they refer both to one of the most controversial arguments against livestock, the 51% figure, and one of the most controversial arguments in favour of livestock, Savory’s theory. It does not appear relevant to verify if the two arguments are compatible since they adopt entirely different perspectives. We can, however, try to understand why they were included. On the one hand, it is not surprising to see a mention of the article by Goodland and Anhang since it was published by the *Worldwatch Institute*. On the other hand, the inclusion of Savory is noteworthy since this text was published before his

famous TED talk in 2013. It remains that from an ethical meat perspective, the inclusion of both these references is puzzling.

Now that these reports have been presented, three trends can be identified in the evolution of the *Worldwatch Institute* position. First, while political consumerism was one of many solutions in their first publication in 2004, it appears to have slowly taken centre stage. At the end, other solutions are still present, but they appear to become less important. Simultaneously, they focus more and more on consumers and talk more about labels. That is why it can be concluded that the *Worldwatch Institute* primarily uses the humane meat discourse. Second, the idea that meat consumption should be reduced also took more importance. Third, as the ethical meat literature was developing in the 2000s, they referred more and more to its most important authors. Most importantly, the organization started to talk about Savory around 2012. While this is just one report, he remains a controversial figure. Indeed, as was said multiple times, he is controversial not only because of his recommendations, but also because he is sometimes associated with the industry. In any case, this much more specific analysis confirms the general conclusions that were reached in the previous section.

3.3 Conclusion: A Green Seal of Approval

In conclusion, two points should be fairly obvious. First, the ethical meat discourse has been adopted only by certain environmental organizations. It appears that the organizations whose main strategy is to work with the meat industry to improve their environmental practices, like the WWF, avoided it to stay on good terms with its big players. It remains that the few organizations that do support ethical meat provide an important “green seal of approval” to the coalition. Second, it appears that here as well, it is through the humane meat

discourse that ethical meat is integrated. This again, leads to the same argument about depoliticization.

Considering these two points, as was said above, the organizations that support ethical meat can indeed be considered to be involved in a process of absorption. There is, however, a key difference with the absorption that was seen with the animal advocacy organizations. Indeed, for the latter, the emergence of the ethical meat discourse neutralized the political potential of organizations that used to be opposed to animal agriculture. In the case of environmental organizations, it would be difficult to argue that any of them used to share this position. It could even be argued that the ones that collaborate with the industry were already part of the Animal-Industrial Complex, even before the existence of ethical meat. Indeed, this was implied when the WWF was found to be in the GRSB.

What is interesting about the other organizations, and especially with the *Worldwatch Institute*, is how receptive they are to the environmental criticism of factory farming. Considering that, it is reasonable to assume that without the emergence of ethical meat, they could have adopted a more critical stance against meat eating. Put differently, the absorption in their case can be understood as preemptive, that is, it prevented the formation of new opponents to meat eating. It is, however, important to remember that environmental arguments only prescribe a reduction in meat consumption. As was seen above, while environmental organizations repeat this conclusion, they remain for the most part fairly conservative. The omnipresence of *Meatless Monday* can attest that and as such, if there is one place where the impact of the ethical meat discourse can be seen, it is in the moderation of their positions.

4. Ethical Meat as a Passive Revolution

Based on the analysis of each of the three categories of organizations, key components of the process of passive revolution have been identified. It has been noted multiple times that to have comprehensive understanding of that process, a larger analysis, based not only on this chapter, but also on chapter 4 and chapter 5, is needed. This is precisely what this section will do, and it will be divided in three subsections. It will first propose a general analysis of the process of passive revolution by further exploring the question of the legitimation of meat consumption. The next two subsections will further analyze the more specific processes of depoliticization and of absorption.

4.1 A Passive Revolution to Save Meat Eating

To understand how ethical meat operates as a passive revolution, it is helpful to go back to key Gramscian concepts. In chapter 3, passive revolution was defined as the characteristic response of the hegemony when faced with an organic crisis, that is, a crisis that emerges from structural contradictions within the hegemony. In the context of the debate about meat consumption, it was argued that the revealing of the excess of factory farming and its negative impact on animal welfare, the environment, and human health led to such a crisis for the meat eating hegemony. The emergence of the ethical meat discourse was then presented as a way to preserve the legitimacy of meat consumption. This idea was most effectively captured within the context of ethical arguments, in chapter 4, where many ethical meat proponents noted that the problems associated with factory farming are caused by this specific practice and not by meat production in general.

This last point leads to an apparently contradictory relation between the meat industry and the ethical meat coalition. On the one hand, they criticize each other,

but on the other, they share the key objective of preserving the legitimacy of meat eating. This tension is very well captured by the inclusion/exclusion relation of the meat industry with ethical meat: they use their expressions, but they try to marginalize them. Throughout this thesis, however, it is mostly the difference between the two that was analyzed. This can be easily understood when remembering that in chapter 4 and chapter 5, the analysis was made from the point of view of the proponents of ethical meat. One consequence of this is that one of the assumptions of this discourse was integrated into the analysis, that is, that there is a clear-cut separation between what was called the industry and ethical meat. The former is associated with the horrors of factory farming while the latter is associated with happy animals on small farms. This assumption should not be surprising as one of the main arguments of ethical meat remains that it is superior to factory farming.

From this mutual rejection, it could be argued that there is no passive revolution. Indeed, if they are opposed in all things, aren't they undermining one another? How is it possible to deduce that they are working together for the preservation of the legitimacy of meat consumption? In this section, it will be argued that it is precisely in this simultaneous distancing that the passive revolution operates. Even more counter intuitively, it will be suggested that they need one another and it is out of this ambiguous relation that space is created for the reorganization of the hegemony, and thus, for the preservation of the legitimacy of meat eating. This will be demonstrated by examining their respective points of view.

From the point of view of the industry, ethical meat can be understood as a necessary evil. Indeed, they would certainly prefer to just keep doing their thing, but with the organic crisis, they now need ethical meat. For them, the function of that discourse should be fairly obvious: it serves as an ideal that preserves the

idea that meat can be produced in an ethical way. As was said above, without this ideal, it would be easy to conclude that since factory farming is seen as an abomination, meat consumption is simply unethical and, thus, an illegitimate practice. As was seen in the analysis of the industry, the big companies keep an ambiguous relationship with ethical meat. With ethical meat strictly understood as an ideal, this relationship makes even more sense. Indeed, they deny its relevance to minimize the criticism against their current practices while giving the impression that they are moving towards it. The question of whether they actually do so is an entirely different question that is beyond the scope of this thesis. For now it is important to note that the key element is that by saying that they are doing their best to move towards it, their operations gain in legitimacy. Indeed, since it is usually not expected that they can entirely reform their practices overnight, pretending to have the intention of doing so goes a long way to improve their image. This was apparent when PETA said it has stopped protest against companies that agreed to reform.

About this argument, it could be replied that the industry has always pretended that it is trying to improve its practices, even before the formalization of the ethical meat discourse. While factually this is correct, this counter-argument underestimates the role and the discursive power of the ethical meat ideal. Indeed, not only does it serve as an end goal, as the incarnation of what, in theory, meat production could be, it is also a very credible ideal since it is backed by all the ethical meat literature. What is implied here is that the industry could not in itself have developed an artificial ideal farm image. It would not have been credible for the simple reason that it would not have been very critical of factory farming. It was fairly clear above how the industry's own attempt at ethical meat, with the GRSB, was not as convincing as presenting an alternative form of meat

production. Put differently, as contradictory as it may appear, the industry needs a credible and critical animal farming ideal to preserve its own legitimacy.

From the point of view of the ethical meat discourse-coalition, the positioning is much more obvious. It is obvious since it is easy to understand why they do not want to be associated with the industry. After all, factory farming remains the main target of their criticism. The necessity of having a clear distinction between the two can also be understood by the fact the one of the first argument used by animal advocacy organizations against ethical meat is the idea that it is the same as factory farming. It remains that they need the industry since without it, it would no longer have compelling storyline around which to form a coalition. As a reminder, it was said in chapter 4 that the storyline is based on a double distancing from both factory farming and veganism where the ideal of the small farm is used as the central metaphor. As such, ethical meat would only end up being opposed to veganism.

Of course, in some way, this is an irrelevant point since without factory farming there would be no need for a discourse detailing an alternative form of meat production. However, this point about only being opposed to veganism highlights a key element about the passive revolution and even its fundamental reason for being, that is, that its primary objective is to preserve the legitimacy of meat eating. Indeed, while the lives of farmed animals might improve in the process of an ethical meat passive revolution, it has to be understood as secondary benefit. Indeed, as was seen in chapters 4 and 5, the ethical questions were considered only up to the point where it was still possible to produce meat. For example, many proponents of ethical meat admitted some of the rough edges of their own practices were necessary to keep producing meat. Put differently, the passive revolution is not about the promotion of ethical meat in itself, but about the

continuation of meat eating in general. It is important to note here that this is not the same as saying that proponents of ethical meat have a hidden agenda, but to point out that the political process in which they are participating is one relating to the legitimacy of meat consumption.

In sum, it can be argued that the meat industry and ethical meat coalition need one another since it is precisely in their contradictory interrelations, whether animal agriculture improves or not, that a storyline can emerge to preserve the legitimacy of meat eating. This dynamic can be observed in more detail by looking specifically at the two passive revolution processes that were explored in this chapter. First, depoliticization will further be explored by analyzing the importance of the humane meat discourse. Second, absorption will be detailed by looking more closely at the case of animal advocacy organizations.

4.2 Depoliticization: Making Meat Eating a Technical Issue

Following the analysis of this chapter, it should be clear that the humane meat discourse appears to be the preferred way to integrate the ethical meat discourse. Indeed, the industry did talk about some form of standards while both the moderate animal advocacy and environmental groups provided guides to help consumers choose the most ethical animal products. Again, as was said in the previous chapter, this can easily be understood with the increased popularity of political consumerism since the 1990s. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the promotion of political consumerism can be understood in itself as a form of depoliticization by reducing politics to consumption practices. Moreover, as was seen throughout this research, the same can be said about the promotion of humane meat standards since depoliticization can also be found in the technicalization of the debate. These two, however, represent two forms of depoliticization: the former limits the political options available while the latter

limits the debate to “how” and not “if” animals should be farmed. It is this second point that is of interest here since it brings us back to the question of the legitimacy of meat eating. Three points will be discussed: (1) the general normalization of meat eating, (2) the selection of humane meat discourse, and (3) the politics of certification.

First, while it is not directly related to the humane meat discourse, it is essential to return to the process of normalization of meat eating. As was mentioned above, this is not a new strategy to justify meat consumption. The meat industry has been using it for years and it is still doing it. It was particularly noteworthy to see how they reinforce this idea by accepting meat demand as an external force to which they have to respond. While this is not directly related to ethical meat, it is important to mention it to see how the other actors insert themselves in the same process. To do so, we can refer back to Gramsci’s concept of common sense and its corresponding daily practices. It was argued in chapter 3 that the practice of meat eating can currently be considered normal and as such, the legitimacy of meat eating, part of the common sense. It was further argued that the animal rights movement has been working for years to put this in doubt.

Based on this dynamic, the process of normalization can be reconsidered. Two ways of indirectly reproducing this dominant idea that eating animals is acceptable can be identified. On the one hand, there is the pragmatic decision of some animal advocacy and environmental organizations to accept this idea to promote their own agenda. As was seen, they start from the premise that meat consumption is here to stay, so the only option is to improve animal agriculture. In other words, even if this is not their objective, they reinforce the prevalent common sense. On the other hand, there is the related idea of the reduction of meat consumption. It was mentioned by ethical meat proponents, and by both

animal advocacy and environmental organizations. It was concluded in the analysis of the meat industry that promoting this idea is still a way to legitimate meat consumption. From the perspective of common sense, the same thing can be said: proposing to reduce meat consumption does not question the legitimacy of this practice. In all cases, this has the consequence of resisting the animal rights' attempt to politicize the issue of meat consumption and as such, it can be considered part of the depoliticization process.

Second, the importance of the humane meat discourse needs to be analyzed. To do so, it is necessary to go back to the discourse-coalition. At the end of the last chapter, it was suggested that by having multiple discourses within the coalition provides many entry points to the ethical meat discourse. However, looking at this chapter analysis, it appears that the variations in discourses in ethical meat literature are not translated in the practices of animal advocacy and environmental organizations. This, however, does not mean that the typology is useless. On the contrary, by identifying the humane meat discourse as one of many in the discourse-coalition, it is possible to clearly see that the relative importance of the humane meat discourse is actually the result of a choice. It could be argued that it might not have been a conscious choice but, even so, it is still necessary to ask why it was made.

For animal advocacy and environmental organizations, it can be understood as a strategic decision related to the wider popularity of political consumerism. It can also be understood by looking at the typology from another perspective. Indeed, it was developed by classifying different solutions based on the general idea of ethical meat. The various discourses, however, did not all provide detailed information about how to put in place these solutions. Not surprisingly, it is the two individualist discourses, humane meat and urban homesteading, that have

the most concrete recommendations. Moreover, even if urban homesteaders have clear solutions, they are not available to most people living in dense cities and they require considerable investment. As such, the humane meat discourse emerges has the simplest one: just buy ethical meat. To see how this is appealing, it can be contrasted with *Direct Action Everywhere's* strategy of opposing this advocacy through consumption by asking militants to be much more engaged.

For the meat industry, the appeal of the humane meat discourse comes from being the least critical of its current practices. Indeed, in the definition of the humane meat discourse, it was said that it was the only one that accepted the idea that the animal agriculture industry could be reformed. There were authors who had a more critical take on political consumerism, such as Friend, but as was seen in the previous chapter, in the United States the various humane labels currently tend towards the moderate side. Put differently, the humane meat discourse is by far the one that is the most compatible with the way meat is currently produced. It also has the advantage of firmly putting the focus on consumption rather than production. From this perspective, it is easy for the meat industry to argue, as it does by talking about meat demand as an external force, that they are producing what consumers are demanding.

Third, it was also noted in chapter 5 that while the ethical meat discourse-coalition flexibility has considerable advantages, it can be a double-edged sword since it has no control over who uses its storyline. The consequence of this can most easily be seen with the humane meat discourse. As was seen in the great variation of humane meat standards, who is to decide which one is “good enough?” Considering that, it could be argued that the politics of certification open up a competitive space where a process of co-optation happens. However, for the current purpose, it is not that important to explore the details of this co-

optation or recuperation by the industry. It is more appealing to explore at how this politics of certification lead to further depoliticization of the issue of meat consumption through a technicalization of the debate.

In chapter 5, this issue was discussed with the concept of humane-washing which led to the idea of the humaneness continuum. It was argued that from a discursive perspective, the details of each certification were not important since they all shared the premise that ethical meat was possible and desirable. This idea can be reinterpreted through the process of passive revolution. Indeed, not only do they depoliticize the debate over meat-eating with this idea, but most importantly, they are all bringing the debate on the humane meat continuum. Not surprisingly, the exact same dynamic was apparent throughout this chapter. Indeed, in the discussion about animal advocacy organizations, the idea that some farms are not ethical enough is omnipresent. It could even be argued that controversy over whether a certification is good enough is a form of depoliticization because it moves the debate over to technical issues. Unsurprisingly, when there is a debate over whether an animal farming practice is acceptable or not, the question of legitimacy of meat eating becomes peripheral. While the question of technicalization is discussed through the humane meat discourse since it is where it is the most obvious, it is essential to note that it is not restricted to this discourse. This can mostly easily be seen in a quote from Cole. He wrote that for Fairlie,

there is no doubt that [...] 'killing animals' is right, although he makes a virtue of his lack of justification for that moral stance in the book. This background assumption means that Fairlie's attacks on veganism throughout the book always miss their mark because he confronts veganism as if it were solely one technical option to be explored in the pursuit of environmentally sustainable human food production. That is, Fairlie at a stroke dismisses the essence of veganism. (Cole 2016, 112)

While from the logic of this thesis, the critical content of Cole's argument is not that important, it remains that he highlights how the question of the legitimacy of killing animals is sidelined by a technical discussion about the environmental impacts of various food production systems.

In sum, ethical meat, especially through its humane meat variant, can be seen as a depoliticizing force. Indeed, from the normalization of meat eating to the strategic selection of humane meat and the implications of the politics of certification, the question of the legitimacy of meat-eating is marginalized and reduced to a technical one.

4.3 Absorption: Shifting the Debate

About two special issues on humane meat published by *Satya Magazine*, Vance Lehmkuhl concludes: "Beyond that [the welfarist/abolitionist debate], the two branches of animal activists can find common ground in at least rejecting the phrase 'humane meat' as an oxymoron." (Lehmkuhl 2007) As was seen, both abolitionist organizations and some new welfarist organizations recognize the implicit contradiction in the expression. It was, however, also seen that this position-taking cannot really be considered independently of the rest of the positions of the various animal advocacy organizations. It is with the process of absorption that these various positions will be further analyzed. It was already suggested that all but the abolitionist organizations were absorbed by the ethical meat discourse-coalition, but this section will put this in wider context.

In chapter 2, it was seen that according to Forkasiewicz, the moderate organizations could already be considered part of the meat eating hegemony, and that, without talking about the ethical meat discourse. He said:

Though many supporters will deny it, reformist and neo-reformist organizations have largely become a part of the animal exploitation complex and need it just as much as it needs them. Odds are, in any country where animal “protection” is an issue at all, there operates at least one such group. On account of its moderate, modest postulates, that group is most probably positioned centrally, surrounded by smaller, more radical organizations and coalitions. [...] Within such a constellation, the related problems of human species-supremacy and the self-estrangement of the human being from its own animality scarcely ever arise; thus animal liberation is completely marginalized. (Forkasiewicz 2014, 48)

At the time, it was noted that while his ideas are interesting, they were not fully explored.

As can already be seen, the previous sections reached similar conclusions about the interrelation between the meat industry and ethical meat as well as about the marginalization of animal rights ideas. It remains that it appears problematic to claim that animal advocacy organizations are simply part of the animal-industrial complex. Such a proposition is usually not very well received by supporters of these organizations and that can easily be seen by the often aggressive internal debates within and between them. In the context of this research, it is believed that with the ethical meat discourse-coalition a more nuanced account can be proposed. Put differently, it appears much more promising to associate animal advocacy organizations to ethical meat than directly to the meat industry. To do so, we have to go back to their respective positions.

For the case of welfarist organizations, their support for ethical meat is explicitly said. As such, the rest of the analysis will focus on the more complex case of new welfarist organizations. In the above section about animal advocacy organizations, it was argued that considering the form of the ethical meat coalition and its flexibility, most of the arguments that do not directly attack its core principle, can be diffused or be turned around to be in favour of ethical

meat. Moreover, it was noted that thanks to its storyline based on the idealized small farm, ethical meat is even harder to criticize. All of this explained the ambivalent position held by new welfarists toward ethical meat and led to the conclusion that it left the door open to absorption.

To understand this larger process, it is important to go back to the relation between welfarist reforms and ethical meat. As can be seen by the unconditional support of welfarist organizations to ethical meat, it can be argued that the welfarist logic has been for the most part captured by the coalition. This situation leaves new welfarist organizations in a conundrum: how is it possible to stay in favour of the abolition of animal exploitation if the reforms that are supposed to lead there are rerouted towards the ethical meat discourse? Put differently, if welfarist reforms lead to a reinforcement of the ethical meat discourse, and consequently, of the legitimacy of meat eating, how is it still possible to pretend to be in favour of abolition? Concretely, this put these organizations into a strategic dilemma by making it untenable to be both in favour of welfare reforms, and consequently, of ethical meat, and of the abolition of animal exploitation. The indecision and division caused by ethical meat is perfectly captured by the “Tales of two letters” that was presented above. The point here is not to argue that organizations like PETA and *Mercy for Animals* are hypocrites since it is irrelevant for the current argument, but to highlight the fact that the ethical meat discourse has changed the landscape of the welfarist-abolitionist debate, rendering the new welfarist position untenable.

In other words, the ethical meat discourse puts pressure on preexisting internal divisions within the animal advocacy movement to further divide it. Indeed, the argument about new welfarist organizations helping legitimate meat consumption has been around since Francione formulated it in the 1990s. More

recently, the logical continuation of this argument was to associate ethical meat and new welfarism. For example, Nibert conflates the two when defining the strategy of the latter as the promotion of “the more ‘humane’ production of ‘meat,’ ‘dairy,’ and ‘eggs,’ ostensibly as a step toward the eventual end of animal oppression.” He then continues by arguing that this strategy “actually *promotes* the continued oppression of domesticated animals and the underlying global injustices and dangers that accompany it” (2013, 259). In the animal rights literature, this conflation is a common way of discrediting ethical meat. The problem with this kind of argument is that they do not explore the subtle dynamic between ethical meat and new welfarism. They do not show how the landscape of the welfarism/abolitionism debate has changed since Francione’s original argument and that it is mostly because of the emergence of ethical meat that the terms of the debate changed.

The conclusion of the current argument is not that different, but the means of getting there are. Indeed, to sum it up, it is argued that with the emergence of the ethical meat discourse, new welfarist organizations were pushed closer to welfarist ones more than ever before. It is in that sense that it can be argued that the ethical meat discourse has absorbed its moderate opposition. As was said above, this was obvious for welfarist organizations, but from the current discussion, it seems reasonable to also include new welfarist organizations in this. Consequently, by being associated, even if reluctantly, with ethical meat, new welfarist organizations can be said to be promoting meat eating.

5. Conclusion: The Marginalization of Animal Rights

Based on the previous analysis, an answer to this thesis’ research question can be proposed. As was written in chapter 3, it asked: what can the specific process of passive revolution tell us about the impacts of the ethical meat discourse on the

animal rights movement? Put differently, the question assumed that ethical meat is indeed part of a passive revolution that neutralizes the animal rights movement to explore the specific process through which that is done. While this process has been explored in great detail in this chapter, it appears important to conclude by closing to loop and explicitly saying how it led to the marginalization of the animal rights movement.

The process of depoliticization marginalizes the animal rights movement by focusing on the relevance of one of its main issues, that is, the idea that it is immoral to eat animals. It was already seen in chapter 4's arguments that the starting point of the ethical meat discourse is to recognize that factory farming is an unacceptable practice, but that animals can be eaten ethically. In this chapter, the way this idea is deployed was analyzed and it revealed that it is mostly by depoliticizing the question of the legitimacy of meat eating that it is done. As the industry has done for decades, the ethical meat discourse reinforces the common sense idea that it is normal to eat meat. Moreover, with the relative importance of the humane meat discourse, there is a tendency to technicalize the debate by focusing on certain standards or practices. More generally, the ethical meat discourse systematically tries to restrict the debate to the humaneness continuum. All of this directly or indirectly presents the question of the legitimacy of meat eating as irrelevant.

As for the process of absorption, it marginalizes the animal rights movement by pushing aside the few organizations that resist it. As was said above, the ethical meat discourse shifted the internal debate between animal advocacy organizations, leaving the moderate ones in an untenable position. This situation led them to adopt an ambiguous position about ethical meat which, thanks to the coalition's flexibility, ended up as a form of support. With abolitionist

organizations left as the only ones clearly opposing ethical meat, they can easily be categorized as radicals. Even more important from a discursive point of view, they are the only ones left to criticize the ideal of the small farms and what everybody seems to think of as a win-win solution, ethical meat.

In sum, if this logic is pushed to the extreme, ethical meat leaves the animal rights movement with an irrelevant question about the legitimacy of eating meat and with the few animal advocacy organizations that were already perceived as radical pushed into an even more marginal position. Most importantly, the ethical meat discourse, with its storyline and its adaptability, secures its own position by making itself very difficult to criticize. However, as was noted above, whatever the interrelation between the meat industry and ethical meat, with the passive revolution, it is not only the latter's position that is secured, but more broadly, the legitimacy of meat consumption. Put in Gramscian terms, the meat eating hegemony has reorganized itself and now has much more solid ideological and political foundations.

CONCLUSION

This research started with the hypothesis that with the emergence of a new way to defend meat consumption, ethical meat, something fundamental had changed around the debate on meat eating. Not only did this new phenomenon nullify one of the most important arguments against meat eating, the critique of factory farming, but it also appeared to affect the animal rights movement in a more profound way. After a survey of the literature surrounding that issue, it became apparent that this impression was shared by other animal rights authors and most importantly, that current theoretical perspectives were not adapted to analyze it. Consequently, to get new insight on the matter, it was suggested to proceed from a political perspective. To that end, a theoretical framework based on Gramsci's theory of hegemony was developed and it became apparent that his concept of passive revolution offered considerable potential to understand the dynamic of ethical meat. To make it operationalizable, Gramsci's concepts were combined with Hajer's theory of discourse-coalition.

From there, a research proposition was developed around the question: "If the emergence of the ethical meat discourse is understood as part of a passive revolution, what can the specific process of passive revolution tell us about the impacts of the ethical meat discourse on the animal rights movement?" At that point, it was already clear that before this question could be explored, a deeper understanding of the ethical meat phenomenon was needed. As such, it was proposed to first analyze the content of the ethical meat discourse through its arguments and second, to explore its internal dynamic with the help of the concept of discourse-coalition.

More precisely, in chapter 4, the content of the ethical meat discourse was analyzed by looking at its animal ethics, environmental and human health arguments. From this, it quickly became apparent that the ethical meat discourse defines itself in opposition to both factory farming and veganism. As such, it tries to position itself as a third alternative between two options that are presented as unappealing. Beyond this idea, two further conclusions emerged. First, in its attempt to present itself as a win-win solution, it often relies on vague arguments and appears to try to hold multiple positions simultaneously despite the fact that they may not be compatible. Second, despite this apparent incoherence, the metaphor of the small farm emerged as a common thread in all the arguments. These two elements led to conclude that the ethical meat discourse was best understood as a discourse-coalition with a storyline based on the small farm ideal as the ultimate solution to avoid both veganism and factory farming.

Based on that finding, chapter 5 proposed to use the concept of discourse-coalition to make sense of the apparent internal division and incoherence within the ethical meat discourse. A typology of discourses was then developed to show how the ethical meat storyline could be extrapolated into four entirely different discourses: the humane meat discourse, the urban homesteading discourse, the agrarian populist discourse and the permaculture livestock economy discourse. By looking at the relations between them, it was concluded that the political power of the ethical meat discourse came from its ambiguity and flexibility, by making it adaptable enough to diffuse most criticism against it and making it much more convincing. Put differently, the ethical meat discourse is not only very attractive, but it is also particularly difficult to criticize.

Using this discursive framework of analysis, the actual process of passive revolution was explored through the way the meat industry, animal advocacy

organizations and environmental organizations actually engage with the ethical meat discourse. From this analysis, three conclusions were reached. First, at the most general level, it was noted that the best way to understand the passive revolution was to notice how the meat industry and the ethical meat coalition end up relying on one another to preserve the legitimacy of meat-eating. Second, it was argued that the normalization of meat consumption and the popularity of the humane meat discourse highlight a process of depoliticization where the issue of meat-eating is marginalized and reduced to a technical one. Third, it was argued that by changing the landscape of internal debates within the animal rights movement, ethical meat pushed new welfarist organizations closer to welfarist organizations. This was understood as a process of absorption by the ethical meat coalition that had the consequence of marginalizing the abolitionist organizations, left to stand alone in their opposition to meat-eating.

Considering this research and its conclusions, this last chapter seeks to highlight some of the scientific implications and limitations of the project. While doing so, research avenues will be suggested to go further. Finally, the chapter will end by considering the militant implications of this thesis for the animal rights movement.

1. General Implications

In light of all this analysis, a few important implications can be identified. For the animal rights literature, the first obvious one is that the ethical meat discourse is much more complex than it appears. This was first hinted at in the literature review and confirmed in chapter 4 where its arguments were analyzed, but it is only in chapter 5 that all its complexity became apparent. Put differently, it is the development of the typology of discourse that was the key element to understand the ethical meat phenomenon. This typology, which could arguably be considered

the most important contribution of this thesis, not only gave a sense of order to a coalition that initially appeared incoherent, but also gave an understanding of its internal dynamic and, most importantly, of the source of its political power. As can be deduced from the fact that a considerable part of the typology was not needed to analyze the process of passive revolution, it is believed that this typology could serve as a basis for further research.

Another contribution of the typology was to highlight the complexity of the relationship between the meat industry and the ethical meat coalition. At first sight, by looking at how the latter is founded on the criticism of the former, it would be tempting to conclude that they are simply opponents. Moreover, as was seen in chapter 6, the idea that there is a clear-cut division between the two is used by both in their respective argumentation. However, it was argued that when looking at the humane meat discourse, this division breaks down as it becomes apparent that they can both be placed on the same humaneness continuum and as such, that there is no fundamental difference between the two. This is also illustrated by the fact that despite their disagreements, they remain allies for a key element, that is, the preservation of the legitimacy of meat eating. As such, it is important to remember that, from an analytical perspective, it can be limiting to simply take for granted the self-serving idea that factory farming and ethical meat are qualitatively different practices. Again, unpacking that assumption was essential to understand part of the process of passive revolution.

This last point leads to another implication that was briefly mentioned in chapter 6. From the discussion about the depoliticization process, it could also be argued that the ethical meat discourse is itself a victim of the meat industry's attempts to associate itself with it. This can be seen in the push back against weak certifications and accusations of humane-washing. While, to some extent, ethical

meat proponents could argue that their “pure” idea is being corrupted or twisted by the meat industry, the concept of passive revolution also implies that to preserve its dominant position, the hegemony has to compromise, as long as it does not affect its foundational ideas. This means that it could very well happen that with the ethical meat passive revolution, the conditions of animal farming in the United States actually improve. Of course, that would have to be verified and it is probably too early to conduct such research. Nevertheless, the point is that from the perspective of ethical meat proponents as well as for welfarist organizations, if it turns out to be the case, it could be interpreted as a success. Considering this ambiguous relationship, it remains to be seen if over time internal debates will emerge within the ethical meat coalition to further differentiate itself from the meat industry and if that is the case, to what extent this might change the dynamic within the coalition.

More broadly, this analysis was only possible by adopting a political perspective and this point leads to the importance of the adopted theoretical framework. Some important limits related to it will be identified in the next section, but before, two key implications can be highlighted. The first is related to the pertinence of using Gramsci’s theory. Right from the start, this thesis argued that using Gramsci’s concepts to analyze a contemporary issue unrelated to his own concerns did not automatically make sense and had to be problematized. Without going back to the debates within Gramscian secondary literature, this thesis can serve as an example that his theory can yield valuable analytical insights to investigate the power dynamics related to contemporary issues. Not only did it provide a framework to understand the politics of animal rights before the emergence of ethical meat, but it also provided keys to understand its role and impact with the concept of passive revolution. As such, this thesis suggests that it

does make sense to use Gramsci to study issues related to animal rights, but also other issues that exhibit similar power dynamics.

The second key theoretical implication is related to Hajer's argumentative approach. More specifically, it is important to reiterate that this analysis was only possible by considering arguments from a socio-cognitive perspective. Two fairly obvious implications can be deduced from that. First, an argument can be very convincing even if its philosophical validity is questionable. Bluntly, in a debate, having the "best" argument is rarely enough. In the end, the attractiveness of the reality presented by an argument might be a much more important factor. Just as Hajer used this idea to understand the influence of ecological modernization, it was essential to analyze the ethical meat discourse. Second, a discourse's political power is not necessarily constrained by its lack of coherence. The concept of discourse-coalition effectively showed that a vague storyline can be sufficient to put in place an important political force. Moreover, in chapter 5, it was argued that for the ethical meat discourse, incoherence can even prove a useful tool. All these elements are particularly relevant to the animal rights literature that, as was seen in chapter 2, has a tendency to give considerable importance to moral arguments.

It could be argued that these theoretical contributions were made possible by thinking, as Morton put it, "in a Gramscian way" (2007, 35). As Hall suggested, this research tried to do its "own work to make Gramsci work" (1997, 27). In a sense, it would be reasonable to argue that it was a fruitful effort and a convincing first step to adapt Gramsci's work to the issue of animal rights. However, through this adaptation some problems have emerged. They will be explored in the next section.

2. Limitations

Considering the fact that this thesis proposed an original theoretical assemblage, it should not be surprising that most of its limitations are related to its theoretical framework and its operationalization. In this section, the most important limitations will be presented with, when possible, ways to make up for them in future research.

The first point is not really a limitation, but a concept that was ignored. In chapter 3, at the end of the presentation of Gramsci's theoretical framework, his conception of intellectuals was presented only to be immediately rejected. While at the time, it appeared logical and consistent with the proposed theoretical approach to avoid focusing on the analysis of particular individuals, the present research showed that this type of inquiry could also be relevant. Indeed, it would be fairly easy to identify the key organic intellectuals of the ethical meat coalition, the most obvious being Pollan. However, as Gramsci said, these are not the most important actors. Indeed, for the current purpose, it would be interesting to verify if the concept of traditional intellectual makes sense in the debate about meat consumption. While in the context of this research, a definitive answer cannot be provided, it remains that Gramsci's conception of intellectual could probably be used to shed some light on the role of key individuals whose names appeared repeatedly. For example, two persons, Grandin and Savory, were in the ambiguous position of being referred to by both the meat industry and ethical meat proponents. Such a position could thus theoretically be understood as providing an important contribution to the legitimation of meat-eating.

That being said, one important issue that was left unexplored throughout this research is the question of the relative positioning of the ethical meat coalition and the meat-eating hegemony—which is not necessarily restricted to the meat

industry. To understand why this is problematic, it is important to go back to the way Gramsci's theory was operationalized. In chapter 2, the concept of hegemony was first associated with the meat-eating ideology and then, this ideology was associated with the Animal-Industrial Complex as its corresponding political coalition. The logic was that this complex is the key actor in the preservation of the legitimacy of animal exploitation. While at the beginning of the thesis, this made sense, it appeared while doing the analysis that, not only was this concept of Animal-Industrial Complex not needed to understand ethical meat, but also, and most importantly, it was not clear how the two are to be related.

Indeed, while for Forkasiewicz, it seems clear that moderate animal rights organizations and obviously the ethical meat coalition are part of this complex (2014, 48), it is difficult to blindly accept this idea when looking at the intensity with which some proponents of ethical meat are criticizing factory farming. The key question here is then: is the ethical meat coalition part of the Animal-Industrial Complex? This question would be relevant to further research in general, but for this thesis, it has key theoretical implications because for Gramsci, a passive revolution is a revolution from above, that is, a reorganization of its hegemony to preserve its dominant position. This leads to two possible interpretations.

On the one hand, following the logic of passive revolution's definition, the ethical meat coalition would necessarily have to be considered as a "creation" of the Animal-Industrial Complex. Such an idea can be seen when people are trying to associate ethical meat with factory farming to discredit the former. This, however, leads to many other questions about the intentionality of proponents of ethical meat. Indeed, this implies that they are on some form of mission for the benefit of the industry. As was said above, that would be difficult to accept and since it was

not visible in the ethical meat literature, it would imply some sort of conspiracy. In other words, while it would be theoretically coherent, it would lead to some serious analytical shortcuts.

On the other hand, the ethical meat coalition can be considered independent from the Animal-Industrial Complex. This is much more coherent with this research as it was necessary to assume some division to be able to analyze their interrelation. However, while this was fruitful, it was also incoherent with the definition of passive revolution. This leads to the bizarre conclusion that the passive revolution was a revolution from the “side,” that is, as if the ethical meat discourse came from the outside of the hegemony to save the legitimacy of meat eating. This issue highlights a limit with the way Gramsci’s concepts were operationalized, that is, as a more or less rigid opposition between the meat eating hegemony and the animal rights counter-hegemony with no place left for the emergence of a third actor. In other words, it was assumed that ethical meat could be understood as part of the hegemony, but as was seen, the dynamic is much more complex and this constitutes an important limitation to this research.

Another issue related to the concept of Animal-Industrial Complex can also be identified. Indeed, in the definition of this concept, the complex relies on the help of the state to preserve its dominant position, but in the concept of hegemony as defined in chapter 3 the state was not considered a relevant actor. In a sense, this was a reasonable assumption since, as was seen in the ethical meat literature, the state is rarely considered an important actor. It remains that when the whole issue of meat eating is considered, the state is far from being an irrelevant actor. Indeed, this is precisely why the concept of Animal-Industrial Complex is important in the animal rights literature: it highlights the intimate relationship between the state and key players in the meat industry. Not surprisingly, so far,

the state has mostly been associated with a defence of factory farming. This can be seen in the United States where ag-gag bills are adopted that “seek to make it difficult or impossible for whistleblowing employees or animal advocacy groups to expose animal cruelty or safety issues.” (HSUS 2018a) More broadly, as was seen in the analysis of the industry, current animal welfare laws are not very strict compared to some humane standards. While the relation between the state and ethical meat would be interesting to investigate on its own, it could also be argued that the state’s actions are simply determined by the very influential meat industry.

This leads to what is probably the most important limitation of this thesis, that is, the fact that material forces were not included in the analysis. In chapter 3, it was argued that one reason for the use of Gramsci’s work was his inclusion of both material and ideological forces, but in the end, with the inclusion of Hajer into the theoretical framework, the concept of discourse took centre stage to analyze ideologies. Consequently, while the socio-cognitive process of argumentation was analyzed, what could be called the socio-economic process of discourse propagation was for the most part ignored. Put differently, the relative capacity of the various discourses to occupy the public debate was not included since it would have required a completely different kind of research. While such research has been done extensively for the role of the animal industry to promote meat consumption (D. R. Simon 2013; Nibert 2013), it has not been done specifically for the ethical meat discourse. On that topic, many questions could be asked. For example, considering the fact that the ethical meat discourse was presented as originating from an article in *The New York Times Magazine*, it would be relevant to question the role of the media in the United States in the propagation of the ethical meat discourse.

In sum, while some theoretical shortcomings could be identified, some of them are simply due to the fact that it was not possible to include everything in this thesis. Indeed, as a first in-depth use of Gramsci to analyze the animal rights issue, some choices had to be made. The fact that more research avenues based on the same theoretical framework present themselves confirms that Gramscian theoretical frameworks offer an immense potential to further analyze ethical meat, animal rights and other contemporary issues. However, before more research is conducted, it is essential to go back to the beginning and discuss the implications of this thesis for the animal rights movement.

3. Implications for the Animal Rights Movement

For abolitionist readers, reading parts of this thesis must have been frustrating because the ethical meat arguments were not systematically refuted when presented. As was said in chapter 1, while this research is still a critical thesis, it was decided to analyze the ethical meat phenomenon on its own terms. That meant letting it speak for itself in the hope that it would provide valuable insights to understand it. This method is believed to have been successful in the sense that, by avoiding systematic criticism, it was possible to develop a much more profound and nuanced understanding of this phenomenon than what can currently be found in the literature. Now that this has been done, it is possible to return to a normative stance and to propose an analysis of this thesis from a militant perspective.

The first obvious implication of this research for the animal rights movement is to question the relevance of criticizing factory farming. As was mentioned multiple times, the exposure of factory farming's cruelty has been one of the movement's key strategies since the 1960s. There is no doubt this was partially successful considering the fact that the issue of animal rights is now seriously discussed both

in the media and in academic circles. It was also essential to the triggering of the organic crisis faced by the meat industry with the publication of undercover investigations of animal cruelty. However, if the ethical meat discourse is understood as the response to this crisis, it is essential to ask whether or not this strategy is still effective. As was said in chapter 4, since the ethical meat discourse suggests similar criticism of factory farming, how is it possible to know if the exposure of animal cruelty will really lead to the end of animal agriculture?

While there is some research about the effectiveness of using shocking images by the animal rights movement (Jacobsson and Lindblom 2013), what is particularly important to remember here is that many proponents of ethical meat strategically tell the stories of vegans who had stopped eating meat because of factory farming's cruelty only to subsequently change their mind after discovering the existence of ethical meat. There are many such accounts in the media (Woginrich 2011; Zoe McKnight 2017) and in the ethical meat literature (Pollan 2006; Salatin 2011). One of the most obvious one is, however, Leigh's personal story. In *The Ethical Meat Handbook*, she writes that she became a vegetarian and then a vegan after watching a "grueling video in high school about the horrors of an industrial slaughterhouse" (Leigh 2015, 1). She then writes that, at the time, she was ignorant: "I was not making a huge difference in the lives and deaths of animals, was not looking at the bigger picture of global human health and environmental restoration, was not actively changing mass wrongdoing." (Leigh 2015, 1) When she later encountered ethical meat, she "began [her] journey into the meaningful consumption of animals." (Leigh 2015, 2) In other words, veganism is presented as an immature and emotional response while ethical meat is seen as the reasonable solution.

The obvious implication here is that it is ethical meat that should be criticized and not factory farming. This is not a new idea. Indeed, as was seen in chapter 2, it is already criticized by many authors. However, as was argued at the time and as this thesis confirmed, this criticism is usually based on oversimplifications of the phenomenon. Two main types of criticism have been identified. First, for some authors, ethical meat is just another variant of new welfarism and as such, it can be treated similarly. However, as was argued in chapter 6, ethical meat's emergence can be understood as having completely changed the dynamic around the debate over the legitimacy of meat eating. As such, it is doubtful that the same arguments as those used against new welfarism would be effective. Second, as was seen in the literature review, a lot of energy is spent criticizing the inconsistencies of the ethical meat discourse and Salatin's case. However, as was noted multiple times, when ethical meat is considered as a discourse-coalition, this kind of criticism becomes irrelevant. Indeed, the ethical meat coalition was understood as working in a more nuanced and insidious manner. This is mostly due to its adaptability that allows it to deflect many arguments and even turn some in its favour.

The underlying implication of this last point is that criticizing the ethical meat discourse can be difficult. If the analysis of this research is followed to its logical conclusion, the only way to do so is to target its storyline. Not only because it is what is holding the coalition together, but also because it is the only constant variable in the discourse, the only element that cannot be put aside to diffuse criticism. Put differently, the ideal of the small farm is the key to the whole discourse-coalition. That being said, what makes ethical meat difficult to attack remains its attractiveness. This is illustrated both by its positioning as a win-win solution where people can keep eating meat without worrying about its moral and social implications, but also, as was seen in chapter 6, by the inherent value

of the small farmers' image on which it is founded. Indeed, as could be seen most clearly in the agrarian populist discourse, the nostalgic idea of the caring and hardworking small farmer carries a strong social appeal and one could even argue, an almost universal sympathy. This conclusion is, however, based on extrapolation and as such, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which there is sympathy for the image of the small farmers and if there is, how it influences the debate over meat eating. This kind of research would also provide a unique opportunity to understand how people perceive the small farm ideal.

It was also implied in chapter 6 that even if criticizing this storyline is difficult, it appears to be the only option left to the organizations still opposed to ethical meat. Indeed, it was concluded that the way ethical meat changed the welfarist-abolitionist debate transformed any kind of compromising position into a position in favour of ethical meat.. Indeed, while new welfarist organizations tried to be both in favour of welfare reforms and abolitionism, with the emergence of ethical meat, this position became difficult to hold. This was seen most clearly in PETA's ambiguous position about ethical meat. From these new terms of the debate, it was concluded that this also leaves abolitionist organizations in the uncomfortable position of having only one strategy left: criticizing the ethical meat storyline. If the above hypothesis about the attractiveness of the small farm ideal is correct, this is a perilous situation for the animal rights movement that requires further research.

It is not, however, entirely correct to argue that this is the only option. Indeed, if one takes a step back, the modern animal ethics literature has been developing arguments concluding that animal exploitation and meat eating are immoral practices for decades. Most of these arguments are general in the sense that they do not depend on the details of these practices. In other words, they are also

arguments against ethical meat. It could, however, be argued that over the years since the foundation of the modern animal rights movement, images of cruelty from factory farming did much more to legitimate the animal rights movement than its moral arguments. Two examples can show how these arguments are perceived by some ethical meat proponents. In a 2015 article on the environmental news website *Grist*, food writer Nathanael Johnson was exploring the moral case for meat and, after reviewing many of the arguments against and seeing how there were not many convincing arguments in favour, he wrote:

Perhaps some brilliant philosopher will develop these points, but, since I am not one of those, I was left with the conclusion that the vegans were right. Oddly, however, that didn't make me think twice about laying sliced turkey on my sandwich the next day. I was convinced on a rational level, but not in an embodied, visceral way. (2015)

More directly, he said: "Nevertheless, despite my inability to muster a defence for my meat eating, I didn't change my way of life." (Johnson 2015)

A similar reception of moral arguments can be found in Pollan's writing. In an article published in *The Atlantic*, B. R. Myers analyzes the way Pollan engages with moral arguments in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. He describes it as such:

One debates the other side in a rational manner until pushed into a corner. Then one simply drops the argument and slips away, pretending that one has not fallen short of reason but instead *transcended* it. The irreconcilability of one's belief with reason is then held up as a great mystery, the humble readiness to live with which puts one above lesser minds and their cheap certainties. (Myers 2007)

Bluntly, like Johnson, Pollan implicitly recognizes that he has lost the debate, but that he does not care. The point is not to shame either of them but, once again, to highlight the limits of arguments understood strictly from a cognitive perspective. Using Hajer's argumentative approach, this research has shown how they are best understood as a socio-cognitive process. Indeed, it is only from this perspective that the power of the ethical meat storyline with its win-win solution and its small

farm ideal becomes apparent and conversely, how futile moral philosophy appears when confronted to it. This is precisely the reason why it was assumed above that the only option left for abolitionists was to criticize this storyline, that is, because rational arguments are not enough. The point here is not to discredit moral philosophy as a discipline, but to highlight the fact that its capacity to induce social change is limited.

That being said, it is hoped that this thesis has contributed to the burgeoning literature, mostly associated with Critical Animal Studies, providing original perspectives on the animal rights movement as well as on the issue of animal exploitation and will go on to inspire further research.

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