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MSc Thesis  
Applied Communication Science

# It's time to start talking

A discursive psychological perspective on how 'soft impacts' of food technology can be publically discussed



WAGENINGENUR

*For quality of life*



# It's time to start talking

## *A discursive psychological perspective on how 'soft impacts' of food technology can be publically discussed*

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### Abstract

The importance of taking into account public concerns related to innovative (food) technologies is widely acknowledged. Yet, the public's 'difficult to pin down', social, moral or political concerns, that are referred to as 'soft impacts', continue being neglected in public debates. These 'soft impacts' tend to get warded off the negotiation agenda, which prevents a genuine and fruitful expert-citizen dialogue that actually addresses these public concerns. This study aims to examine how two central 'soft impacts' of food technology (*good taste* and *naturalness*) can be incorporated in public debates by studying how these issues *are*, and *can be* depicted as legitimate topics for public consideration. This study adopts a discursive psychological perspective. It analyses two group discussions conducted at a convention on socially responsible food innovation and looks at what is achieved by participants by putting forward certain arguments at particular moments in the debate. The findings show that concerns for *good taste* are presented as 'based upon evidence' and evoked by participant's 'superior knowledge and experience in this field'. The phenomenon itself is depicted as 'actually occurring' and 'advanced by practises of industry and average consumers'. In addition, the request for *naturalness* is presented as 'generally known to exist among the public', as 'giving voice to other aspirations consumers have with regard to food as well', and being 'inadequately dealt with by industry'. Hence, it is recommended that when incorporating *good taste* in the public debate the focus should be on making this notion concrete and tangible. *Naturalness* on the other hand should be discussed as to reveal underlying aspirations consumers attach to this concept and to what extent these are generally shared. Subsequently, on the basis of this information about the meaning of these 'soft impacts', concrete options should be discussed for dealing with these public concerns in the food sector.

### Keywords

public debate, food technology, 'soft impacts', *good taste*, *naturalness*, discursive psychology

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Thesis Strategic Communication (COM 80533)

Wageningen University, Department of Social Science, March 2014

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# Table of content

1. Introduction	4
1.1. Food technology, an highly influential and rapidly expanding field	5
1.2. Problem statement	6
1.3. Research objective, research question and underlying assumptions	6
1.4. Research perspective	7
1.5. Overview of thesis	7
2. Theoretical framework	9
2.1. Public involvement in scientific decision making	9
2.1.1. Problems associated with public participation and the public debate	9
2.1.2. Public engagement in the food sector – an example from genetic engineering	10
2.2. ‘Soft impacts’ and their difficulty reaching the agenda of public debates	11
2.2.1. The ‘soft impact’ <i>good taste</i>	12
2.2.2. The ‘soft impact’ <i>naturalness</i>	12
2.3. Discursive Psychology	13
2.3.1. Adopting a discursive psychological perspective	13
2.3.2. Discourse as action-oriented, constructed and situated	13
2.3.3. Knowledge claims	14
2.3.4. Identity constructions	15
2.4. Concluding remarks	16
3. Methods	17
3.1. Group discussions as data collection method	17
3.2. Practical information and structure of the convention	17
3.3. The group discussions	18
3.3.1. The discussion on <i>Good taste</i>	18
3.3.2. The discussion on <i>Naturalness and authenticity</i>	19
3.4. Recordings and transcriptions	19
3.5. Analytical principles	20
3.6. Selection procedure	20
4. Results	22
4.1. Discussing <i>good taste</i>	22
4.1.1. Legitimizing discussion about good taste by constructing its disappearance as <i>actually occurring</i> and <i>potentially detrimental</i>	22
4.1.2. Attributing responsibility and blame by depicting the disappearance of good taste as caused by industry and the average consumer	26
4.1.2.1. Constructing the industry as allowing good taste to disappear by deliberately prioritizing maximum profit	26
4.1.2.2. Constructing the average consumer as neglecting good taste by	

failing to notice or pay attention to it_____	28
4.1.2.3. Constructing the interplay between industry and the consumer as contributing to disappearance of good taste_____	32
4.1.3. Building an identity of ‘concerned advocate of good taste’_____	33
4.1.3.1. Demonstrating individual knowledge and experience on <i>good taste</i> to suggest superior judgement concerning its disappearance_____	33
4.1.3.2. Demonstrating collective knowledge and experience on <i>good taste</i> to suggest superior judgement concerning its disappearance_____	34
4.1.4. Summary of the discussion on <i>good taste</i> _____	37
4.2. Discussing the ‘soft’ impact <i>naturalness</i> _____	37
4.2.1. Constructing the public’s request for naturalness as generally accepted as existing_____	38
4.2.2. Building an identity as a ‘consumer with a comprehensive and intangible, but therefore not less sincere, desire referred to as naturalness’_____	40
4.2.3. Constructing industry as inadequately responding to the request for naturalness_____	45
4.2.4. Summary of the discussion on <i>naturalness and authenticity</i> _____	48
5. Discussion and Conclusion_____	49
5.1. Main observations_____	49
5.1.1. Constructing <i>good taste</i> and <i>naturalness</i> as legitimate topics for public debate_____	49
5.1.2. Using identity constructions to account for knowledge of <i>good taste</i> and <i>Naturalness</i> _____	50
5.1.3. Presenting the current situation with regard to <i>good taste</i> or <i>naturalness</i> as ongoing through constructions industry and average consumers_____	51
5.2. Recommendations_____	51
5.2.1. Towards a fruitful public debate on <i>good taste</i> _____	51
5.2.2. Towards a fruitful public debate on <i>naturalness</i> _____	53
5.2.3. Implications for the public debate around food in general_____	54
5.3. Strengths and limitations_____	55
5.4. Further research_____	56
5.5. Acknowledgements_____	57
References_____	58
Appendix A: <i>a simplified version of the Jefferson transcription method</i> _____	61
Appendix B: <i>schematic representation of discussion setting &amp; detailed participants list</i> _____	62

# 1. Introduction

In almost all facets of modern society applications of scientific knowledge and technologies can be found. Still, the unconditional trust that once was granted to science and scientists has by now considerably diminished. This has become replaced by a seemingly more critical and reserved attitude among the public towards science and scientific innovations which increased the need for public involvement in scientific decision making (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002). Nevertheless, while policymakers are currently implementing participatory initiatives that should foster such public involvement and facilitate open-minded and responsive public dialogue, the extent in which such initiatives actually succeed in reaching these aims, remains critiqued (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Irwin, 2006; Felt and Fochler, 2010; Wynne, 2006).

A number of limitations associated with public participation initiatives have been pointed out (Felt and Fochler, 2010; Irwin, 2006; Wynne, 2006), such as the prevalence of scientific and technical knowledge within these initiatives that restricts their negotiation agenda (Veen, Te Molder, Gremmen and Van Woerkum, 2012). More specifically, while participatory initiatives should ideally facilitate a responsive public dialogue that takes into account all concerns that people voice with regard to an innovation, they frequently allow only technical and straightforward matters to be thoroughly debated. Other issues are excluded from the topical agenda by either remaining implicit and unnoticed or by getting dismissed as needles to discuss in public. The latter is the result of a process called *privatisation*, that occurs when an issue is depicted as a legitimate, yet *private*, concern that should be decided upon individually instead of being dealt with in the public debate (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). The kind of issues that frequently get excluded from the public debate, are those encompassing political (Marris, 2001; Wynne, 2001) social or moral concerns that are mostly voiced by consumers and are difficult to pin down and quantify (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). For example, this could be the impact a new technology has on someone's identity (ibid). Nevertheless, despite being neglected in the public debate, these issues – referred to as 'soft impacts' or 'soft concerns' (ibid) – still have the ability to reappear in the public sphere later on and jeopardize a successful integration of an innovative product or technology into society (Marris, 2001; Veen, Gremmen, Te Molder and Van Woerkum, 2011). Moreover, if 'soft impacts' would be sincerely considered in the public debate, these might also enrich the resulting dialogue (Swiersta and Te Molder, 2012; Veen, et al., 2012). Hence, it is time to look for ways to open-up the topical agenda of public debates to these 'soft impacts' (ibid.). They should be incorporated on their own terms, and then it's time to start talking, though in a way that actually addresses these concerns and allows dealing with them as a public (Veen et al., 2011).

As for this study, the focus will be on the public debate taking place in the context of *food technology development* and how the negotiation agenda of participatory initiatives carried out in this domain can be made more responsive towards 'soft impacts'. In particular, the focus will be on the 'soft impacts' *good taste* and *naturalness*, as concerns related to these issues are frequently voiced by the public in relation to innovative food technologies (Marris, 2001; Siegrist, 2008; Tepper and Trail, 1998). Also, these issues have been pointed out as two main 'soft impacts' of food technology that consumers draw upon when evaluating food innovations (e.g. the usage of genetic modification or the production

of functional foods), next to primarily scientific or technical criteria of good or bad food (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Stinesen, 2012; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). Nevertheless, it must be realised that trying to make the public debate more *responsive* towards 'soft impacts' does not imply that all issues brought forward instantly need to be acted upon or accepted as true. Rather this means that such issues explicitly need to be taken into account and *talked about* by incorporating them in the topical agenda and seriously considering their implications as a public (Swiersta and Te Molder, 2012).

### **1.1. Food technology, an highly influential and rapidly expanding field**

Food Technology can be defined as the 'application of a diversity of scientific and practical disciplines, including chemistry, biology, physics and engineering, to the development of food products and to their worldwide distribution' (IFIS, 2009, p. 174). The reason for studying the admission of 'soft impacts' in the public debate within this particular field is that food and eating are highly interwoven with many areas of peoples' everyday life and cultural practices, and they are even inevitable for life itself. Likewise, the technologies that are used to produce food also significantly affect people's daily lives, ranging from issues like health, wellbeing, eating practices and the wider environment people live in (Blue, 2010). This makes it is important that people (at least to some extent) feel comfortable about food technologies.

In addition, the field of food technology has expanded rapidly in recent years, as ever higher requirements are put on the food sector in response to the growing world population that increasingly asks for affluent diets with high proportions of animal protein, fat, beverages and processed food (Gerbens-Leenes and Nonhebel, 2002; Godfray, Beddington, Crute, Haddad, Lawrence, Muir, Pretty, Robinson, Thomas and Toulmin, 2010). Simultaneously, consumers demand food that is cheap, good looking, easy to prepare and safe, as well as produced in an environmental sustainable and animal friendly manner (Walstra and Van Boekel, 2006). Hence, food technologists have put effort in optimizing food production, distribution and storage to respond to these demands while coping with the limited availability of arable land and natural resources (Gerbens-Leenes and Nonhebel, 2002; Godfray et al., 2010). This led to a rapid transformation of the food sector into a highly technical and industrialised industry and broadened the gap between 'the common man' consuming the food and the experts involved in producing and distributing it. This contributed to consumers becoming more critical and concerned towards newly introduced food technologies and increased the demand for strict regulation and public engagement in the food sector (Blue, 2010).

Therefore, as the field of food technology is highly interwoven with consumer's everyday life and also expands rapidly, it is very important that public concerns are taken into account in food technology development. Firstly, according to the ethical principle that one should not harm others ('the principle of nonmaleficence') this can even be considered a moral obligation for the actors responsible for developing en implementing food innovations (Van den Belt, 2012). Secondly, there are also commercial reasons for considering public concerns, as a successful integration of an innovative food technology or product in society highly depends on consumer acceptance and product purchase. Yet, consumers have become increasingly critical, better informed and educated and like to see their needs and concerns to be taken seriously (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Costa and Jongen, 2006;

Ronteltap, Van Trijp, Renes and Frewer, 2007). Thirdly, public concerns also tend to differ from the issues mostly brought forward by experts (Marris, 2001; Wynne, 2006), thereby providing an opportunity to enrich the dialogue when incorporating these concerns in the public debate (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012; Stirling, 2008; Veen et al., 2012). Hence, food technology is considered a particularly interesting field to study in relation to 'soft impacts'.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

While knowledge about the existence of 'soft impacts' and the importance of taking these issues into account in the public debate increases, scientific research has thus far mainly focused on describing *what is currently happening* in light of these 'soft impacts'. For example, Swierstra and Te Molder (2012) have pointed out that the issues that often get treated as 'soft' tend to be difficult to value, measure and quantify, and that this makes them vulnerable for getting removed from the topical agenda of public debates. Yet, the way people talked about these 'soft impacts' appeared to play a key role in the process of excluding them from the topical agenda of public debates (for a more elaborate description see section 2.2. or Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012).

Nevertheless, despite the elaborate knowledge on how 'soft impacts' get removed from the topical agenda of public debates and how language plays a role in this, options for *what could be done* in terms of interaction to make this process run in the opposite direction, are not yet examined. As a result, policymakers that have to organise and/or facilitate public debates remain empty-handed with regard to how these discussions could best be designed to effectively take 'soft impacts' into account. Hence, attempts to actually incorporate 'soft impacts' in the public agenda and effectively dealt with them in the public sphere remain difficult and likely to fail.

## **1.3. Research objective, research question and underlying assumptions**

Therefore, by shedding light on this knowledge gap, this study aims *to facilitate 'soft impacts' to penetrate the negotiation agenda of participatory initiatives and public debates*. More specifically, it intends to identify ways in which the 'soft impacts' *good taste* and *naturalness* are and can be depicted as legitimate topics for public consideration as to provide recommendations on how to incorporate these 'soft impacts' in the public debate. This information can be used by the actors involved in participatory initiatives and public debates in the domain of food technology to actually improve the responsiveness towards 'soft impacts'. Subsequently, this would enrich the public dialogue and potentially foster democratic decision making on these 'soft impacts'. The actors that are targeted by this study are primarily the policymakers that organise and/or facilitate participatory initiatives and public debates in the context of food technology development, but indirectly also the consumers and food technology experts that take part in these initiatives.

To contribute to this aim the current study examines two discussions performed among actors that are professionally involved in food technology. Both discussions (one focussing on *good taste* and the other on *naturalness*) start off by asking participants to accept joint responsibility for dealing with 'soft impacts'. Within the discussions this study will focus on interactional practices that are deployed by the participants and successfully depict these 'soft impacts' as legitimate issues for collective debate.

Looking at such ‘best practices’, but also examining interactional practices that obstruct collective consideration of ‘soft impacts’, is considered informative for how *good taste* and *naturalness* might best be incorporated in the public debate in general. Accordingly, the central research question is:

***‘(How) do participants discuss ‘soft impacts’ of food technology as legitimate issues for public consideration and what is achieved by the deployed strategies?’***

Important when reading this thesis is to realise that both the research objective and the research question are based upon the theoretical assumption that language and actions performed through language (e.g. claiming knowledge or managing responsibility or blame) are able to obstruct as well as facilitate opening up the dialogue about ‘soft impacts’. In addition, it is also assumed that irrespective of whether such ‘soft impacts’ are considered realistic and/or should be acted upon, they should still be seriously discussed within the public sphere. Already the sole notion that consumers consider these concerns to be important makes them relevant to be openly discussed. This stimulates that everyone feels heard, prevents that such concerns might pop up and jeopardise the introduction of a food technology later on and also allows the identification of potentially important matters that can enrich the dialogue although initially being overlooked. Subsequently, when the public debate within participatory initiatives indeed becomes more responsive towards ‘soft impacts’, this allows a wider range of issues to be explicitly considered in early stages of technology development and stimulates more informed – and perhaps even better accepted – food technology development.

#### **1.4. Research perspective**

As this study intends to identify interactional strategies that depict ‘soft impacts’ as legitimate issues for public consideration, this requires one to look beyond the literal content of what is being said. Hence, the research perspective that is adopted in this study is that of *discursive psychology* as this perspective considers language to be a strategic device in the hands of people and focuses on revealing what is actually *being done* through interaction. To identify these so-called *discursive actions*, discursive psychologists focus on *interactional strategies* that are performed by people through their language and interaction (e.g. demonstrating knowledge or emphasizing particular interpretations of reality) and look at what is achieved by this (Edwards, 1997; Te Molder and Potter, 2005). Likewise, this study also focuses on the interactional strategies that are performed by participants during their discussion of the ‘soft impacts’ *good taste* and *naturalness* and looks at if, and if so how, these strategies construct *good taste* or *naturalness* as legitimate topics for public consideration.

#### **1.5. Overview of thesis**

The second chapter of this thesis covers the theoretical framework underlying this study. First, this chapter starts with public participation in scientific decision making, discussing why this is important and what problems are undermining it. Second, the limited ability of participatory initiatives to take into account ‘soft impacts’ of technologies that are often voiced by the public is highlighted and explained in detail. Just as two main ‘soft impacts’ in the domain of innovative food technologies, *good taste* and *naturalness*. Third, the research perspective *discursive psychology* that is adopted throughout this study is presented, including two major concepts within this field called *knowledge*



*claims* and *identity constructions* that are also central during the analysis. Subsequently, the third chapter of this report presents the methodology that is used to analyse the data collected at the convention 'Zachte zorgen, harde gevolgen; een publieke agenda voor voedselinnovatie' as well as explain the convention itself. The fourth chapter presents the actual analysis of participants talk during their discussions on *good taste* and *naturalness*. Both discussions are presented separately. Finally, the fifth chapter summarises the major findings of this study and compares the observations made of both discussions, followed by recommendations on how to incorporate *good taste* and *naturalness* in the public debate. It ends with emphasizing some strengths and limitations of the current study and giving some recommendations for further research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

This chapter starts by elaborating on the importance and some limitations of public participation and public debate, as this is the context this study aims to contribute to. In addition, an example is given of (unsuccessful) public involvement in the domain of food technology. Next, problems associated with 'soft impacts' and their difficulty of getting incorporated in the public debate are highlighted, as this particular limitation of public participatory initiatives is targeted by this study to help tackling. Finally, the research perspective of discursive psychology is explained. Why it is considered useful and what are two major topics in this field that are believed to be important when trying to identify *if* and if so, *how* 'soft impacts' can be depicted as legitimate issues for public consideration.

### 2.1. Public involvement in scientific decision making

Nowadays scientists are frequently held accountable for their innovations and need to negotiate with an expanding group of legitimate stakeholders to increase the chance that their innovations can successfully integrate into society (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993; Van Mierlo, Arkesteijn and Leeuwis, 2010). Consequently, participatory initiatives have become more important and are more frequently implemented as they bring together this multitude of stakeholders, enabling these actors to discuss their views and provide input for policy decisions (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Leeuwis, 2004; Van Mierlo, Arkesteijn and Leeuwis, 2010). In this way, participatory initiatives and the public debates performed within these encounters are supposed to improve the quality of decisions, make the decision making process itself more democratic and fair (Webler, Kastenholz and Renn, 1995), as well as enhance transparency, trust and acceptance among the public (Irwin, 2006). In other words, these initiatives are supposed to serve respectively substantive, normative and instrumental objectives (Stirling, 2008).

#### 2.1.1. Problems associated with public participation and the public debate

Nevertheless, critics have pointed out their limitations (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Irwin, 2006; Felt and Fochler, 2010). For example, Irwin (2001) explains how practical features incorporated in the designs of such initiatives can reduce the public's ability to actually engage in decision making. That is, when emphasis is put on information provision instead of public consultation or when the topical agenda is highly predefined, this reduces the chance that participants can actually voice their opinions (Irwin, 2001). Likewise, the broader (political) context surrounding participatory initiatives also influences participants' perception of actually being listened to and being able to influence policy decisions (Felt and Fochler, 2010). Moreover, Irwin (2006) also points out that despite their pro-participatory aims and rhetoric, the actual implementation of participatory initiatives remains fairly instrumental. That is, they often turn out to be isolated events aimed at effectuating public trust and acceptance of an innovation, instead of truly offering the public a chance to consider (and potentially impede) the introduction of the discussed innovation (Irwin, 2006).

In addition, Veen et al. (2011) emphasize that in order to be able to actually understand people's reactions to innovative technologies and adequately deal with these, their concerns need to be considered from *their own* perspective and discussed *on their own terms*. However, exactly this is a

major point of criticism of current public participatory initiatives as they are supposed to let scientific discourse and interpretations of public concerns prevail, thereby failing to get hold of the essence and added value of these public concerns (Irwin, 2006; Wynne, 2006). As a result, the contemporary scientific culture continues to alienate the public from their innovations as it – despite its advocated willingness to engage with the public – omits to genuinely take public concerns into account and understand that these might be based upon something else than lay ignorance and subjectivity (Wynne, 2006).

Nevertheless, this situation is not necessarily deliberately caused by scientists. Rather, it is the result of scientists' tendency to perceive public concerns from their own scientific point of view and impose their own scientific interpretations and definitions on them, thereby failing to see that these public concerns are the result of *different*, but still *legitimate* frames of reference (Wynne, 2006). To illustrate this, with regard to genetic modification it appeared that the conception of risk as used by the public covered a wider range of issues than the interpretation used by scientists. Besides solely technical and measurable hazards, the public also considered socio-economic matters and matters of justice (Lassen, Madsen and Sandøe, 2002). Logically, as the actors involved in public-expert encounters bring very divergent backgrounds and frames of reference to the table when judging innovative technologies, joint elaboration on those issues that one considers relevant while another does not, becomes difficult (Wynne, 2001).

### **2.1.2. Public engagement in the food sector – an example from genetic engineering**

Also in the food sector, the acknowledgement and popularity of public engagement in scientific decision making and product development has increased (Blue, 2010; Linnemann, Benner, Verkerk and Van Boekel, 2006). To illustrate this, a wide range of participatory initiatives have been carried out – although with limited success – with regard to genetic modification of food crops (Blue, 2010; Irwin, 2006). This technology enables the transfer of certain pieces of genetic material into crop varieties, in order to induce expression of the introduced trait in the transformed organism (Nap, Metz, Escaler and Conner, 2003). However, despite its potentially promising benefits with regard to improving yields through increasing stress resistances of crops (De Cosa, Moar, Lee, Miller and Daniell, 2001; Wang, Vinocur and Altman, 2003) as well as its potential unintended consequences for other organisms or the environment (Lu and Snow, 2005; O'Callaghan, Glare, Burgess and Malone, 2005), a major hurdle for the success of this technology on the market remains the low level of public trust and acceptance (Frewer, Lassen, Kettlitz, Scholderer, Beekman and Berdal, 2004; Lassen, Madsen and Sandøe, 2002; Marris, 2001). Among other things this is believed to be stimulated by scientists' inability to actually hear and effectively respond to concerns voiced by the public with regard to genetic modification when this was introduced. Hence, the public started feeling neglected, reluctant and distrustful towards genetic modification and the resulting food products (ibid). Likewise, also experts have expressed feelings of frustration, as they believe their innovations are being misunderstood, not given a chance and overreacted to (Marris, 2001). Nevertheless, despite the limited success of earlier attempts to involve the public, it is still believed that in order to give this technology a chance to become better accepted by the public, genuine public involvement is needed and the public's concerns actually need to be taken seriously (Frewer et al., 2004; Lassen, Madsen and Sandøe, 2002)

## 2.2. 'Soft impacts' and their difficulty reaching the agenda of public debates

As was mentioned above, the public makes use of a wider range of issues and considerations as frame of reference when judging a scientific innovations (Marris, 2001; Wynne, 2006). Besides the seemingly 'hard' scientific, economic and health related assessments of risks and benefits associated with an innovation, they also take into account potential cultural, moral and political factors (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012) as well as issues that are indirectly related to an innovative technology (Marris, 2001). Nevertheless, as long as these 'soft impacts' are being neglected in public debates and the scientific perspective continues to prevail, public debates will not be able to achieve genuine and fruitful public-expert dialogue that truly considers all concerns related an innovation. Instead, they are more likely to represent a spurious demonstration of a merely rhetoric aim of advancing public engagement that does not actually contribute to giving the public a voice (Wynne, 2006).

Scientist have studied what it is that characterises these 'soft impacts' and how their dismissal of the public agenda is mostly accomplished. This led to the identification of three dimensions that 'soft impacts' have in common that make them vulnerable for being treated as 'soft' and getting warded off the public agenda (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). First, 'soft impacts' appear to be *difficult to value as detrimental*, meaning that uncontroversial or obvious "harm" cannot easily be claimed or pointed out. For example, it is much easier to claim that the presence of lethal bacteria in food products causes harm to consumers, then to explain the "harm" that is caused by the impact of an innovative (food) technology on consumers perceptions of identity and autonomy. Second, *quantifying the negative consequences* that are supposed to be caused by 'soft impacts' in terms of numbers showing their probability and sincerity is also difficult. Yet, exactly the ability to quantify negative consequences and provide numbers, stimulates a perception of objectivity and rationality which makes the suggested "harm" appear more reasonable and existing. Lastly, *the inability to hold someone responsible* for 'soft impacts' makes straightforward and undeniable causality for these issues difficult to establish. In turn, when nobody feels responsible for these 'soft impacts', nobody feels the need act to solve these issues (ibid).

Consequently, 'soft impacts' tend to be difficult to pin down or truly grasp, which keeps them mostly implicit and invisible in the debate. In addition, when 'soft impacts' do become explicit and they are brought forward for debating in the public sphere, they still often get dismissed on the basis of being depicted as too complex, diverse and intangible to be successfully decided upon as a group. As a result, people define them as private concerns that should be decided upon (and dealt with) by everyone individually in the way that this particular individual considers appropriate. This process, referred to as *privatisation*, can occur both by the hands of experts as well as consumers and blocks further debate on these privatised 'soft impacts' (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012).

Nevertheless, despite their frequent dismissal from the public agenda, 'soft concerns' remain able to influence public acceptance of an innovative food technology and its successful integration into society (Marris, 2001). Hence, they need to be explicitly incorporated in the topical agenda of public participatory initiatives and seriously discussed on their own terms (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012; Veen et al., 2011; Wynne, 2001). This would enable dealing with these issues in an early stage of (food)

technology development and fosters participatory initiatives to become more responsive towards a wider range of (public) concerns (ibid).

By now, the issues *good taste* and *naturalness* will be elaborated on, as these topics frequently manifest themselves as public concerns of innovative food technologies but still continue to get treated as ‘soft impacts’ (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Stinesen, 2012; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). *Good taste* and *naturalness* also represent the central ‘soft impacts’ that are discussed in the discussions analysed in this study.

### **2.2.1. The ‘soft impact’ *good taste***

Research on consumer attitudes has shown that consumers consider taste attributes to be very important criteria when buying food products that might even be superior to for example health considerations (Tepper and Trail, 1998). Also they tend to be unwilling to compromise claimed healthiness of a product with an inferior or bad taste (Verbeke, 2006). Discursive psychologists specified this notion by showing that consumers also *use* taste evaluations for example with regard to products that contain health claims (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Stinesen, 2012). That is, taste evaluations provided consumers with certain epistemic rights that allowed them to judge these food products on the basis of something different than technical knowledge. Voicing these judgements presented them as critical and autonomous consumers that can make their own food choices instead of blindly accepting scientists’ health claims. In this way, taste evaluations were made relevant as to manage consumers epistemic rights to judge, as well as their identity and sense of autonomy in relation to the food products they were presented with (ibid).

Nevertheless, the subjective and private character of ‘taste’ and ‘taste evaluations’ is powerfully secured in our cultural minds. The study of tastes even departs from a notion of inter-subjectivity and in accepting that, it looks for objectively existing features of an object under scrutiny that can be pointed out and discussed (Shapin, 2011). In contrast, scientists usually work with a notion of objective truth and uncontroversial realities that are inherently the same for everyone (ibid). As a result, this difference obstructs a smooth discussion of ‘good taste’ in the domain of food technology. Hence, as long as public concerns related to the disappearance of good taste continue to be depicted as subjective and private notions, these concerns remain difficult topics for collective consideration that are prone to get treated as ‘soft’ and get warded off the negotiation agenda. Nevertheless, as consumers are expected to continue to voice concerns regarding the taste of innovative food products, this is likely to complicate work of food technologists and the food industry (e.g. in the domain of functional foods) when these actors try to market their products on the basis of their presumed health benefits.

### **2.2.2. The ‘soft impact’ *naturalness***

Another concern that is frequently voiced by consumers with regard to innovative food technologies is that of increasing *unnaturalness* of food products (Blue, 2010; Marris, 2001; Siegrist, 2008; Stinesen, 2012). For example this continues to pop up in the debate around genetically modified foods when opponents refuse to accept this technology (Siegrist, 2008; Tenbült, De Vries, Dreezens and Martijn,

2005). In addition, it is also shown to be associated with healthy food. That is, O'Key and Hugh-Jones (2010) point out that mothers frequently referred to naturalness when talking about whether they trusted information on healthy eating and suggested modern food to be risky.

Nevertheless, despite being acknowledged as a reappearing and important public concern, naturalness continues to fall prey of being denied in the public debate (Stinesen, 2012; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). Both experts and consumers tend to refer to this concern in a fairly straightforward way that suggests its definition to be common knowledge and thus not requiring additional explanation. As a result, the exact meaning of the concern for naturalness becomes excluded, or *black-boxed*, from joint consideration and debate. In addition, experts also present naturalness as a legitimate, though *private* concern, by presenting it as something consumers ask for and that industry is already able to create. In this way, experts present naturalness as something that is dealt with by industry and only requires individual consumers to make up their mind about how they like to manage this issue themselves (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). As a result, both *black-boxing* and *privatisation* obstruct an open-minded and responsive and dialogue about naturalness and how this concern could be dealt with in the public debate.

## **2.3. Discursive Psychology**

### **2.3.1. Adopting a discursive psychological perspective**

As this study aims to identify ways in which interaction can foster 'soft impacts' to be depicted as legitimate topics for public consideration, an interactional perspective to look at participants' talk is considered necessary. After all, the focus of this study is not on the *literal content* of what is being said by participants with regard to 'soft impacts', but on the *interactional effects of their talk*. Language and interaction are thus considered to be a strategic device in the hands of people that consists of a multitude of discursive strategies that can be used to achieve certain interactional goals through talk. For example, as a result of attributing meaning and attaching expectations to what is being said and allowing these implicit interpretations affect the interaction as well (Te Molder, 2012b). So, whether or not the statements voiced by participants are true is left aside, yet what is actually done in interaction and what is achieved by the deployed statements represents the central focus of analysis in this study, as well as a starting point of discursive psychology (Edwards, 1997; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012; Te Molder and Potter, 2005). Hence, the research perspective that is adopted in this study is that of *discursive psychology*.

### **2.3.2. Discourse as action-oriented, constructed and situated**

Central to the perspective of discursive psychology is its conception of talk or discourse that consists of three fundamental notions. First, *discourse is conceived as action*, as in that discourse is taken to be a tool or strategic device in the hands of people which allows them to use this tool for achieving interactional goals (Edwards and Potter, 1992). Such interactional goals might be managing interest, blame and causality, demonstrating knowledge or building identities (Horne and Wiggins, 2009; Sneijder and Te Molder, 2005; Te Molder, 2012a). Second, *discourse is considered to be a construction*, meaning that it is a build-up of devices like words and descriptions that together create sentences and discourse, as well as that it is constructive by itself. That is, when someone makes a description of

reality, this inevitably is a simplified version of the reality that is being described as the speaker always has to make a selection of what to mention or empathise and what to leave out. Hence, talk presents a particular version of reality (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Te Molder, 2012a). Third, *discourse is taken to be situated* as the context surrounding it influences what is being said and how. The context in this sense can be interpreted in multiple ways. That is, rather broadly including among other things aspects like the socio-cultural habits, physical setting or location and people present, as well as rather narrow encompassing the influence of expectations raised by the sequential position of statements and utterances of the interaction. In addition, also the presence of actual or potential alternative versions of reality in an interactional setting can stimulate people to utilize the rhetorical potential of discourse through countering or denying these envisioned versions through emphasizing their own version of reality (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

By taking these beliefs as entry points for data analysis, discursive psychologists preferably examine *natural occurring talk* and then look at discursive strategies that are being used by people as well as what is achieved by these strategies in terms of interactional business. For example, such interactional business can be claiming certain knowledge, emphasizing a particular causal relation or building a certain identity and influencing the perceived credibility and factuality of what is being claimed (Potter, 1996; Te Molder, 2012a).

Two very important concepts within the scope of discursive psychology, that also will be central in the analysis of participants talk in this study, are *knowledge claims* and *identity constructions*. Both concepts will now be explained and two additional sub-research questions are presented that provide a more specific focus to the analysis of participants talk in this study.

### **2.3.3. Knowledge claims**

In their talk people continuously claim knowledge and make evaluations about reality. Inherently such statements contain implicit suggestions regarding what a speaker claims to know (and what not), and how he positions himself in relation to the discussed topic or his listeners. Hence, knowledge claims are linked to identity constructions (see section 2.3.4.) and can be used to perform interactional tasks (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). This makes them particularly interesting to study from a discursive psychological perspective when analysing how participants discuss 'soft impacts' of food technology as legitimate topics for public consideration.

An important distinction with regard to knowledge claims is the difference between subjective- and objective constructions (Wiggins and Potter, 2003). Wiggins and Potter (2003) studied this distinction by analysing mealtime food evaluations and showed that generally subjective evaluations (e.g. 'I like carrots') reduce the need for listeners to agree with a speakers' claim and can be used to account for particular behaviour or a point of view. Likewise, the usage of modals (e.g. 'may', 'should' or 'probably') also incorporates a degree of caution in a statement that makes this appear less robust and therefore reduces a speakers' accountability for the general validity of the claim (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2005). In contrast, objective evaluations (e.g. 'Carrots are tasty') avoid incorporating caution and tend to be used in persuasive talk (Wiggins and Potter, 2003). Thus whether knowledge claims

are constructed as more subjective/cautious or objective is interesting to look at when analysing participants' talk of 'soft impacts' as this construction implies a different degree of claim validity and can be used to achieve different interactional tasks.

Another interesting action that is associated with knowledge claims, is that people can use such claims to manage their relative epistemic rights and authority (Heritage and Raymond, 2005). That is, incorporated in a knowledge claim there can be an implicit suggestion that the speaker, or others, possess superior or independent knowledge on a topic that allows him or her to make judgements (ibid). With regard to taste evaluations of food products (that are often considered to be subjective judgements, see section 2.2.1. or Shapin, 2011), Sneijder and Te Molder (2006) showed that the regulation of epistemic rights was a major thing people did in interaction. They showed that in the online talk taking place on a food pleasure forum, a major action performed was the construction of an identity as 'gourmet' through emphasizing superior and independent knowledge on taste. This enabled participants to present their claims as referring to *what good food is* instead of constructing them as solely *subjective* opinions. This allowed participants to make judgements and claim ownership about taste (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2006).

In recognition of the above, knowledge claims are considered to be particularly interesting to consider when analysing participants talk of 'soft impacts'. Hence, the following sub-research question is formulated:

***'(How) do participants construct knowledge about the 'soft' impacts that are central in their discussion and what is achieved by that?'***

#### **2.3.4. Identity constructions**

Another major thing people do in interaction, is presenting themselves and/or others in a certain way that emphasizes their membership of particular identity groups. That is, people have multiple roles that depending on the situation they are in can become relevant. By emphasizing one particular role over others, people can use this range of potential identities to present themselves as for example experts on food technology, ordinary consumers or advocates of consumer organisation. In doing so, people evoke expectations about what is typically known or done by members of this particular identity group which provides them with certain *rights* or *category entitlements* (Potter, 1996). Subsequently, these category entitlements provide a basis for having particular knowledge that is expected to be common knowledge for members of this identity group. This presents them as knowledgeable and therefore potentially more trustworthy (ibid). To illustrate this, someone of the identity group food technologists is expected to have knowledge about production processes of food products, while a consumer is more likely to know where you can buy these products and how you should best prepare them.

Yet, the role of the concept identity in discursive psychology is twofold. On the one hand it can be used as an interactional strategy to achieve something else, like emphasizing knowledge entitlements that allow a speaker to make statements about the subject being discussed. On the other hand,



constructing a particular identity can also be an interactional goal on itself (Te Molder, 2012a). With regard to innovative food technologies, identity has already proven to be an important phenomena people manage when responding to innovations (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Veen et al., 2011). That is, although often remaining implicit in the debate, concerns related to the impact of an innovation on people's identity, sense of achievement or autonomy, can still underlie their rejection of an innovation (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012; Veen et al., 2011). Moreover, with regard to food evaluations (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2006) and ideological food choice (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2009), constructions of identity also turned out to be an important interactional goal on itself as well as a resource people could use in interaction to claim knowledge and emphasize particular interpretations of reality.

Therefore, identity constructions are expected to be particularly relevant when analysing participants' talk about 'soft impacts'. They can be used to present a specific interpretation of the speaker (or others) in relation to the 'soft impacts' being discussed or food technology in general, as well as provide a speaker with a basis claiming knowledge by providing category entitlements. Hence, the following sub-research question is formulated:

***'(How) are identities build up by participants during the discussion of 'soft' impacts and what is the interactional effect of these constructions?'***

## **2.4. Concluding remarks**

Taken together, while public participation initiatives aimed at involving the public in scientific decision making and (food) technology development are more frequently being implemented (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Irwin, 2006; Felt and Fochler, 2010; Wynne, 2006), their ability to actually foster genuine and responsive dialogue as well as their responsiveness towards so-called 'soft impacts' remains limited (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). As a result, authorities, technologist and the public seem to have a hard time genuinely negotiating together and considering all matters brought forward on their own terms, as deeply rooted practices continue to impede such an open-minded and responsive dialogue (Wynne, 2006). Yet, in order to meet the challenges currently faced by the food industry, innovative food technologies still continue to be researched and developed (Blue, 2010; Godfray et al., 2010; Walstra and Van Boekel, 2006), even though, as was shown by the case of genetic engineering, not always well received by consumers (Lassen, Madsen and Sandøe, 2002; Marris, 2001). Consequently, putting effort in improving the public debate, as in that it gives space for effectively discussing 'soft impacts' of food technologies is considered relevant. For that reason, the current study adopts an interactional perspective to identify discursive strategies that depict 'soft impacts' as legitimate topics for public consideration and help incorporate them in the topical agenda of public debates. The specific methods deployed by this study to achieve this aim, will be the main subject for the next chapter.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Group discussions as data collection method

To gain insight in how 'soft impacts' in the domain of food technology can be discussed as legitimate issues for public consideration, this study examines participants' talk during two group discussions. Both sessions were conducted during a convention about socially responsible food innovation that was called 'Zachte zorgen, harde gevolgen: een publieke agenda voor voedselinnovatie'. One of the discussions focussed on the 'soft impact' *good taste* and the other on *naturalness and authenticity*.

The reason for choosing group discussions as method for data gathering, is that discursive psychologists aim to look at *natural occurring talk* (for example Edwards, 1997; Snejder and Te Molder, in progress; Veen et al., 2011). Group discussions are considered closely resembling such informal or 'natural occurring talk' since they allow participants to interact with each other, as well as talk relatively unconstrained without being bothered by for example a question format which might be the case in interviews. Moreover, the reason for selecting these particular group discussions at this particular convention, is that the discussions focused on either *good taste* or *naturalness* and that these issues both have been shown to appear among the public as important 'soft impacts' of innovative food technologies (Snejder and Te Molder, in progress; Siegrist, 2008; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). In addition, the convention itself brought together people that are in varying ways professionally involved with food technology (e.g. food technologists, food marketers, people working at food NGO's, etc.) and explicitly focused on 'soft impacts' of food technology and their difficulty of getting incorporated in the public agenda. Also, preceding the discussion sessions, participants were asked to discuss these 'soft impacts' from the basis of accepting joint responsibility for dealing with them. Hence, as the current study aims to identify how 'soft impacts' can be discussed as legitimate topics for public consideration, this convention and the discussions conducted there are considered particularly interesting as source for data collection.

### 3.2. Practical information and structure of the convention

The convention 'Zachte zorgen, harde gevolgen: een publieke agenda voor voedselinnovatie' was conducted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, at the Felix Meritis Hall in Amsterdam and did not ask a fee. It was carried out in Dutch and brought together about 50 participants that were mostly invited by the organising researchers based upon their professional involvement with food technology. In addition, some participants were present that had learned about the convention through internet advertisement and joint because of personal interested to learn more about this topic.

The central theme of the convention was socially responsible food innovation and that this involves taking into account the legitimate, though difficult to pin down, public concerns that are now often neglected and treated as 'soft'. To introduce this topic, the convention started with a presentation of the researchers Petra Snejder (Wageningen University) and Dirk Haen (Maastricht University) who explained the notion of 'soft impacts' and the current state of research on this topic. Then, after a short coffee break, professor of Anthropology of the human body from the University of Amsterdam, Annemarie Mol, continued. She talked about food, different ways of evaluating what 'good food'

might be and what makes such evaluations complex. Moreover, she noted that all these considerations she just explained complicate the public debate about 'good food' as well as consumers perceptions about it. Next, after a lunch break the convention proceeded in three separate discussion sessions that all focussed on a different 'soft impacts'. Two of them are selected for data analysis in this study; one focussing on *good taste* and the other on *naturalness and authenticity*. Together these two discussions yielded two hours of discussion material that was transcribed and analysed. The reason for not selecting the third discussion on *food culture* was that the facilitator of this discussion had a very dominant role, making the discussion more closely resemble a presentation of this facilitator followed by an inquiry of the participants. Hence, this discussion was considered very divergent from the other two discussions and less appropriate for analysis since participants did not really interact and talk much.

### **3.3. The group discussions**

All three discussion sessions were conducted parallel in separate rooms of the Felix Meritis Hall, forcing participants to split up between the three sessions. The discussions were chaired by a facilitator that started with an introduction on the discussion topic, taking between 26 and 30 minutes, which was followed by a full hour of discussion among the participants.

In the following two sections, an explanation will be given about the participants that took part in the discussions on *good taste* and *naturalness* as well as the general introduction that was given by the facilitators. This is considered important as it represents an important part of the interactional process and context through which participants' talk came in to being and is therefore important for understanding and evaluating the resulting observations (Veen et al., 2011). (For a schematic representation of the discussion settings and a more detailed list of the participants, see Appendix B)

#### **3.3.1. The discussion on *Good taste***

Seven participants took part in the discussion on *Good taste* and professor Applied Philosophy from Wageningen University Michiel Korthals facilitated it. In addition, the researcher and organiser of the convention Petra Sneijder was present as well as a student from Wageningen University who took notes on a flip over. Both did not participate in the discussion itself.

Among the seven participants the following categories were present. As can be observed from this list, no actual food technologists took part in this discussion:

- 1 male and 2 females working in the food *marketing and communication* sector (MAR<sub>1</sub>, MAR<sub>2</sub> and MAR<sub>3</sub>),
- 1 female *entrepreneur* in food design (ENT<sub>1</sub>),
- 1 male *researcher/philosopher* (RES<sub>1</sub>),
- 1 female *student* (STU<sub>1</sub>) and
- 1 female *consumer* (CON<sub>1</sub>)

In the general introduction, the facilitator (F) talked about (good) taste as consisting of five different facets that range from the rather objective notion of *what is actually present in a food product*, to

increasingly broad and contextual aspects like *the esthetical experience of taste*. Moreover, he linked 'good taste' to issues like *virtue* and *decency*, and suggested it to be *something exclusive* for an *elite culture* or someone with the identity of '*gourmet*'. This in contrast to the common man that might not be very concerned with 'good taste'.

Nevertheless, the facilitator emphasized the importance of talking about and dealing with concerns about 'good taste', as throughout history ever less time has been devoted to both food consumption and production causing people to become alienated from food and good taste. Then, at the end of this introduction, the facilitator posed three questions that should be discussed by the participants during the discussion, that is: 'What is *good taste*?', 'Is *good taste* a public concern?' and 'Who has responsibility for *good taste* and what should this actor do?'.

### **3.3.2. The discussion on *Naturalness and authenticity***

In the discussion on *Naturalness and authenticity* sixteen participants took part, next to a student from Wageningen University who took notes (and in this case made some small contribution to the discussion) and a researcher that only observed. The discussion was chaired by affiliate professor on Journalistic Criticism of Art and Culture Maarten Doornman that works for both Maastricht University and the University of Amsterdam.

The sixteen participants that took part in this discussion consisted of the following categories. Again, representatives of the food industry/food technology formed a minority of the participants present:

- 2 males and 1 female working in the food *marketing and communication* sector (MAR<sub>1</sub>, MAR<sub>2</sub> and MAR<sub>3</sub>),
- 2 males and 3 females working for a food related *NGO's* (NGO<sub>1</sub>, NGO<sub>2</sub>, NGO<sub>3</sub>, NGO<sub>4</sub>, NGO<sub>5</sub>)
- 1 male and 1 female working in the *food industry* (FO<sub>1</sub>, FO<sub>2</sub>)
- 2 female *social researchers* (RES<sub>1</sub> and RES<sub>2</sub>)
- 1 male working for the *Rathenau Institute* (RATH<sub>1</sub>)
- 1 male working for the *ministry* (INN<sub>1</sub>)
- 2 female participants that did not introduced themselves (P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>)

In the introduction, the facilitator talked about the current food sector as very complex and consumers as feeling troubled by this, while also being known for not always acting upon their voiced concerns when actually buying food. In addition, the facilitator mentioned the current trend of words like 'natural', 'pure' and 'traditional' being put on food products and talked about the notion of *naturalness* in relation to its meaning during the Romantic period. That is, elaborated on some ancient clichés about nature, purity and the innocent child, in contrast to falsehood and imitation. At the end of this introduction, the facilitator emphasized that according to him these concerns should still be taken seriously and ways to actually address these feelings of discomfort should be explored.

## **3.4. Recordings and transcriptions**

Both discussions were recorded using a video camera as well as an audio recorder that covered two hours of discussion material (one hour collected at each discussion session). This formed the basis for transcription and analysis. The video tapes were first transcribed at word-level – parts that were

difficult to understand were also cross-checked with the audio recordings – and then, the parts that were considered particularly interesting in light of the present study were transcribed in more detail making use of a simplified version of the Jeffersonian transcription method (see Appendix A). Doing so, allowed to indicate some of the interactional element in participants talk, like overlap, emphasis, intonation and pauses (Potter and Hepburn, 2005). However, since the video recording of the discussion on *Naturalness and authenticity* only covered the first 15 minute, the other 45 minutes of discussion had to be transcribed based on audio material only. Because of limited time it was decided to keep all transcripts in Dutch.

### **3.5. Analytical principles**

On the basis of a discursive psychological analysis of talk there are three analytic principles that can be used by a researcher to make sense of what is happening in interaction (Te Molder, 2012a). Within the current study, especially the first two principles have been used to perform the analysis.

The first analytical principle points out that to understand the meaning of an utterance in terms of discursive actions that it performs, discursive psychologists should look at the *uptake* of talk by the other person(s) involved. In this way, a researcher can avoid imposing his or her own interpretations of what is being said and instead let these interpretations be determined by observing how the co-participants respond to, or treat, an utterance. This is called the *next turn proof procedure* (Edwards, 1997; Snejder and Te Molder, 2006; Snejder and Te Molder, 2009). To illustrate this, the statement ‘The doorbell rings’ can be interpret as a request to open the door, but also as a simple remark of what has just occurred depending on how this statement is treated by the conversation partner.

The second analytic principle emphasizes the importance of considering potential alternative- or counter versions of what is actually being said, as these are indicative for the meaning of what is actually being said. That is, by emphasizing one particular description of reality, this automatically denies or undermines potential alternative versions. In this way, the *rhetorical nature of talk* gives an additional indication of how to interpret what is being said (Potter, 1996; Snejder and Te Molder, 2006; Snejder and Te Molder, 2009; Veen et al., 2011).

Third, in their talk people frequently use varying ways to refer to something. This *variation* is the last of the fundamental tools used in discursive psychology as it often indicates that something is being done. Hence, these moments in interaction that should be given special attention (Te Molder, 2012a).

### **3.6. Selection procedure**

After transcribing the two hour recordings obtained from the discussions on *good taste* and *naturalness*, the analysis started by carefully reading through the transcripts one by one. During this phase, themes of interest that were based upon the sub-research questions presented in section 2.3.3. and 2.3.4., were marked. That is, knowledge claims that participants made with regard to *good taste* or *naturalness* (thereby focussing especially on those presenting these ‘soft impacts’ as legitimate topics for public consideration), but also identity constructions of major actors involved in the food sector (e.g. The industry and The consumer) and participants themselves.

For gathering knowledge claims the following utterances were marked. Statements that explicitly incorporated the words '(good) taste' or 'naturalness' (e.g. 'Naturalness is ...' or 'Taste is ...') and occasions when participants were (explicitly) asked to give a statement about (the meaning of) these 'soft impacts'. Moreover, statements that explicitly or implicitly emphasized a particular interpretation of the current situation regarding *good taste* or *naturalness* were also marked (e.g. descriptions of specific food products that were suggested to have lost their 'good' taste or the way concerns for 'naturalness' are currently responded to by the food sector). Then, the collected knowledge claims were analysed with regard to whether participants constructed these as more or less subjective and cautious or objective and factual. Also it was examined whether these claims presented the speaker and/or others as possessing independent or superior knowledge on *good taste* or *naturalness*.

For gathering fragments that are likely to contain identity constructions of the major actors involved in the food sector, explicit references to 'the industry' and 'the (average) consumers' were marked. In addition, recurrent words like 'them', 'they' and 'people' were also briefly checked to see whether these referred to consumers or the industry. Likewise, fragments containing identity constructions of participants themselves were highlighted by coding statements in which people explicitly emphasized a particular role in relation to the food sector (e.g. 'consumer', 'food technologist' or 'marketer'), as well as when they mentioned themselves performing particular behaviour or having particular knowledge that is logically associated with such a role (e.g. 'buying meat at the supermarket' or 'frequently visiting the food industry for inspecting issues of food safety'). Then, the resulting fragments were analysed with regard to implicit suggestions that are incorporated in the statements used by participants. For example, this could be the result of using particular synonyms to refer to the involved actors, highlighting particular aspects of reality while downplaying others, or emphasizing particular knowledge, characteristics or behaviour. By analysing these things, the image that was constructed by participants in these fragments of either important actors involved in the food sector or themselves could be distilled from participants talk.

Subsequently, the resulting collections of fragments with regard to the specific themes of interest (e.g. identity constructions of 'the consumer') were looked at again to reveal similarities or 'patterns' in participants talk. This was the case for the way participants claimed knowledge on *good taste* or *naturalness*, how they presented these 'soft impacts' as legitimate topics for public consideration, and how they constructed important actors and themselves in relation to *good taste* or *naturalness*. Then, the identified similarities were reflected upon in light of their potential consequences for the public debate on *good taste* or *naturalness* and the entire transcripts of the discussions were re-examined to check whether these similarities indeed predominated in the discussions as a whole. If this was the case, some illustrative fragments were chosen from the collections of coded fragments on the basis of being considered most typical and clear to understand when presented in isolation. The selected fragments were transcribed using a simplified version of the Jeffersonian transcription method (see Appendix A). In the next chapter, these fragments will be presented and described in detail thereby giving an overview of the observations made during analysis.

## 4. Results

This chapter presents an overview of how participants discuss *good taste* and *naturalness* during two discussions conducted at the convention 'Zachte zorgen, harde gevolgen; een publieke agenda voor voedselinnovatie'. By doing so, an answer is given to the main research question '(How) do participants discuss 'soft' impacts of food technology as legitimate issues for public consideration and what is achieved by the deployed strategies?'. Moreover, within this overview attention is given to the way participants handle knowledge claims and identity constructions, thereby answering the sub-research questions '(How) do participants construct knowledge about the 'soft' impacts that are central in their discussion and what is achieved by that?' and '(How) are identities build up by participants during the discussion of 'soft' impacts and what is the interactional effect of these constructions?'.

Throughout the analysis a discursive psychological perspective is adopted that puts emphasis on the interactional business that is performed by participants through their talk. In this way, this study shows how participants construct *good taste* and *naturalness* as legitimate topics for public debate and how they present the involved actors as to suggests causality and responsibility for these 'soft impacts'. Moreover, the DP perspective highlights how participants build their own identity in relation to these 'soft impacts' from which they voice their statements.

Throughout this chapter illustrative text-fragments are presented combined with detailed descriptions of the discursive actions that are performed by participants and their interactional results. Nevertheless, it has to be kept in mind that the analysis presented in this chapter does not represent an all-inclusive analysis of the discursive actions that were performed during the discussions. Instead, it is primarily meant to demonstrate how the above mentioned issues characterise the way either *good taste* or *naturalness* is discussed.

### 4.1. Discussing *good taste*

First it will be explained how participants constructed the disappearance of good taste as actually occurring and potentially detrimental. Next, attention will be given to participants' construction of this phenomenon as inevitably following the practices of both industry and the average consumer, followed by how they build their own identity as 'concerned advocates of good taste'.

#### 4.1.1. Legitimizing discussion about good taste by constructing its disappearance as *actually occurring and potentially detrimental*

When participants claim knowledge about the disappearance of good taste, they take responsibility for statements presenting this phenomenon as actually taking place in reality and being possible to point out. In contrast, they incorporate caution and subjectivity in claims suggesting good taste to be a public concern or presenting its disappearance as detrimental. In doing so, the disappearance of good taste is depicted as legitimately requiring attention in the public debate as it *actually occurs* and *might be* considered negative or detrimental. The latter however is suggested as not yet decided upon as a public. In addition, this construction also makes participants' concerns appear reasonable and

plausible, as well as counters the potential interpretation of participants making excessive claims they cannot account for.

To give an example, Fragment 1 shows how MAR<sub>1</sub> makes a statement about the disappearance of good taste. In his argument, he presents this phenomenon as out there and observable by everyone, while suggesting his concerns related to this topic to represent his personal point of view. The statement that is presented here, is the first reaction following the general introduction on good taste given by the discussion facilitator.

### Fragment 1 Good Taste

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1 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Ik zou eigenlijk wel willen beginnen, ik zat te denken, (.) die tweede vraag, zijn publieke  
2 zorgen over goede smaak terecht. ( 0.6.) Ik denk uh: (0.8) waarschijnlijk wel en (.) misschien  
3 moet je eigenlijk nog een stapje e-eerder •gaan, (0.8) ik zeg, ik denk dat we eigenlijk ons  
4 zorgen moeten maken om •de •rol •van •voeding in z'n algemeenheid, in z'n algemeenheid,  
5 (0.3) en daar is smaak een onderdeel van. (0.6) En waarom, uh:, als je:, als je kijkt naar wat  
6 wij over hebben voor voeding (0.3), uh:, als het minder open vergelijkt, men betaalt de  
7 laagste prijzen,uh: als je kijkt naar de tijd die wij eraan besteden, (0.7) uh:, •he, er moet  
8 meer een soort brandstof moet erin, uh: fast food, (0.4.) ja, het is het is het is niet meer het  
9 samenzijn het is nu meer het hebben van iets en klaar. (0.5) En zolang (0.5), uhm:, van het  
10 het ut ut hebben, ik bedoel, het belang van de basaalste voeding is-, ((*inaudable*)) wordt  
11 gereduceerd, he we geven er minder geld aan uit, we vinden andere dingen veel belangrijker  
12 in die zin, veel statusverhogender. (0.6) En en en en, ik sprak een pedant van van voedsel,  
13 die het hoger (begrebe kan) van mensen, (.) uh: heeft 't denk ik ook niet zoveel zin om over  
14 smaak te praten, (of in ieder geval) laten we het hebben over ((*inaudible*)) met elkaar te maken.

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In this fragment, MAR<sub>1</sub> uses the words “ik denk” (line 2-3) when he answers the question “zijn publieke zorgen over goede smaak terecht” (line 1-2), thereby explicitly declaring his answer to represent his *personal* point of view on the issue. He suggests that although *he* considers the disappearance of good taste to be detrimental or negative (and potentially even part of a bigger problem related to food in general), other opinions are possible as well. Moreover, by incorporating the modals “waarschijnlijk” (line 2), “misschien” (line 2) and “eigenlijk” (line 3), MAR<sub>1</sub> reinforces the caution that is built in his statement and presents it as less robust. In this way, MAR<sub>1</sub> avoids claiming general validity for his statement (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2005) and instead depicts the disappearance of good taste as *potentially* detrimental.

Then, by stating “En waarom, uh, ... zin, veel statusverhogender” (line 5-12), MAR<sub>1</sub> presents the following part as *the underlying reasoning* or *evidence* that made him adopt this opinion. That is, by using the word “waarom” (line 5) and putting emphasis on it. Subsequently, by stating “als je...” in which ‘you’ refers to a generalised ‘you’ or to his listeners, this ‘underlying reasoning’ is presented as a general trend that might be described by MAR<sub>1</sub>, but that can be observed in reality by everyone who takes the effort to look. It is suggested to be generally observable and taking place ‘out there’, and the listeners appear potential witnesses who – as a result of this identity – all take a share in the responsibility for the validity of this ‘evidence’ described by MAR<sub>1</sub>.

In addition, MAR<sub>1</sub> frequently refers to ‘we’ throughout his argument; “wat wij over hebben voor voeding” (line 5-6), “de tijd die wij eraan besteden” (line 6-7), “we geven er minder geld aan uit” (line 11) and “we vinden andere dingen veel belangrijker” (line 11). This constructs the disappearance of



good taste as something that everybody actively takes part in and that needs to be taken responsibility for and be solved as a group; “we” (line 3) need to worry.

Taken together, MAR<sub>1</sub> constructs the disappearance of good taste as *potentially detrimental* by presenting his concerns as his *personal* point of view, which suggests that other people might think differently. In contrast, the phenomenon itself MAR<sub>1</sub> constructs as *actually occurring* by presenting it as commonly observable in reality and generally performed. In this way, the disappearance of good taste is depicted as legitimately requiring public consideration, since it is an existing phenomena whose potential detrimental nature is not yet decided upon. Moreover, the concerns voiced by MAR<sub>1</sub> appear plausible as they seem based upon ‘evidence’.

Another example is Fragment 2a that takes place about two minutes after Fragment 1. In this fragment the potential (un)desirability or detrimental nature of the disappearance of good taste is referred to as *a question that still needs to be answered*. In doing so, the disappearance of good taste is again constructed as *potentially* negative or detrimental.

### Fragment 2a Good Taste

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1 F: >Maar misschien kunnen we inderdaad even bij die vraag blijven, want tenminste< is hier  
2 nou zo'n uh unieke concern over smaak(.)vervlakking(.) >Wahn heh dus uh<, [want] wat je=  
3 ENT<sub>1</sub>: [Ja ]  
4 F: = natuurlijk wel veel merkt is van nou: de appels smaken niet mee:r, ze zijn me:liq, uhm: (.)  
5 de uh spruitjes hebben niet meer die die uh mooie bittere smaa:k, lof niet zo goed, u:h het is  
6 allemaal waterig, vlees is waterig, uh  
7 STU<sub>1</sub>: °tomaat°  
8 F: Huh?  
9 STU<sub>1</sub>: De toma:ten.  
10 F: Ja, de tomaten ook, [ja ] dat is misschien °uhm uh ook niet zo sterk of ((*inaudible*))°  
11 STU<sub>1</sub>: [de tomaten]  
12 ENT<sub>1</sub>: Ja. En dat kun je dus ook alleen maar zeggen als je natuurlijk eerst,  
13 [(1.0) dat andere kent. ]  
14 F: [dat andere, ° dat alternatief °] hebt geproefd heh.  
15 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Maar goed uh feit is wel (.) uh, dat ik kijk even naar andere uh, ° naar de° feiten kijk, of  
16 tenminste het zijn het zijn feiten uh, maar ik, ik werk dan in de ((*inaudible*)), in de dierlijke  
17 sector, (0.6) nou en u:hm, en als je dan als je dan ((*inaudible*)) op de keten, nou die hele  
18 keten de afgelopen tien jaar gericht op uh efficiency gericht, alleen maar food conversie-,  
19 F: Ja.  
20 MAR<sub>1</sub>: En er is geen enkele kennis in de ketel hoe je nou een onderscheid in smaak gaat creëren met  
21 [met] •vlees. (.) >Die kennis [is] er niet meer<=  
22 F: [Ja ] [Ja]  
23 MAR<sub>1</sub>: •Ja:, onderzoek uit 't verleden (.), misschien nog onderzoek uit 't buitenland. (.) [Maar] daars=  
24 F: [Ja ]  
25 MAR<sub>1</sub>: •eigenlijk, daar is gewoon totaal geen •aandacht •voor.  
26 F: °Ja°  
27 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Dus je krijgt, (.) naja >goed dat is<, je krijgt smaakvervla-, nee je krijgt inderdaad een  
28 eenvormige smaak, das het resultaat van de •dokter °om°, want alleen op die manier kun je 't  
29 <goedkoopste •produce:ren>=  
30 F: Ja.  
31 MAR<sub>1</sub>: =En wat uh wat uh kun je daar over vinden, mja:, (0.4) das dan een tweede stap.=  
32 F: Ja.  
33 MAR<sub>1</sub>: =En dat is dat is wel iets, wat ik wat ik •constateer.  

---

By stating “Maar misschien kunnen ... over smaak (.) vervlakking” (lines 1-2), the facilitator constructs the disappearance of good taste as a *potentially detrimental* by depicting to its status as a public concern as a *question that still needs to be answered*.

Then, instead of answering this question, the facilitator states “>Wahn heh dus ... is waterig, uh” (line 2-6) which is presented as the justification of this question by using the word ‘because’ (line 2). The justification itself is presented as based upon facts that exist ‘out there’. That is, by using a grammatical format that distances himself from his description of the well-known food products he suggests having lost their good taste, the facilitator presents these food products as the ‘objective evidence’ that exists ‘out there’ that shows that good taste is actually disappearing (Potter, 1996). Moreover, by stating “wat je natuurlijk wel veel merkt is” (line 2 and 4), the facilitator makes use of a strategy called ‘seeing for one self’ which is a commonly used strategy among lay persons to construct themselves as having expertise and knowledge on a subject based upon personal experience (Myers, 2004). This allows a speaker to make generalisations based upon these personal experiences (ibid). In addition, the ‘justification’ voiced by the facilitator also incorporates a reference to ‘you’ (line 2) which refers to the listeners or a generalised you. Doing so constructs the listeners as potential witnesses that as a result of this construction all take a share in the responsibility for the validity of the claim regarding the food products that have lost their good taste. This makes the claim appear more realistic and trustworthy.

Taken together, the facilitator constructs the disappearance of good taste as *potentially detrimental* by presenting its status as a public concern as a *question that still needs to be answered*. Moreover, by suggesting that there is generally observable and ‘out there’ existing evidence that indicates that good taste is actually disappearing, he depicts this phenomenon as *potentially detrimental* but anyhow *occurring* and thus legitimately requiring public consideration.

In the second part of Fragment 2a (“Maar goed uh ... wat ik ↓constateer.”, lines 15-33), MAR<sub>1</sub> also constructs the disappearance of good taste as *actually occurring* while suggesting its detrimental nature to be *potential* by presenting this as a *question that still needs to be answered*.

The first part of this construction (good taste as *actually existing*) MAR<sub>1</sub> achieves by combining four different strategies when he states “Maar goed uh ... ‘t <goedkoopste ↓produce:ren>” (line 15-29). First, by saying “ik werk in de ((*inaudible*)), in de uh dierlijke sector” (line 16-17), MAR<sub>1</sub> explicitly emphasizes his membership of the identity group ‘professional in the food sector’, thereby evoking expectations about what is typically known and done by such people: category entitlements (Potter, 1996). Hence, this identity construction provides MAR<sub>1</sub> with an account for claiming knowledge of the things he talks about and makes him appear more reliable (ibid). Second, the actual description of current practices in the food industry starts with “en als je dan” (line 17) in which ‘you’ refers to the listeners or a generalised you that works in (or visits) the food sector as well. That is, the word “dan” refers back to MAR<sub>1</sub>’s earlier construction of being a ‘professional in the food sector’. In this way, MAR<sub>1</sub> constructs his listeners as potential witnesses that all share responsibility for the validity of this description, thereby making it appear more realistic and trustworthy (Te Molder, 2012a). Third, MAR<sub>1</sub> uses distanced footing when talking about the current practices in the food industry, which evokes a perception of ‘out there ness’ and factuality (Potter, 1996). This depicts the description as the ‘objective evidence’ that shows that good taste is actually disappearing. Fourth, by explicitly admitting

the limits of his knowledge when stating “En er is ... geen ↓aandacht ↓voor.” (line 20-25) MAR<sub>1</sub> presents himself as modest and credible. That is, by demonstrating his willingness to admit the things he does not know for sure, MAR<sub>1</sub> makes those things he *does* claim to know appear more certain and trustworthy (Te Molder, 2012a).

Then at the end of his statement, MAR<sub>1</sub> constructs the (un)desirability of the disappearance of good taste as ‘not yet decided upon’ or ‘potential’ by adding “En wat uh ... een tweede stap.” (line 31). That is, he presents the existence of this phenomenon as separated from whether it should be considered detrimental or negative, and the latter evaluation as a question that still needs to be answered.

In sum, by presenting the disappearance of good taste as something that *actually* happens in reality while only *potentially* being considered as negative or detrimental, participants depict the disappearance of good taste as a plausible concern that legitimately requires attention in the public debate. That is, this phenomenon *actually occurs* (participants can even provide ‘evidence’), while it is not yet (publically) decided whether this should be considered detrimental or should be acted upon.

#### **4.1.2. Attributing responsibility and blame by depicting the disappearance of good taste as caused by industry and the average consumer**

By emphasizing particular interpretations of reality, industry and average consumers, participants present the disappearance of good taste as an ongoing process that logically following from the behaviour of both industry and average consumers. More specifically, participants construct industry as aware of its actions with regard to taste, but still deliberately choosing to opt for maximum profit and efficiency instead of safeguarding good taste as such. The average consumer they present as unaware and neglectful towards good taste and instead acting on behalf of routines and prioritizing sugar and salt, convenience and cheap food products. Subsequently, by combining these constructions and depicting the interplay of industry and the average consumer as logically causing good taste to disappear, participants are able to attribute responsibility and blame for the disappearance of good taste to these actors.

##### **4.1.2.1. Constructing the industry as allowing good taste to disappear by deliberately prioritizing maximum profit**

Fragment 3 shows MAR<sub>1</sub> mentioning two phenomena he suggests to be problematic with regard to taste innovations. The latter includes a construction of ‘the industry’ as being driven by product sales and profit while allowing good (or in this case explicit or strong) taste to slip away from their products.

#### **Fragment 3 Good Taste**

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1 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Maar misschien (1.0) De conclusie is misschien eigenlijk dat misschien dat ze ook anders de  
2 vraag °kunnen° definiëren zelfs, want eigenlijk, ik ervaar twee problemen als het gaat over  
3 innoveren op het gebied van •smaak. (0.2) Ene is, door de (infucisieslag) is al het huidige eten  
4 zo goedkoop geworden, dat als je iets wil, (0.9) moet de consument vaak al 50 tot 100% meer  
5 betalen•.  
6 F: °Hmhm°  
7 MAR<sub>1</sub>: En dat is gewoon, •heh, dat is, (.) ja, dat is gewoon een drempel.  
8 F: Hmhm.  
9 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Heh, u:h, °dat ken je. ° Het tweede, dat ook interessant is u:hm, dat ik laatst ook las is dat,  
10 (0.8) u:hm, als je van die nadrukkelijkere sma:ken hebt, worden mensen makkelijker sneller

11 daardoor verza:digd.  
 12 F: Ja.  
 13 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Nou, op zich, dat is hartstikke- dat is •eigenlijk is dat goed=  
 14 F: =Dat is heel [goed ],  
 15 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [maa:r] passen we dus niet toe.  
 16 F; Nee, [°nee is een wiswasje° ]  
 17 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [°(wat is dan nadruk-)°]  
 18 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [Wa::nt dat wil men ] dus niet.  
 19 RES<sub>1</sub>: En wie is men dan? De industrie  
 20 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Nou, de industrie.  
 21 F: Is een wiswasje natuurlijk, want dan verkoop je minder.  
 22 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Dan verkoop je [minder] ((*speaker points his hand in the direction of F*))

---

When stating “Het tweede, dat ... verkoop je minder.” (lines 9-21), MAR<sub>1</sub> presents ‘explicit or strong tasting products’ as undesirable *according to industry*, but not as negative in general. That is, he starts by describing what happens when people consume strong tasting products and presents this description as expectable and occurring in a particular (causal) sequence by using a script format; “als je van ... sneller daardoor verza:digd.” (lines 10-11) (Edwards, 1994; Snejder and Te Molder, 2005). Then, MAR<sub>1</sub> depicts industry as considering the consequences of producing strong tasting products (that is, people consume less food and product sales drop) as undesirable and this being the reason for industry to omit producing such food products. MAR<sub>1</sub> achieves this construction by confirming the facilitator’s words when he states “want dan verkoop je minder” (line 21).

In addition, the lines “maa:r dat passen we dus niet toe” (line 15) and “wa:nt dat wil men dus niet” (line 18), in which ‘men’ refers to the industry, construct this decision of industry to omit producing explicit or strong tasting food products as business as usual and as a deliberate choice that is acted upon. In this way, MAR<sub>1</sub> and the facilitator present industry as being driven by product sales and maximizing profit when making decisions regarding good taste.

Next, Fragment 4 shows how the facilitator talks about industry as contributing to the disappearance of good taste by deploying scientific knowledge about taste to maximize product sale and profits.

#### Fragment 4 Good Taste

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1 F: Ja: ik denk dat daa:r u:h (.) veel uh gebeurt op dat punt, dr is zo’n prachtig boek heh, van  
 2 Moss, dat heet <sugar, fa:t and> (.)  
 3 ENT<sub>1</sub>:°Sugar, salt and fat°  
 4 F: >°Wat was die laatste? °<  
 5 ENT<sub>1</sub>: Sugar, salt and fat.  
 6 F: •Salt •ja. En die, en die laten zien in het eerste hoofdstuk (.) e:hm hoe dus inderdaad een groot  
 7 aantal wetenschappers in dienst van de industrie bezig zijn dat <bliss point uit te vinden>, en  
 8 daarop de-, en het bliss point is dus een verzameling van •vet en u:h en uh •zout,. >Dat is dus  
 9 (precisie chips)< (°oke°). En daar gaat het dus niet om de smaak, het gaat om het zout dat en  
 10 verder gaat om dat er zoveel mogelijk ((*inaudible*)) wordt gegeten. (.) °(Dat willen we.)° En das  
 11 tuurlijk toch weer een andere kant, want wat daar ook wel in zit, is daar zit een vorm van  
 12 manipulatie van smaak in, [die] weer gebeurt, zodat mensen zoveel mogelijk eten, en die zak=  
 13 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [Ja.]  
 14 F: =leeg-eten, of twee zakken of-

---

By stating “En die, en ... twee zakken of-” (line 6-14), the facilitator explicitly describes industry as deploying scientific knowledge about taste to maximize product sales and profit. This depicts ‘good

taste' as something that can be created in, and removed from, food products and suggests industry as playing an active and conscious role in this process.

Moreover, this statement also portrays industry's usage of scientific knowledge of taste to maximize product sales and profit as *despicable*, both with regard to 'good taste' and consumers. The facilitator achieves this construction by stating "En das tuurlijk ... twee zakken of-" (lines 10-14) and using the words "manipulatie van smaak" (line 12) and "die zak leeg-eten, of twee zakken of-" (line 12 and 14). By using (and emphasizing) the word "manipulatie" he depicts this behaviour as *strategic* and *mistreating* knowledge about taste to pursue something that is only beneficial for industry while potentially harmful for unsuspecting and defenceless consumers. The words "die zak leeg-eten, of twee zakken of-" (line 12 and 14) underscore the potential harm that is referred to by suggesting excessive overeating. This is generally associated with negative health consequences for the person doing so, while only increasing product sale and profits for industry. In this way, industry's behaviour is depicted as strategic, actively causing 'good taste' to disappear and harming consumers' health.

In sum, throughout the discussion participants construct industry as consciously contributing to the disappearance of 'good taste' from food products as well as prioritizing their own interests (in terms of maximizing product sale and profit) over the interests of consumers or safeguarding good taste.

#### 4.1.2.2. Constructing the average consumer as neglecting good taste by failing to notice or pay attention to it

Fragment 5 and 6 illustrate how participants construct average consumers in relation to good taste and how they present themselves as separated from this group. Both fragments show how particular characteristics are linked to 'The consumer' (e.g. preferring salt) and how this group is presented as neglecting good taste, while also allowing participants to distance themselves from this group.

In Fragment 5 MAR<sub>3</sub> describes particular behaviour in relation to salt-usage in restaurants which she depicts as common and preferred. She contrasts this with a second description of behaviour she claims to have observed from a large group of people whom she distances herself from. Doing so allows MAR<sub>3</sub> to present 'average people' as prioritising salt over 'actual good taste' and thereby endangering good taste.

##### Fragment 5 Good Taste

- 
- 1 MAR<sub>3</sub>: Wat ik ook een mooi voorbeeld vind is zoutvaatjes. Als je in een (.) restaurant bent, (.) ik  
2 ja, >het is wel vaak hoe duurder het restaurant,< hoe minder zoutvaatjes.  
3 RES<sub>1</sub>: Ja.  
4 MAR<sub>3</sub>: Want als de kok z'n werk uh niet goed doet dan moet je je gaan compenseren [met zout. .h]=  
5 ENT<sub>1</sub>: [met zout, ja]  
6 MAR<sub>3</sub>: =En en (.) en en >heel veel mensen (geschiede) zitten dan< in een café, dan krijgen ze een  
7 bord met eten en dan zie je ze eerst zo doen ((MAR<sub>3</sub> makes a shaking movements with her  
8 hand, as if she puts salt on imaginable a plate))  
9 F: tsj-tsj-tsj-tsj ((F makes a similar hand movement as MAR<sub>3</sub>, as if he puts salt on imaginable a  
10 plate))  
11 ENT<sub>1</sub>: Haha hoho ((ENT<sub>1</sub> puts her hand over her mouth, laughs and bends her forward with her upper  
12 body))  
13 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Gewoon gewoonte.  
14 MAR<sub>3</sub>: Dus ei:genlijk als je het hebt over uh zou•t, be•doel, de de uh de, wordt veel gezegd over de  
15 industrie maar die weten precies hoeveel zout er in hun eten zit, hoeveel in het reductieplan,  
16 en de bakkerijen-industrie, >weet ik veel<. Maar die mensen th•ui•s (.) en met zo'n po:t dat is  
17 dat is echt een gevaar hoor, volgens mij. En ook voor (.) als je het hebt over goede sm•aa•k,  
18 misschien moet je daar wel-  
19 RES<sub>1</sub>: Maar wat zeg je (.) die ((inaudible)) van nou: die industrie die doen het wel goed,

20 [en mensen zijn (.) uh onverbeterlijk. ]  
 21 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [>nou, ik zeg niet de industrie< (.) nee ik zeg dat er] meerdere, (.) het is makkelijker soms om  
 22 de indus•trie te controleren dan om men-, uh uh uh loslopende uh individuen die niet perse  
 23 uh zo  
 24 F: >Maar je [moet wel ]<  
 25 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [en groupe] aanspreekbaar zijn.

---

By stating “als de kok ... compenseren met zout” (line 4), MAR<sub>3</sub> constructs salt as a potential and preferred remedy that is used to compensate a lack of ‘good taste’ in food. She presents this behaviour as performed by everyone by referring to a generalised ‘you’. Also she presents it as *expectable* and *occurring in a particular sequence* by using an ‘if A, then B’ type of script-formulation (Edwards, 1994). That is, people should *first* make sure whether food has a good taste or not, and if not, they should compensate this lack of taste by adding salt. In doing so, MAR<sub>3</sub> implicitly suggests that people are not supposed to add salt when food already has a good taste as well as that salt should be considered a second best alternative for ‘actual good taste’.

Subsequently, MAR<sub>3</sub> contrast this ‘preferred behaviour’ with a second script that represents her observations of a large group of people that immediately add a lot of salt when they receive food in a restaurant: “En en (.) en ... ↑eerst ↑zo doen.” (lines 6-7). By referring to this group using words like “heel veel mensen” (line 6) and “ze” (line 6 and 7), MAR<sub>3</sub> distances herself from this group and their behaviour. Also, since the sequence of events in this second script has a reverse order of what has just been described as ordinary, preferred and expectable behaviour of a generalised you, the second script appears to represent *unexpected* or *inappropriate* behaviour that is nevertheless performed by a lot of people. And indeed this construction is confirmed by the reactions of the other participants. First, the facilitator and MAR<sub>1</sub> confirm the construction of this behaviour *as actually occurring* by respectively imitating the behaviour and stressing its routine character for those people (“gewoon gewoonte”, line 13). Second, ENT<sub>1</sub> confirms the suggestion of *undesirability* and *abnormality* by laughing and making “ohoh” (line 11) sounds while putting her hand over her mouth and bending forwards. This can be interpret as playfully signalling a kind of shock or astonishment.

Then, MAR<sub>3</sub> continues her reasoning with a conclusion (by using the word “dus”, line 14) about the role of industry and consumers with regard to the disappearance of good taste. In this conclusion, MAR<sub>3</sub> constructs ‘consumers’ as not paying attention to ‘good taste’ when they are confronted with it. Hence, they fail to notice ‘good taste’ and even endangering it by allowing routines like adding salt prevail in their consumption behaviour. Simultaneously, by referring to this group as “die mensen th↑ui↓:s” (line 16) and “loslopende uh individuen” (line 22) MAR<sub>3</sub> again constructs this group of ‘average consumers’ as separated from her own identity or that of the other participants present.

Fragment 6a takes place directly after the facilitator has mentioned scientific research that showed how watching television while eating influences the ability to taste food. In this fragment, MAR<sub>1</sub> responds to this statement by voicing a personal experience of him reading a news paper and eating at the same time. He emphasizes his conscious choice to separate both activities and pay attention to the taste of the food he is consuming and contrasts this with the behaviour of ‘average people’. In this way, MAR<sub>1</sub> (and the other participants) depict the average consumer as distanced from themselves and omitting to pay attention to ‘good taste’, hence failing to notice it.

## Fragment 6a Good Taste

22 [... 22 lines omitted ...]  
23 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Ik ik uh, das wel, dat vind ik echt een hele interessante discussie. Ik merk het zelf ook, dat uh  
24 dan ben ik de krant aan het lezen en (dan) >stop ik met krant lezen<(>ik ben aan het •eten.<=  
25 F: =Ja.=  
26 MAR<sub>1</sub>:=>Zit ik de •krant te •lezen.<=  
27 F: =Ja.  
28 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Denk van ja, ik moet gewoon even genieten van, ik moet er echt even (.) even bewust [van]=  
29 F: [Ja ]  
30 MAR<sub>1</sub>:=genieten. Ik betrap mezelf erop, (0.2) en als, dan leg ik hem ook weg.(>)en [dan] uh, zo lekker=  
31 F: [Ja.]  
32 MAR<sub>1</sub>:=klaargemaakt, hier wil ik, hier wil ik even van •genieten.  
33 F: Ja.  
34 ENT<sub>1</sub>: Mi:ndfull eten.  
35 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Ja, [ja,] dat is wel, dat is wel [(een interessant stukje)]  
36 F: [Ja.] [(dat zit daar ook), dus ] het zit ook aan die  
37 consumentenkant, dat die (0.4) ut eigenlijk maar slikken, (.) al die: <smaakvervlakte spullen>  
38 (0.6) •ja:, omdat ze:[: (.) ] [Ja:]  
39 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [gedachte]loos[heid]  
40 F: Gedachteloosheid •eten, en in je eentje eten of of, gratis [misschien en uh]  
41 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [met je Ipho:ne ]

By voicing a personal experience of reading a new paper while eating, MAR<sub>1</sub> uses the strategy ‘seeing for oneself’ (Myers, 2004) to claim knowledge on how performing certain behaviour while eating can affect the ability to actually taste food. He uses a script-format and actively phrases this in the present continuous, thereby constructing his experience as occurring on the spot: “dan ben ik ... aan het ↑eten” (line 24). Then, by starting to refer to the act of *reading* and only mentioning to the act of *eating* after suggesting to have stopped reading, the sequence of events is underscored and an aspect surprise and sudden awareness of the activity ‘eating’ is build in the description. Moreover, by incorporating a short pause just before mentioning the act of eating and increasing his tone of voice when referring to this activity, the construction of eating as ‘surprising’ is reinforced. Likewise, this also happens by using and emphasizing the word “betrap” when stating “ik betrap mezelf erop.” (line 30), this suggest MAR<sub>1</sub> becoming aware of something that was initially unknown or unconscious. Consequently, MAR<sub>1</sub> presents reading and eating at the same time as preventing him (and potentially others as well) to notice and actually taste the food he is consuming. Next, by describing his thoughts and behaviour when he realises that he is combining both activities, MAR<sub>1</sub> presents himself as able to notice this process and deliberately choosing to alter it, and pay attention to and actually taste the food he is eating. This is confirmed by the words “Mi:ndfull eten.” (line 34) voiced by ENT<sub>1</sub>, which MAR<sub>1</sub> again confirms as indeed representing what he tried to explain: “Ja, , [ja,] dat is wel, dat is wel [(een interessant stukje)]” (line 35).

Then, by using the word “dus” (line 36) the facilitator poses a statement about the average consumer regarding ‘good taste’ which he presents as a conclusion or continuation of the reasoning given by MAR<sub>1</sub>. In this conclusion, the facilitator upgrades the personal experience of MAR<sub>1</sub> to suggest that ‘average consumers’ also do not pay attention to food, although – in contrast to MAR<sub>1</sub> – not choose to alter this behaviour and hence fail to notice good taste even when confronted with this. That is, the aspect of not paying attention to food when consuming it (“gedachteloosheid ↓eten”, line 40), is suggested to be common among consumers, while the deliberately decision of MAR<sub>1</sub> to start paying

attention to his food, is not mentioned again in the conclusion about ‘consumers in general’. This suggests this deliberate decision as not being part of the ‘common behaviour of average consumers’. In addition, throughout this conclusion, the facilitator distances himself and the other participants from this construction of ‘the average consumer’ by referring to this group as “die consumentenkant” (line 36 and 37), “die” (line 36 and 37) and “ze” (38).

In this way, the personal example given by MAR<sub>1</sub> is used to achieve two things. First, it portrays ‘consumers in general’ as neglecting ‘good taste’ as they do not pay attention to it and fail to notice it even when confronted with ‘good taste’. Second, it allows participants to distance themselves from their construction of the ‘average consumer’ by emphasizing their own ability pay attention to and actually consciously experiencing a food products’ ‘good taste’.

In sum, by constructing consumers as not paying attention to their food, failing to notice ‘good taste’ when confronted with it, preferring salt and sugar over ‘actual good taste’, acting on behalf of routines and so on, participants are able to present an image of the ‘average consumer’ as allowing good taste to disappear from their lives by simply neglecting. In addition, by referring to this group in terms that distances themselves from this construction of ‘average consumers’, participants present their own identity as separated from this group.

#### 4.1.2.3. Constructing the interplay between industry and the consumer as contributing to disappearance of good taste

Besides emphasizing how industry and consumers contribute to the disappearance of good taste, participants also construct their interplay as contributing to this phenomenon. For example, Fragment 7 shows how RES<sub>1</sub> refers to things he noticed during his research on ‘soft impacts’ and suggest these as representing business as usual in the interaction between industry and consumers.

##### Fragment 7 Good Taste

---

1 RES<sub>1</sub>: U:h, wat, wat je, (.) waar we in ons onderzoek dus altijd tegenaan liepen, was die  
 2 privati•sering, [•heh], dat dat je •Nederlanders die kan je een ongelofelijk gezellige avond=  
 3 F: [Ja. ]  
 4 RES<sub>1</sub>:=laten hebben, op voorwaarde dat iedereen dan altijd mag doen wat ie zelf •wil en dat ie dat  
 5 voordurend ook zeg. (0.2) Doe jij ‘t maar zo ((*speaker points to his right side*)), ik doe ‘t zo  
 6 ((*speaker points to his left side*)). Nou, u:h, zo doet de voedingsindustrie dat ook, •heh, die  
 7 zegt van •nou: goed, heh als mensen 100euro willen besteden aan een maaltijd, dan gaan we daar  
 8 toch voor ca:teren •heh, >maar dat willen ze •niet<, een kilo (plof) willen ze hebben, •nou,  
 9 dan krijgen ze een kilo (•plof). •Dus .h •alles valt een beetje, verdwijnt in dat zwarte gat  
 10 van de individuele keuzevrijheid zeg ik altijd.  
 11 F: Ja, ja.

---

In this fragment, RES<sub>1</sub> presents industry as claiming to act in response to the wishes of consumers who are believed to prefer cheap products over products that actually have ‘good taste’. That is, by starting with the words “die zegt van ↑nou: goed, heh als” in which “die” refers to the industry, the following part is constructed as something that could have been said by industry (“↑nou: goed, heh ... een kilo (↓plof).”, line 7-9). Then, by incorporating a causal script that is phrased as ‘if A, then B’ the wishes of



consumers are presented as the claimed cause that made industry act in a way that makes good taste disappear from their products.

In addition, this description of the interplay between industry and consumers also contains the suggestion that industry is able – or at least believes to be able – to create ‘good taste’ in food products if they would only want to do so. That is, by presenting the words “goed, heh als ... voor ca:teren ↑heh,” (line 7-9) as voiced by ‘the industry’, industry is depicted as omitting to create good taste in their products because they consider this to be of low priority for consumers and not because this may be too difficult to create. Consumers in turn are suggested to prefer “een kilo (plof)” (line 9) over “100euro willen besteden aan een maaltijd” (line 7), thereby constructing consumers as preferring ‘cheap, a lot, unsustainable and bad tasting food’ over actual ‘good (tasting) food’.

Taken together, throughout the discussion, participants can be observed to build particular constructions of industry, average consumers and their interplay that all allow participants to attribute responsibility and blame in their description of reality. In this way, participants suggest that the disappearance of good taste logically follows from the deliberate choices of industry, the routine behaviour of the negligent average consumer, as well as the interplay of these two actors. In addition, by distancing themselves from their construction of the negligent ‘average consumer’, participants counter the potential interpretation of being negligent themselves, thereby omitting to take a share of the responsibility and blame for the disappearance of good taste that they attribute to ‘the average consumer’.

#### **4.1.3. Building an identity of ‘concerned advocate of good taste’**

As described in the previous sections, participants present their worries about *good taste* as plausible concerns that are based upon objective evidence of its disappearance (see section 4.1.1.) as well as present themselves as separated from the negligent ‘average consumer’ (see section 4.1.2.). Combining these constructions with a construction of themselves as being *considerably knowledgeable and experienced in the domain of good taste*, enabled participants to build an identity as ‘concerned advocate of good taste’. Subsequently, this identity presents participants as genuinely worried about good taste and their concerns as being based upon their above average interest and expertise in good taste, as well as their superior ability to notice its disappearance. In this way, the fact that their concerns about good taste might not be generally shared among the public, does not make these appear less legitimate. Instead, it mainly reaffirms the construction of the ‘average consumer’ as negligent and failing to notice this phenomenon.

When looking at the way participants construct themselves as knowledgeable and experienced in the field of good taste and how they demonstrate their ability to point out evidence for its disappearance, it can be observed that participants do this both *individually* and *as a group*.

##### **4.1.3.1. Demonstrating individual knowledge and experience on *good taste* to suggest superior judgement concerning its disappearance**

To demonstrate personal knowledge and expertise on this subject, participants pointed out issues they presented as ‘objective evidence’ for the disappearance of good taste – as is described in section 4.1.1.

– thereby presenting this phenomena as actually occurring. Simultaneously, by doing so participants also present themselves as being experienced and knowledgeable in this domain, as they are able to notice the disappearance of good taste and point out concrete signals of, as well as processes linked to, this phenomenon.

Fragment 2b shows how the facilitator worked up such a construction. This fragment directly follows Fragment 2a that showed both the facilitator and MAR<sub>1</sub> constructing good taste as actually disappearing and potentially considered detrimental or negative.

### Fragment 2b Good Taste

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33 [... 33 lines omitted ...]

34 F: Ja (.) ik ik heb zelf ook wel dat gevoel hoor,>dat dat zo is<, want ik koop nog wel eens, of ik  
35 kocht nog wel eens vlees bij Albert Heij:n, vroeger (0.9), en uh:, ja inderdaad, als je dat vlees  
36 in de pan hebt, uh dr komt ongelofelijk veel water uit, en dat is ook he, als je dat allemaal  
37 terugvoert, tumbling heet dat, ongeveer 10-, dat mag ook nu, 10% van het gewicht van een  
38 stuk vlees, .h wat dan uh:, wat vlees mag heten, mag gewoon vocht zijn. En dat wordt erin  
39 gestopt, dat wordt er gewoon uh:, daar zijn apparaten voor waar in uh:, he, die spritsen dat  
40 gewoon dat vocht erin. (0.9) En uh ja, of ga maar naar de sappen, daar heb je hetzelfde  
41 natuurlijk he, de fruitsappen, uh:, (0.2) je moet echt heel goed kijken op het etiket wat je  
42 hebt, of uh, want fruitsap is geloof ik, worden daar (alleen nog maar) pitten voor uitgeperst  
43 °of u:h ((inaudible)) ° ((people laugh))

---

The facilitator starts by presenting himself as member of the identity group ‘consumers’ and later on shifts to an identity of ‘expert’ by suggesting having above average knowledge and expertise about the underlying process. That is, by using the words “ik koop” (line 34) the facilitator describes himself as performing behaviour that is generally associated with consumers, thereby implicitly emphasizing his membership to this identity group. Subsequently, the facilitator continues with a knowledge claim about what can be observed when buying meat at the supermarket, cooking this meat at home and looking what happens – something he is entitled to know as a consumer (Potter, 1996). The description he presents as ‘business as usual’ by making use of a script format (Edwards, 1994), as well as visible for everyone by incorporating a generalised you (“als je” line 35) that suggests potential witnesses. In this way, the action of cooking meat and observing the water that comes out, is portrayed as expectable and observable, thereby presenting it as ‘evidence’ for the disappearance of good taste. In addition, by demonstrating his ability to point out this apparent evidence as well as constructing this as something he has ‘seen for himself’ (Myers, 2004), the facilitator presents himself as knowledgeable and experienced with this issue and therefore being able to recognize and identify such signals that show good taste is actually disappearing.

Thereafter, the facilitator continues his scripted observation by claiming knowledge on the underlying process leading to this release of water from the meat during cooking by stating “als je dat allemaal ... dat vocht erin” (line 36-40). However, since the underlying process is not likely to be common knowledge of consumers, this identity no longer provides a basis for claiming such knowledge. Hence, by using jargon to refer to the process (“tumbling” line 37) and giving some additional information concerning how this process works and that it is allowed (“tumbling heet dat ... dat vocht erin”, line 37-40), which he constructs as short explanatory parentheses, the facilitator implicitly suggests

himself as more experienced and knowledgeable about this phenomenon than his listeners. That is, he suggests being able to give information that his listeners might not know before.

Taken together, the facilitator switches from a constructed identity of a consumer that is able to identify signals of the disappearance of good taste in reality, to that of an expert that is knowledgeable about the underlying processes. This allows the facilitator to voice statements about different parts of the process he is describing which are likely to be known by either consumers or experts. In this way, the facilitator appears trustworthy, experienced and knowledgeable and his description appears to be objective 'evidence' that shows that good taste is actually disappearing.

#### 4.1.3.2. Demonstrating collective knowledge and experience on *good taste* to suggest superior judgement concerning its disappearance

To suggest the group as being knowledgeable and experienced about good taste and issues related to its disappearance participants can be observed to complement and add to each others statements concerning good taste. In this way, participants suggest independent access to the disappearance of good taste that allows them to make judgements (Heritage and Raymond, 2005). Also this presents what is being said about good taste as a generally accepted reality within the setting of the discussion, while simultaneously reaffirming their own (and each others') suggested knowledge about the issues being described.

This can be illustrated by Fragment 6b (which is an extended version of Fragment 6a) that shows how participants jointly construct attention for food and attention for taste as being linked to each other.

#### Fragment 6b Good Taste

---

1 ENT<sub>1</sub>: Ik denk dat bewustheid voor smaak daar komt, dat hangt samen met bewustheid voor  
2 voeding.  
3 F: [Ja-ha]  
4 STU<sub>1</sub>: [Ja. ]  
5 ENT<sub>1</sub>: En als je geen bewustzijn hebt voor smaak, dan kun je ook  
6 [niet bewustzijn ] van voeding, dus dat •heeft  
7 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [niet ( bezig zijn )]  
8 MAR<sub>1</sub>: =Ja, en [daarom moeten (we ook)]  
9 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [met elkaar te maken ja]  
10 ENT<sub>1</sub>: [Ja, ja. ]  
11 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [(ik denk] die dingen) met elkaar te maken hebben, dus dat op een gegeven moment (duh  
12 buh betoog), inderdaad die dingen hebben met elkaar te maken. (0.3) Heh, en (bedoel) als je  
13 voeding belangrijk vindt, dan, is het wel fijn natuurlijk dat je ook uh meer gaat letten op  
14 de smaak.  
15 F: Ja want dat is dus uh eigenlijk wel, vin ik, bedoel, ik wil niet alles verdedigen wat Wageningen  
16 doet, maar uh, in tegendeel, (.) maar één onderzoek vond ik, was nog wel aardig, dat is .h wat  
17 proeven mensen eigenlijk, als ze:=  
18 ((*people laugh shortly*)  
19 F: =uhev, (0.5) wat proeven mensen eigenlijk als ze voor de televisie zitten, en en uhm, uhm  
20 televisiekijken en dan eten. .h >Dat heb ik natuurlijk zelf ook wel<, wanneer ik zit te •pra:ten  
21 met iemand die ik •heel interessant vind, en je eet ondertussen, >dan weet je eigenlijk niet  
22 Meer wat je eet.<  
23 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Ik ik uh, das wel, dat vind ik echt een hele interessante discussie. Ik merk het zelf ook, dat uh  
24 dan ben ik de krant aan het lezen en (dan) >stop ik met krant lezen<(.)>ik ben aan het •eten.<=  
25 F: =Ja.=  
26 MAR<sub>1</sub>: =>Zit ik de •krant te •lezen.<=

27 F: =Ja.  
 28 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Denk van ja, ik moet gewoon even genieten van, ik moet er echt even (.) even bewust [van]=  
 29 F: [Ja ]  
 30 MAR<sub>1</sub>: =genieten. Ik betrap mezelf erop, (0.2) en als, dan leg ik hem ook weg (.) en [dan] uh, zo lekker=  
 31 F: [Ja.]  
 32 MAR<sub>1</sub>: klaargemaakt, hier wil ik, hier wil ik even van •genieten.  
 33 F: Ja.  
 34 ENT<sub>1</sub>: Mi:ndfull eten.  
 35 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Ja, [ja,] dat is wel, dat is wel [(een interessant stukje)]  
 36 F: [Ja.] [(dat zit daar ook), dus ] het zit ook aan die consumentenkant,  
 37 dat die (0.4) ut eigenlijk maar slikken, (.) al die: <smaakvervlakte spullen> (0.6) •ja:, omdat  
 38 ze:[ (.) ] [Ja:]  
 39 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [gedachte]loos[heid]  
 40 F: Gedachteloosheid •eten, en in je eentje eten of of, gratis [misschien en uh]  
 41 MAR<sub>3</sub>: [met je Ipho:ne ]

---

Looking at this fragment, makes clear that participants frequently add slightly different statements to reasoning that is started by someone else. In this way, they continuously demonstrate their own knowledge and experience on the subject as well as confirm what is being said by the others. That is, in line 7 MAR<sub>3</sub> states “niet bezig zijn”, which is slightly different from the words used by ENT<sub>1</sub> “geen bewustzijn hebt” (line 5) en “niet bewust zijn” (line 6), although implying the same thing. By doing this, MAR<sub>3</sub> counters the potential interpretation of only repeating the claim made by ENT<sub>1</sub>, and instead suggests having independent access to and knowledge on the issue herself. That is, she demonstrates having her own thoughts on this issue by giving a small, seemingly careful, adjustment to this the initial statement made by ENT<sub>1</sub>.

In the next line, MAR<sub>1</sub> uses the words “Ja, en daarom moeten (we ook)” (line 8), which are constructed as logically following the reasoning stated by ENT<sub>1</sub> and MAR<sub>3</sub> by incorporating the word ‘therefore’ which signals a reason or explanation. Nevertheless, the actual reasoning starts only in line 11, since MAR<sub>3</sub> simultaneously states the words “met elkaar te maken ja” (line 9) which is presented as a completion of the reasoning given by ENT<sub>1</sub> in line 6, as her words accurately finalise the sentence started by ENT<sub>1</sub> in the correct grammatical format.

Then, both MAR<sub>1</sub> and the facilitator continue giving a statement about the linkage between taste and attention for food by stating “(ik denk) die ... op de smaak” (line 11 and 14) and “Ja want dat ... wat je eet.” (line 15 until 22). Both statements incorporate words like “dus” (line 11 and 15) and “want” (line 15) that emphasize their link with what is already said by presenting these statements as conclusions on or continuations of someone else’s reasoning. Likewise, MAR<sub>1</sub> continues giving an elaborate example derived from his personal life “ik ik uh... even van ↓genieten” (line 23 until 32), which is the same as described in section 4.1.2.2. By voicing this example, MAR<sub>1</sub> presents himself as having some general knowledge and experience on this topic based on his ‘personal experience’ or ‘seeing for oneself’ (Myers, 2004). Also this makes the preceding claim of the facilitator appear more realistic by confirming it with this personal example. Interestingly, throughout MAR<sub>1</sub>’s example the facilitator continues to confirm it by saying ‘yes’, thereby making the example appear even more trustworthy. Thereafter, – as was also described in section 4.1.2.2. – ENT<sub>1</sub> suggests being familiar with the issue herself by concluding with the words “mi:ndfull eten” (line 34), which are confirmed as indeed representing what was being referred to by MAR<sub>1</sub> when he states: “Ja, [ja,] dat is wel, dat is wel [(een interessant stukje)]” (line 35).

Then, the facilitator continues adding a conclusion about average consumers, he constructs as continuing the previous line of reasoning by stating “dus het zit ... omdat ze:[ (.)] [ja:]” (line 36-38). Directly afterwards, this statement is supplemented with the addition of MAR<sub>3</sub> “gedachteloosheid” (line 39), which emphasizes the link that exists between the conclusion voiced by the facilitator and the example given by MAR<sub>1</sub>. On its turn, the addition of MAR<sub>3</sub> is repeated and complemented by the facilitator by giving a few examples when stating “gedachteloosheid ↓eten, en ... [misschien en uh]” (line 40) and which is again supplemented by the example of MAR<sub>3</sub>: “met je I-phone” (line 41). Taken together, by continuously confirming, adjusting and elaborating on each others statements, participants build a perception of the described as representing common knowledge about reality that they all have independent access to, in other words they present it as their ‘collective memory’ (Myers, 2004). In this way, participants all appear knowledgeable and experienced, as a group as well as individually.

In sum, to build an identity of ‘concerned advocate of good taste’ participants combined a construction of *being particularly knowledgeable and experienced in the domain of good taste*, with earlier described constructions of *voicing plausible concerns that are based upon evidence* and *being different from the negligent ‘average consumer’*. In this way, participants present themselves as being genuinely worried and suggest their concerns to be the result of above average interest, knowledge and expertise in the domain of good taste that allows them to recognise this potential problem earlier than the average person. Hence, this ability to recognize the potential problems related to good taste in an earlier phase than everyone else constructs participants as potentially more trustworthy than the ‘average consumer’ who might not share these worries by being unable to notice the problem.

#### **4.1.4. Summary of the discussion on *good taste***

Taken together, analysing the way participants talked about *good taste* resulted in some interesting observations. First, participants construct good taste as a legitimate topic for discussion by presenting its disappearance as actually taking place, while constructing its (un)desirability as not yet decided upon and (according to participants) potentially detrimental. Simultaneously, this depicts participants concerns as plausible and based upon ‘evidence’. Second, participants construct industry as consciously allowing good taste to disappear from food products by prioritizing maximum product sales and profit over safeguarding good taste. In addition, they present the average consumer as dissociated from themselves and neglecting good taste by omitting to pay attention to it and failing to notice it. These ‘average consumers’ are suggested to prioritize other things, like sugar and salt, a low price and convenience. In addition, participants present the interplay between industry and average consumers as contributing to the disappearance of good taste, thereby attributing responsibility and blame to these actors and implicitly denying this themselves. Third, by constructing an identity as ‘concerned advocates of good taste’ participants depict themselves as genuinely worried and able to recognize problems related to good taste in a more early phase than the average person. Hence, their concerns appear legitimately requiring attention as they are based upon participants above average involvement, expertise and knowledge about good taste that allows them to notice its problematic nature.

## 4.2. Discussing the ‘soft’ impact *naturalness*

Based on the data obtained from the discussion on *naturalness and authenticity*, it will now be explained how participants construct naturalness as a commonly voiced concern whose exact meaning remains unclear and undefined. Moreover, attention will be given to the way participants’ present themselves as consumers with a comprehensive and intangible – but therefore not less sincere and legitimate – desire for naturalness, while presenting industry as only superficially responding to this desire and disregarding the sincere and deeply rooted feelings consumers attach to the desire for naturalness.

### 4.2.1. Constructing the public’s request for naturalness as generally accepted as existing

When looking at the way participants claim knowledge about naturalness, it can be observed that they take responsibility for claims presenting this desire as generally voiced among the public. Instead, participants display caution or restricting the validity of their claims when referring to the meaning of naturalness or possible ways this public desire should be dealt with. In this way, participants construct the desire for naturalness as a generally known concern that exists among the public, while presenting its meaning and the way it should be dealt with as remaining unclear and undecided.

An example of this pattern is Fragment 1, that shows how MAR<sub>1</sub> talks about the desire for naturalness as something that exists among the public, which is no longer feasible to produce. NGO<sub>1</sub> and MAR<sub>3</sub> respond to this claim.

#### Fragment 1 Naturalness

---

1 MAR<sub>1</sub>: En toch moeten we ons afvragen, ik (werp) even op wat meer stellingu:h aan, omdat ik het  
2 ook (0.3) altijd wat tegendraads vind.(0.8) E:hm, of we dat natuurlijk station gewoon niet,  
3 dat dit het laatste stuiptrekkinkje is van dat natuurlijk •station. Dat we allemaal een beetje  
4 echt en authentiek willen hebben.(.) Dat het er al la:ng niet meer in zit, >want het is< wat  
5 je: terecht zegt (inauthenciteit) .h, >dat dat station gewoon gepasseerd is.<  
6 NGO<sub>1</sub>: Maar •waarom zou dat zo •zijn dan, legt dat nou eens even [wat verder uit.]  
7 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [•Omdat, om- ] •omdat, u:h,  
8 (0.2) onze levensstijl zoveel anders •i:s, we hebben geen tijd om te •koken, geen tijd om  
9 rustig te •eten, daar wordt (allemaal) op •ingespeeld. (.) Ik ga niet ’t flauwe: grapje maken  
10 van de •wereldbevolking die naar 9 miljard •gaat. °We gooien toch al zoveel weg.° Maar ook dat  
11 is een teken dat we veel •weggooien. (.)  
12 MAR<sub>3</sub>: Waar staat die: hang naar authenticiteit dan (.) •voor, want (0.2)  
13 [het gevoel] het gevoel is er wel.  
14 MAR<sub>1</sub>: [na:ja ]  
15 MAR<sub>1</sub>:•Naja, °die° die staat wel ergens •voor. Dat we ons niet lekker in ons zelf u:h vinden zitten  
16 •ofzo, en dat we ergens teruggrijpen naar een romantisch •beeld wat wat een soort comfo:rt  
17 geeft, omdat we misschien de •nieuwe •wereld nog niet aan•kunnen. Ik probeer even wat u:h  
18 verdere [((*inaudible*))]

---

By referring to the desire of naturalness as “dat natuurlijk station” (line 2 and 3), MAR<sub>1</sub> constructs this desire as existing and observable as a result of using the demonstrative pronoun “dat” which implies the ability to point out the described desire in reality. Moreover, by using the words “station” and “het laatste stuiptrekkinkje” (line 3) MAR<sub>1</sub> also presents naturalness as something *temporal* that might be over soon, as both ‘stations’ and ‘convulsions’ imply transiency. Nevertheless, these words also represent real or existing phenomena, thereby constructing this apparent ‘temporal’ desire for

naturalness as almost over, but still existing and real at this particular moment. Furthermore, by stating “Dat we allemaal een beetje echt en authentiek willen hebben” (line 3-4) when he continues talking about the desire for naturalness, MAR<sub>1</sub> emphasizes its generally voiced character by suggesting it to be something that ‘everyone’ wants.

In the following turn, when NGO<sub>1</sub> states “Maar ↑waarom zou ... [wat verder uit]” (line 6), he urges MAR<sub>1</sub> to explain the underlying reasoning that made him conclude that naturalness is infeasible to produce and that this desire is almost over. In this way, NGO<sub>1</sub> challenges these constructions of naturalness by depicting them as not generally known and accepted and requiring additional explanation. MAR<sub>1</sub> responds to this challenge by emphasizing some lifestyle changes he suggests to take place and complicate the production of natural food.

Then, MAR<sub>3</sub> interrupts by stating “Waar staat die: hang naar authenticiteit dan (.).↓voor, want (0.2) [het gevoel] het gevoel is er wel.” (line 12-13). By posing this question MAR<sub>3</sub> achieves three things. First, he explicitly claims the desire for naturalness and authenticity to be existing by saying “het gevoel is er wel” and making use of the demonstrative pronoun “die” that constructs it as generally known and identifiable. Second, MAR<sub>3</sub> depicts the desire for naturalness as more deeply rooted than was suggested by MAR<sub>1</sub>. The words “willen hebben” (line 4) that are used by MAR<sub>1</sub> to refer to this desire imply more or less *superficial wants*, while the words “die: hang naar” (line 12) that are deployed (and emphasized) by MAR<sub>3</sub> suggest this desire as an *urge* coming from somewhere deep inside people. Third, this statement implicitly challenges the suggestion of MAR<sub>1</sub> that when natural food is no longer feasible to produce, this sufficiently accounts for claiming this desire to be over soon. That is, MAR<sub>3</sub> presents the desire for naturalness as existing, despite MAR<sub>1</sub>’s claim regarding its infeasibility. Then, in response to this question posed by MAR<sub>3</sub>, MAR<sub>1</sub> refers to some potential interpretations of the desire for naturalness when he states “↑Naja, °die° die ... wat u:h verdere ((*inaudible*))” (line 15-18). Throughout this statement, MAR<sub>1</sub> incorporates words like “ergens” (line 15), “ofzo” (line 16), “een soort” (line 16), “misschien” (line 17) and “ik probeer even wat u:h verdure” (line 17-18), thereby presenting his statement as less robust and reducing accountability for the general validity of his claims. He suggests uncertainty and caution to be essential components of both his answer and the interpretation/meaning of the desire for naturalness.

Taken together, although aspects like the feasibility, the temporality, the profundity and the meaning of the desire for naturalness appear to be under negotiation in this fragment, *the existence* of desire for naturalness as a commonly voiced concern among the public is not.

Likewise, throughout the discussion on naturalness and authenticity participants refer to the request for naturalness using words like “al dat soort verlangens naar natuurlijkheid”, “de vraag die er is naar natuurlijkheid” and “die natuurlijkheid”, which frequently incorporate demonstrative pronouns and are presented as detached from the speaker. In this way, participants present the desire for naturalness as generally known to exist among the public. It seems to exist ‘out there’ in reality, identifiable and ready to be pointed out.

To give another example, Fragment 2 shows how the facilitator proposes to discuss the statement made by MAR<sub>1</sub> earlier in the discussion regarding the infeasibility of the desire for naturalness.

### Fragment 2a Naturalness

7 M:maar misschien moeten we nog even terug •naar wat u: eerder zei. (.) U:h, namelijk, u:h,  
 8 die: dat die: natuurlijkheid, dat streven naar dat natuurlijke, ook juist wel hee:l schadelijk  
 9 kan zijn, dat verlangen naar natuurlijk voedsel. (.) Want dat is tuurlijk een prikkelende  
 10 stelling, waarvan ik me kan voorstellen dat niet iedereen dat u:h (0.2) meteen (0.2)  
 11 •onderschrijft of (0.2) •begrijpt  
 12 [... 9 lines omitted ...]

In this fragment, the facilitator refers to the desire for naturalness using terms like “die: natuurlijkheid” (line 8), “dat streven naar dat natuurlijke” (line 8), “dat verlangen naar natuurlijk voedsel” (line 9). He phrases these descriptions in the present tense in a way that disentangles them from himself as the observer of this phenomenon, thereby constructing the desire for naturalness as objectively existing ‘out there’ among the public. Moreover, by adding the demonstrative pronouns ‘die’ and ‘dat’, he emphasizes its status as something that can be identified, observed and pointed out. In addition, by omitting to give additional explanation about what he means with ‘the desire for naturalness’, the facilitator constructs this as a commonly known public request, which makes additional information or explanation superfluous.

In sum, by talking about the desire for naturalness as something that exists ‘out there’, that is ready to be pointed out and does not require additional explanation when referred to, participants construct this desire as commonly known to exist among the public. Also by incorporating caution and restricting the validity of their statements regarding the interpretation of the desire for naturalness, they construct its exact meaning as currently undecided and uncertain.

#### **4.2.2. Building an identity as a ‘consumer with a comprehensive and intangible, but therefore not less sincere, desire referred to as naturalness’**

Most participants portray themselves as a ‘consumer that desires naturalness’. The desire itself they present as a comprehensive, indefinite and vague concept, that covers a variety of aspirations and needs consumers might have with regard to food and attach to naturalness. These aspirations however do not need to be objectively linked to actual ‘natural food’. In this way, participants present themselves as a ‘consumer with a comprehensive and intangible, but therefore not less sincere, desire for naturalness’ thereby constructing consumers (including themselves) as in charge of defining ‘the public’s desire for naturalness’.

Fragment 2b starts directly after Fragment 2a and illustrates how MAR<sub>3</sub> constructs naturalness as a comprehensive and complex concept that needs to be interpret more broadly than a sole request for natural food. He does so in response to the suggestion of P<sub>1</sub> that people (at least she) might also desire to know *what is in their food* instead of actually requiring natural food.

#### **Fragment 2b Naturalness**

11 [... 11 lines omitted ...]  
 12 P<sub>1</sub>: Maar verlangen- (.) verlangen naar natuurlijk voedsel of verlangen we gewoon om te weten  
 13 wat er in ons voedsel zit, (0.3) want dat heb ik namelijk.  
 14 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Nee:, verlangen naar natuurlijk voedsel. (0.3) Dat is, ik vin, ‘k bedoel, >ik ben het met je  
 15 eens< (.) >iedereen zou moeten weten wat er in zit.<  
 16 P<sub>1</sub>: J(h)a.  
 17 MAR<sub>3</sub>: Het kan best wel eens zijn, van dat e::uhm, (0.9) de inleiding heeft ‘t ook u:h aangegeven,



18 want kijk, de .h de identificatie met ons voedsel dat levert ons als ge•middeld consument  
 19 steeds meer problemen op. (0.4) Heh, we weten niet meer precies wat we krijgen, u:h en om  
 20 daar toch greep op te krijgen, (0.3) uh grijpen we misschien wel naar zo'n heel groot (.)  
 21 begrip als natuurlijk. Terwijl, (zoals net mijn voorgangster beschreef), misschien niet  
 22 eens zo zeer over natuurlijk g•a•at, maar dat je gewoon wil weten wat er in zit.

When MAR<sub>3</sub> states “Het kan best ... er in zit.” (line 17-22), he confirms and elaborates on the suggestion made by P<sub>1</sub> that peoples might want to know what is in their food instead of actually desiring *natural* food. That is, MAR<sub>3</sub> portrays naturalness as a comprehensive umbrella concept that consumers can turn to in order to deal with other aspirations and needs they have concerning food. He starts by describing consumers – himself included, which is suggested by the words “ons” (line 18) and “we” (line 19 and 20) when referring to this group – as troubled by feelings of unfamiliarity with food and trying to get hold of what is in their food. By describing this attempt using words like “om daar toch greep op te krijgen” (line 19-20) and “grijpen we misschien wel naar zo'n heel groot (.) begrip als natuurlijk” (line 20-21), MAR<sub>3</sub> presents it as a somewhat frantic attempt to cope with these feelings in one way or another that makes people turn to a concept that is much bigger than – and potentially different from – ‘simply’ (“gewoon”, line 22) wanting to know what is in your food.

In addition, Fragment 3 shows how participants, by emphasizing personal interpretations of the concept ‘naturalness’, present themselves as consumers that attach a variety of aspirations – that might not objectively be linked to natural food – to the concept ‘naturalness’. This depicts naturalness as an extensive and vague, but therefore not less sincere, desire.

### Fragment 3 Naturalness

1 RES<sub>1</sub>: Dat ligt ook u(h)h (.) aan denk ik van waarom je u:h (0.2) natuurlijke dingen •koopt heh.  
 2 Als ik naar m'n eigen koelkast kijk, (0.4) uh ik denk dat als ik dingen koop met natuurlijk  
 3 erop, dan denk ik aan lekkerder. (0.4) Lekkerder dan (0.4) waar dat niet op staat, •heh,  
 4 dus uh, lekkere karnemelk, lekkere (0.3) °nou ja°, boter, u:h-. Dus •dat is voor mij dan  
 5 heel belangrijk. (0.7) Ik denk u:h smaak >en en en en< natuurlijk, lopen bij mij (.) bij mij  
 6 na vaak door el•kaa:r. En of dat nou (0.2) ik denk (.) ik weet ook wel dat dat in overmate  
 7 nie •klopt, maar daar daar voel ik me niet door •geremd, om toch lekker te •kopen. (1.3)  
 8 Heh, dus dus >'t is denk ik niet alleen .h dat je als consument< (0.2) dan (.) aan dat hele  
 9 stelsel van van u:h van u:h, als je denkt van nou als ik natuurlijk •koop, dan >red ik de  
 10 •wereld•bevolking, of juist niet, of wat dan ook<, .h >ik denk niet dat dat<((inaudible))  
 11 [... 20 lines omitted ...]  
 31 RES<sub>2</sub>: Ik heb bij natuurlijk een heel andere: •associatie. (.) Ik denk veel meer aan .h u:h lokaa:l,  
 32 u:h seizoensgebo:nde:h, dierenwelzij:n, veel meer dat soort dingen dan lekker. Lekker is  
 33 voor mij eigenlijk, mja:h, (0.3) zit in een heel andere •hoek ofzo.  
 34 FO<sub>2</sub>: °Zou je ook nog even je-°  
 35 RES<sub>2</sub>: Ja, >((participants says name)), ik ben ook filosofe<. (1.1) Ja, dus u:h (0.7) ja •lek•ker,  
 36 lekker (0.4) lekker is voor mij eigenlijk nooit een u:h, ik >ben natuurlijk zelf ook wel  
 37 geïnteresseerd in< .h u:hm NATUURLIJK, •maa:r dan veel mee:r inderdaad in een andere,  
 38 op een andere manier •natuurlijk, veel mee:r, u:h (0.5) letterlijk natuur (0.3) lijk.  
 39 [... 12 lines omitted ...]  
 51 NGO<sub>3</sub>: Maar dat is wat ik ook, ik u:h, mijn naam is Jossie Smeeds en ik werk voor de Youth  
 52 Food Movement. .h Volgens •mij is dat ook zo'n hele moeilijkheid in dit soort discussies  
 53 >dat het bijvoorbeeld< het begrip natuurlijk .h of biologisch, of duurzaam, dat dat veel  
 54 meer gaat over a:l die verschillende associaties, die je ook weer vanuit je •afkomst, maar  
 55 ook vanuit of (0.2) je meer weet over •techniek of over lekker •voedsel, dat die associaties

56 dat dat het daar over gaat en dat die zo verschillen, (0.8) dat (.) dus (.) ja (.) Die  
57 termen zijn zo weinig nog maar •waard •daardoor. (0.6) Want op dit moment wat een waardige  
58 term is, is een term die met feiten is bewezen. Dus daar zit een soort van (0.9)  
59 tegenstelling in.

---

In the first statement RES<sub>1</sub> presents herself as a consumer that attaches particular aspirations or needs to the concept of naturalness, which she considers essential for the interpretation of this desire. She deploys the lay strategy ‘seeing for oneself’ to suggest that this knowledge about herself might be more widely applicable and potentially even true for consumers in general (Myers, 2004). RES<sub>1</sub> starts her personal example by explaining her motivations for buying products that have the word ‘natural’ written on it, when she states “Als ik naar ... vaak door el↑kaa:r” (line 2-6). She phrases these motivations in first person and also stresses words like “my own” (line 2) and “for me” (line 4). Moreover, RES<sub>1</sub> incorporates examples of food products she suggests having bought for this reason, thereby adding detail to her story, which makes it appear more trustworthy and real (Potter, 1996). Then, in the next line RES<sub>1</sub> states “En of dat ... lekker te ↑kopen.” (line 6-7), which counters the potential interpretation that RES<sub>1</sub> may be *unaware* that her reasons for buying food products that have ‘natural’ written on it are *not* objectively linked to actual ‘natural food’. By countering this, RES<sub>1</sub> presents these reasons as still motivating her to request ‘natural food’, despite being aware that these reasons are primarily personal associations she attaches to naturalness that do not need to be in line with reality. In doing so, RES<sub>1</sub> depicts the associations she attaches to ‘naturalness’ as more important to her than any objective definition of the word ‘natural’, thereby suggesting to have a personal ‘superior’ definition/interpretation of *her* desire for naturalness.

Subsequently, RES<sub>1</sub> tries to upgrade this personal example by suggesting it to be potentially more widely applicable: “Heh, dus dus ... niet dat dat<” (line 8-10). In this way, RES<sub>1</sub> constructs consumers as having their own thoughts and aspirations they consider to be important and attach to the desire for naturalness. That is, the word “dus” (line 8) constructs her statement as a conclusion based upon her previous reasoning, the words “ik denk” (line 8 and 10) restrict its validity to *her opinion* and the change of footing (instead of “I” and “me” RES<sub>1</sub> starts referring to a generalised “you” and “consumers”) suggests this statement to be representative for consumers in general.

Next, by saying “Ik heb bij ... letterlijk natuur (0.3) lijk” (line 31-38) RES<sub>2</sub> explicitly states that she does *not* associate ‘natural food’ with ‘good tasting food’ as was mentioned by RES<sub>1</sub>. Nevertheless, RES<sub>2</sub> still presents herself as a consumer that has particular ideas and aspirations she considers important and attaches to ‘naturalness’, thus still confirming the suggestion made by RES<sub>1</sub> that personal thoughts and aspirations that consumers attach to ‘naturalness’ are important for the meaning and interpretation of this desire.

Subsequently, NGO<sub>3</sub> adds “Maar dat is ... van (0.9) tegenstelling in.” (line 51-59), thereby confirming and explicating the construction of both RES<sub>1</sub> and RES<sub>2</sub> that the associations consumers attach to naturalness are an essential part of its meaning. That is, by stressing the word “dat” when saying “Volgens ↑mij is ... dit soort discussies” (line 52), NGO<sub>3</sub> refers back to the reasoning of RES<sub>1</sub> and RES<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, by continuing with the words “>dat het bijvoorbeeld< ... die verschillende associaties” (line 53-54) she explicates this construction.

In addition, NGO<sub>3</sub> also problematizes the suggested *importance of associations* by suggesting this to be “zo’n hele moeilijkheid in dit soort discussies” (line 52) and contrasting it with the current practice of

defining concepts on the basis of hard facts (“Want op dit ... van (0.9) tegenstelling in”, line 57-59). Initially, NGO<sub>3</sub> restricts the validity of this claimed problem/contrast by explicitly referring to it as her *personal belief* (“Volgens ↑mij”, line 52). Later on, when giving a more elaborate explanation why this situation is generally existing and problematic (“>dat het bijvoorbeeld< ... van (0.9) tegenstelling in”, line 53-59), she disentangles herself from her description, thereby presenting it as factual and objective (Potter, 1996).

Taken together, RES<sub>1</sub> and RES<sub>2</sub> construct aspirations consumers attach to naturalness as important for its meaning, by presenting themselves as consumers who have particular associations with naturalness themselves which they consider to be an essential part of *their* desire for naturalness. Moreover, NGO<sub>3</sub> confirms as well as generalised this construction when she explicates it and problematizes it. In this way, participants present the associations that consumers attach to naturalness as important to take into account when trying to define, or deal with, this public request.

While the previous fragments showed how participants depicted consumers’ associations attached to naturalness as an essential part of its meaning, Fragment 4 (that takes place 4 minutes after Fragment 3) illustrates how the two representatives of the food industry challenge this notion. That is, FO<sub>1</sub> and FO<sub>2</sub> emphasize the importance of consensus and agreed upon definitions for grasping the meaning of naturalness. Subsequently, this suggestion is challenged by RES<sub>1</sub> causing ‘the importance of associations versus straightforward definitions’ to become the subject of negotiation in Fragment 4. To understand how this negotiation takes place, the successive turns of participants will be analysed one by one.

#### Fragment 4 Naturalness

---

1 FO<sub>1</sub>: Ja maar (0.3) kijk, ik zie dus uh, biologisch die definitie zoals die vandaag is, is gewoon  
2 een een piketpaaltje. En het kan best zijn dat dat over vijf jaar de voortschrijding inzet  
3 dat het piketpaaltje naar links of naar rechts toe gaat. Maar je hebt in ieder geval iets,  
4 als we over •biologisch praten, (0.2) dan weten we waar we het over •hebben. Als we over  
5 •natuurlijk praten, (0.5) •sorry, dan hebben we met z'n allen een mening, (0.9) •maar we  
6 weten niet waar het over gaat.  
7 [... 8 lines omitted ...]

15 RES<sub>1</sub>: [Tege]lijkertijd komen dr ook wel een paar hele con•crete dingen van wat er dan (0.3)  
16 natuurlijk, en wat we onder de-, die noemer u:h laten vallen. E:h heh, dat dat het lokaal,  
17 uh •heh, zo dicht mogelijk bij uh de producent u:h of uh •heh, dat de >afstand tussen  
18 producent en consument zo klein mogelijk moet zijn<, .h dat 't u:h lekker moet zijn, dat  
19 we [((inaudible)) ]

20 FO<sub>2</sub>: [Ja, maar daar zijn we het] •niet over eens [he:h. (Het het is] meer van de ene vindt=  
21 RES<sub>1</sub>: [Nee, dat klopt ]

22 FO<sub>2</sub>: = dit en de ander vindt dat). [Het is •niet] dat we zeggen van dat vinden wij.  
23 RES<sub>1</sub>: [Ja(h), jaha.]

24 [... 5 lines omitted ...]

29 RES<sub>1</sub>: En ik denk •misschien is het wel precies de functie van het begrip •natuurlijkheid, dat  
30 dat ook een heleboel onder kan vallen, •heh, •maar u:h, dat wil nog niet zeggen dat dingen  
31 die we •wel kunnen benoemen, heh, dat dat ons ook niet verder kan helpen, •heh,  
32 bijvoorbeeld u:h, natuurlijk u:h uh is, (0.3) heh, ik heb het gevoel dat ik natuurlijker  
33 voedsel heb, .h wanneer ik u:h de dingen zelf kan aanpakken •bijvoorbeeld, en da-, heh,  
34 dus dat ik dat ik wee:t van-, en inderdaad die •bronnen misschien wel ken. Ter•wijl, .h uh  
35 niet alle transpara•ntie, heh, van alle producten stel dat ik precies weet wat erin zit,  
36 dan wordt daarmee dat product niet perse natuurlijker. Heh, dus, [u::h-]

---

In the first turn, FO<sub>1</sub> contrasts the label 'organic' with the concept 'naturalness' when he states "Ja maar (.) kijk, ... het over gaat." (line 1-6). He suggests the first to be defined and therefore 'known', while the latter remains 'unknown' as everyone only has an *opinion* on it. By stressing the words "knowing" (line 4), "an opinion" (line 5) and "not" (line 6) this difference between 'organic' and 'naturalness' is emphasized even more. In this way, FO<sub>1</sub> depicts *voicing opinions* about naturalness (or personal associations people attach to this concept) as equal to *not knowing what you are talking about*. Hence, he constructs voicing of 'opinions' as not beneficial for actually grasping the meaning of naturalness and determining how this public desire could best be dealt with, and thus – in contrast to developing objective and consensual definitions – not bringing the discussion forward.

In the second turn, RES<sub>1</sub> challenges this construction of FO<sub>1</sub> by stating "[Tege]lijkertijd komen dr ... zijn, dat we" (line 15-19). She emphasizes that even though mainly personal associations might have been voiced, some "very concrete things" (line 15) that participants consider to be part of the meaning of naturalness have been identified. Also, by listing these "very concrete things" RES<sub>1</sub> makes them appear even more concrete and manifest, and depicts them as a kind of 'achievements' of the discussion. This presents the discussion as moving forward despite its suggested unbeneficial emphasis on 'opinions'. Moreover, by referring to naturalness as "die noemer" (line 16), RES<sub>1</sub> depicts this concept as something extensive and indefinite that covers more than its objective or literal definition.

In the next turn, FO<sub>2</sub> challenges RES<sub>1</sub>'s construction that 'voicing opinions and associations is useful for grasping the meaning of naturalness' when she states "Ja, maar daar ... dat vinden wij" (line 20-22). FO<sub>2</sub> constructs her statements as in disagreement with RES<sub>1</sub> by starting with the words "Ja, maar" (line 20). Then, she stresses that these "very concrete things" RES<sub>1</sub> presents as indicating that the discussion is moving forward and revealing aspects of the meaning of naturalness, still only represent *private opinions* and thus do not equal consensus or an objective definition of naturalness. In this way, FO<sub>2</sub> implicitly suggests that 'associations' or 'opinions' are different from (and inferior to) consensus and objective definitions when trying to grasp the meaning of naturalness.

Lastly, RES<sub>1</sub> resists this challenge of FO<sub>2</sub> by saying "En ik denk ... verder kan helpen" (line 29-31), which explicitly re-emphasizes that exactly these *opinions* and *associations* are an essential part of the meaning of naturalness according RES<sub>1</sub>. That is, she suggests that attaching a range of aspirations and thoughts to naturalness might potentially even be its "exact function" (line 29), even if these associations are not in accordance with an objective definition of 'natural food' ("Ter↓wijn, .h uh niet ... Heh, dus [u::h-]", line 34-36). In this way, RES<sub>1</sub> counters the potential interpretation that she is unaware that the "very concrete things" she mentioned are *only opinions*, and simultaneously depicts these opinions as potentially essential for the meaning consumers attach to the desire for naturalness and therefore still bringing the discussion forward.

In sum, most participants constructed *naturalness* as a comprehensive and vague, but therefore not less sincere and legitimate, umbrella concept that represents other aspirations and desires people have with regard to food as well. Participants achieved this construction by presenting themselves as consumers that desire naturalness and attach a variety of aspirations and needs to this concept. Also, they explicitly referred to the importance of associations attached to naturalness and negotiated this suggested importance in interaction. In this way, participants depicted associations and aspirations

they as consumers attach to naturalness as an essential part of its meaning that definitely needs to be taken into account when trying to define or deal with this public request.

#### 4.2.3. Constructing industry as inadequately responding to the request for naturalness

When talking about the way industry responds to the desire for naturalness, participants present this as inadequate and disregarding the sincere and deeply rooted feelings consumers attach to, and give voice through, their request for naturalness (see also section 4.2.2.). Instead, industry is suggested to prioritize maximum profit and product sale and generating superficial or ‘fake naturalness’.

An example of this construction is Fragment 5 that shows the facilitator when he refers back to an earlier statement made by MAR<sub>1</sub> about that producing natural food is currently infeasible (“daar hebt u zeker een punt”, line 5). The facilitator problematizes this notion by emphasizing that infeasibility does not take away any of the underlying aspirations and needs consumers attach to naturalness.

#### Fragment 5 Naturalness

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1 F: [ ... 4 lines omitted ...]

5 Ik denk daar hebt u: zeker een punt, maar •vervolgens heb je natuurlijk een heleboel van  
6 die .h idea:len over voedsel, die •daarmee nog niet weggeredeneerd zijn. Ik uh, denk dat u  
7 dat ook niet zou (.)•doen.

8 MAR<sub>1</sub>:>Nee, nee, nee<, dat, die frictie die voel ik wel (0.7) u:hm (0.9) en daarom wil ik die  
9 frictievoering, kom zelf uit de: •marketing en ik, en nu op die manier, nog echter, nu nog  
10 verser, dat ken ik allemaal wel dat •spel, (0.2) speelt daar natuurlijk op •in.

11 F: Ja.

12 MAR<sub>1</sub>: Om die frictie, die cognitieve dissonantie •op te lossen. (0.5) Want we •weten wel dat het  
13 eigenlijk (0.8) gewoon uit de fabriek komt, (0.3) maar we zetten erin met echte pinda's.  
14 (0.8) zetten we dr op. En dan heb je (dr nog één) van mwa:h oké: °weet je°. (1.0) Maar het  
15 is ons langzaam toch volgens ••mij, °ik bedoel°, ik denk niet dat het een een samenzwering  
16 is of °(begrijp me niet ve-)°, maar een •langzame •voorbereiding op een andere wereld die  
17 komen gaat, waar dit •gewoon, net zoals huizen, auto's, fietsen, we gaan ook niet met  
18 paard en wagen meer.

---

By stating “Nee, nee, nee, ... we dr op.” (line 8-14) MAR<sub>1</sub> confirms the suggestion that the infeasibility to produce ‘natural food’ does not take away the underlying needs attached to naturalness, while also presenting himself as *aware off* and *willing to acknowledge* this problem (“frictie”, line 12). In addition, MAR<sub>1</sub> also constructs the attempt of industry to deal with consumers’ underlying aspirations as strategic and superficial. First, by referring to this attempt as “that game” (line 10) and voicing hypothetical examples like “nu op die manier, nog echter, nu nog verser” (line 9-10), MAR<sub>1</sub> emphasizes its strategic, short term and inauthentic character. Second, by contrasting ‘products that are produced in a factory’ with ‘products that contain claims like *with real peanuts*’ when he states “Want we ↓weten ... we dr op.” (line 12-14), MAR<sub>1</sub> portrays industry as manufacturing *written* or *fake* naturalness and trying to fool consumers into believing that their products are actually natural. Then, by referring to himself as “kom zelf uit de: ↓marketing” (line 9), MAR<sub>1</sub> emphasizes his identity as ‘a marketer’ which evokes particular knowledge entitlements that suggest him to be knowledgeable about the way marketing and the food industry respond to consumer desires and try to boost product

sales and profits (Potter, 1996). This depicts MAR<sub>1</sub> as informed and familiar with the practices he just referred to, making his statements appear more trustworthy and plausible.

Subsequently, by stating “denk niet dat het een samenzwering is” (line 15-16) MAR<sub>1</sub> counters the potential interpretation that he tries to accuse industry of conspiracy or malicious acts, while still holding on to the construction that industry neither creates actual natural food nor adequately responds to the request for naturalness and the underlying aspirations consumers attach to it.

Fragment 6, that takes place one minute after Fragment 5, also shows how participants constructed industry as disregarding the deeply rooted feelings consumers attach to naturalness. In this fragment, NGO<sub>4</sub> refers back to the creation of ‘fake naturalness’ as suggested by MAR<sub>1</sub> in Fragment 5.

### Fragment 6 Naturalness

---

1 NGO<sub>4</sub>:<sup>o</sup>Ja ik denk<sup>o</sup>, wat ik zo apart vindt, is dat heel veel, zegmaar dit (0.5) u:h als je op deze  
2 manier zegmaar (.) voor mijn beleving als een marketing antwoord geeft op een: vraag die  
3 er is voor natuurlijkheid en authenticiteit, (0.3) ik denk dat dat juist het probleem is dat  
4 dat is korte termij:n en op gegeven moment voelen mensen zich gefopt en uh naja, zijn ze  
5 op een gegeven moment .h een beetje klaa:r met die hele industrie, .h en, ik denk ook dat  
6 het een 't begin is van een nieuw tijdperk, maar alleen zie ik dat tijdperk tegenovergesteld  
7 dan dat u dat schetst.

---

In this statement, NGO<sub>4</sub> presents the way industry is suggested to respond to the desire for naturalness as being a typical example of how marketing operates by stating “als een marketing antwoord geeft” (line 2) and stressing the word ‘marketing’. In this way, NGO<sub>4</sub> depicts the response of industry as strategic, focussed on self-interest and maximizing product sale and profit, as these are characteristics that are typically associated with marketing. Moreover, NGO<sub>4</sub> emphasizes that the main problem of this way of responding to the desire for naturalness is that it is focussed on the “short term” (line 4), causing consumers to feel fooled and lose their faith in industry at a certain point in time (“op een gegeven ... die hele industrie”, line 5). Hence, this portrays industry’s response as superficial and disregarding the sincere and deeply rooted feelings consumers attach to the request for naturalness and therefore according to NGO<sub>4</sub> inadequately dealing with this public desire.

Lastly, Fragment 7 shows how NGO<sub>5</sub> constructs her personal thoughts and worries evoked by written claims about naturalness, which allows her to present ‘naturalness as produced by industry’ as worrisome and instrumental.

### Fragment 7 Naturalness

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1 NGO<sub>5</sub>: Ja •eigenlijk is het natuurlijk heel gek, >ik werk voor de consumentenbond, ((*participant*  
2 *says name*))<, dus ik (.) bekijk eigenlijk dagelijks alle etiketten. .h En ik kom hon-honderd  
3 keer dit soort dingen tegen. Eigenlijk is het bij mij zelf zo, dat ik, op het moment dat ik  
4 het woord natuurlijk zie, dat ik al denk 'ah, daar is iets aan de •ha:nd'.  
5 [Zo had ik laatst, ] zo had ik laa:tst=  
6 NGO<sub>1</sub>?: [Ja, (wordt niet [vertelt) ]]  
7 Male?: [((*inaudible*))]  
8 NGO<sub>5</sub>: =een Rivella, een soort dra:nkje, en daar staat dan op 'met natuurlijke ingrediënten'.  
9 ((*Some participants burst out laughing and a man says 'Yes, yes, yes, yes'*)) En dan

---

10 •betekent dat met, of-, er zitten ook kunstmatige ingrediënten in. (0.4) Dus, dat is ook  
 11 iets wat aan de hand is we:l, misschien maar voor een kleine, kleine groep, maar het is  
 12 ook zo'n moment dat er (0.2) iets op staat, dat het nodig is om zo'n woord te gebruiken,  
 13 [of] 'eerlijk' of 'oorspronkelijk'.  
 14 MAR<sub>1</sub>?: [ja]  
 15 MAR<sub>1</sub>?: Good point, ja.  
 16 NGO<sub>5</sub>: [Dan ]  
 17 FO<sub>2</sub>: [Maar] was er iets aan de hand? [Want (heh wat het seh-)]  
 18 NGO<sub>5</sub>: [Dan •wil er dus iets- ] dan daar-uh dan dan, krijg ik  
 19 dat wantrouwen weer uh-. Dus eigenlijk want, als je kijkt naar al die onbewerkte  
 20 producten die mensen •dan, (0.5) tenminste ik zelf in ieder geval wel meer met natuurlijk  
 21 associeer, daar nooit iets op. Dat is, daar staat gewoon niet het woord natuurlijk op of  
 22 oorspronkelijk.

---

NGO<sub>5</sub> starts by referring to her deployment at the “consumentenbond” and stating “dus ik (.) bekijk ... soort dingen tegen” (line 2-3) thereby emphasizing her professional experience with food labels and consumer interests. This constructs NGO<sub>5</sub> as an expert in these fields and suggests her to be entitled to have knowledge about these fields and being capable of assessing the trustworthiness of written claims (Potter, 1996). Then, instead of suggesting that her knowledge and expertise made her trust written claims like ‘naturalness’, NGO<sub>5</sub> emphasizes her suspicion of such claims by referring to her thoughts when she notices words like ‘natural’ on food labels (“‘ah, daar is iets aan de ↓ha:nd””, line 4) as well as suggesting such claims to be *used for a reason* (“dat er (0.2) iets op staat, dat het nodig is om zo’n woord te gebruiken”, line 12). Moreover, by adding an example of a specific food product and explaining her reasons for feeling worried, NGO<sub>5</sub> presents her concerns as plausible and based on rational thinking (“Zo had ik laatst ... kunstmatige ingrediënten in”, line 5-10). She reinforces this construction by phrasing the part “en daar staat ... 'eerlijk' of 'oorspronkelijk” (line 8- 13) in a grammatical format that deletes herself from this description and presents it as factual and existing ‘out there’ independent of her interference (Potter, 1996). As a result, NGO<sub>5</sub> depicts ‘naturalness as created by industry’ as worrisome and instrumental and suggests it to be aimed at hiding something and fooling consumers into believing that everything is just fine.

Subsequently, NGO<sub>5</sub> reaffirms this construction by adding a counter-example when she states “[Dan ↑wil er ... op of oorspronkelijk” (line 18-22). That is, NGO<sub>5</sub> points out that “unprocessed products” (line 19-20) that “people” (line 20) – and “at least she herself” (line 20) – associate with ‘actual natural food’ never contain the written claim ‘natural’. This implicitly suggests that food products that do contain this written claim, are different from ‘truly’ natural food and therefore worrisome.

In sum, participants emphasized constructions of industry’s attempt to respond to the public’s request for naturalness as superficial, strategic, short term- and marketing focussed, worrisome and leading to the creation of ‘written’ or ‘fake’ naturalness. In this way, industry was depicted as inadequately responding to this public request by prioritizing maximum product sale and profit and disregarding the sincere and deeply rooted feelings consumers attach to this concept.

#### 4.2.4. Summary of the discussion on *naturalness and authenticity*

Taken together, analysing the way participants talked about *naturalness* provided some interesting observations. First, participants construct the desire for naturalness as generally known to exist among

the public, while presenting its meaning as unknown and undecided. Second, participants present themselves as consumers that desire naturalness. This desire participants depict as a comprehensive and vague umbrella concept, that they use to give voice to a range of aspirations and needs they have with regard to food and attach to naturalness. Doing so, does not make the public's request for naturalness appear less legitimate and sincere, it mainly constructs these consumer aspirations and interpretations of naturalness as an essential part of its meaning. Hence, this suggests that these consumer interpretations need to be taken into account when trying to define and adequately deal with this public request in a public debate. Third, participants present industry as inadequately responding to the request for naturalness in a superficial, strategic and marketing oriented way that creates 'fake' naturalness and disregards the sincere and deeply rooted feeling consumers attach to this desire.

Moreover, when combining these observations, participants seem to suggest that a major part of the problems related to naturalness can be traced back to the notion that industry treats this as a superficial demand with a – although not yet decided – objective and clear-cut definition, while consumers use this desire to give voice to a range of aspirations and needs that they have with regard to food. Hence, while both groups might be referring to the same generally accepted public request, they appear to be talking about something quite different.



## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Food technologists continue to develop innovative food technologies to deal with the challenges currently faced by the food industry (Blue, 2010; Godfray et al., 2010; Walstra and Van Boekel, 2006). Yet these innovations are far from being easily and unconditionally accepted by the public, which obstructs smooth integration into society and evokes frustration among both experts and the public (Blue, 2010; Lassen, Madsen and Sandøe, 2002; Marris, 2001). As a result, public involvement and public debate in food technology development have become more important and more prevalent (Chopyak and Levesque, 2002; Leeuwis, 2004; Van Mierlo, Arkesteijn and Leeuwis, 2010). Nevertheless, simply carrying out such public-expert encounters and enabling scientists and consumers to talk to each other, is insufficient to assure a fruitful public dialogue that actually seizes the essence of everyone's concerns. As Wynne (2006) puts it: 'one can hit the notes, while still missing to hear the music' (free reproduction of article title; Wynne, 2006). It is argued that this mainly happens to the 'difficult to pin down'-public concerns that are treated as 'soft' and warded off the negotiation agenda. A more fruitful and responsive public dialogue about food technology development should therefore be designed as to explicitly incorporate these 'soft impacts' of food technology (Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012; Veen et al., 2012). This should be done in a way that actually allows to grasp the meaning of these issues and deals with them as a public, and then it's time to start talking.

The objective of this study was to show how this could be done with regard to *good taste* and *naturalness* in order to provide recommendations to policymakers that organise and/or facilitate such public-expert encounters. The study adopted a discursive psychological perspective and looked at the interactional business performed by participants through their talk during discussions on *good taste* and *naturalness*. In this way the main research question was answered: **'(How) do participants discuss 'soft impacts' of food technology as legitimate issues for public consideration and what is achieved by the deployed strategies?'**. In addition, attention was given to knowledge claims: *'(How) do participants construct knowledge about the 'soft' impacts that are central in their discussion and what is achieved by that?'*, and identity constructions: *'(How) are identities build up by participants during the discussion of 'soft' impacts and what is the interactional effect of these constructions?'*.

### 5.1. Main observations

#### 5.1.1. Constructing *good taste* and *naturalness* as legitimate topics for public debate

Although in different ways, participants of both discussions succeeded to construct either *good taste* or *naturalness* as a legitimate topic for public consideration. To construct *good taste* as a legitimate topic for public debate, participants presented its disappearance as *actually occurring* and *potentially detrimental*. The construction of 'actually occurring' was achieved by pointing out signals and processes that appeared to be the 'evidence' for the disappearance of 'good taste'. This 'evidence' participants talked about in a grammatical format that suggested general observability and deleted themselves from their description, thereby suggesting objectivity and 'out-there-ness' (Potter, 1996). To construct the disappearance of good taste as 'potentially detrimental' participants presented their knowledge claims about whether this phenomenon should be considered detrimental as subjective

statements (Wiggins and Potter, 2003). That is, they constructed these statements as their opinion, used a question format and/or incorporated caution in their claims.

To construct the desire for *naturalness* as a legitimate topic for public debate, participants presented it as *a generally known desire that exists among the public that is inadequately responded to by industry*. To present the desire for naturalness as ‘generally known and existing among the public’, participants referred to it using demonstrative pronouns, often without giving additional information (e.g. “die natuurlijkheid”). Doing so depicted the *existence* of naturalness as a public concern to be common knowledge as well as suggested it to be ready to be pointed out among the public. Nevertheless, when participants were asked to make statements about the *meaning* of the desire for naturalness they displayed caution in these claims. For example through restricting the validity of a claim or constructing it as subjective. In addition, to construct industry as ‘inadequately responding to naturalness’, participants emphasized the superficial, inauthentic and short-term character of industry’s response. They presented this as strategic and trying to fool consumers into buying ‘fake’ or ‘written’ naturalness.

### **5.1.2. Using identity constructions to account for knowledge of *good taste* and *naturalness***

Another major action participants performed through their talk was building a particular identity in relation to good taste or naturalness. These identity constructions implicitly reinforced the above described constructions of good taste and naturalness as legitimate topics for public debate by providing knowledge entitlements that accounted for the claimed knowledge about good taste or naturalness (Potter, 1996). As a result, these knowledge entitlements made participants’ claims appear more plausible and trustworthy (ibid).

In case of the discussion on *good taste*, participants were found to present themselves as an elite group of ‘*experienced and concerned advocates of good taste*’. They did so by emphasizing their above average knowledge and experience in the domain of ‘good taste’, as well as their ability to notice and point out signals and processes related to its disappearance. Moreover, participants emphasized their personal interest in the domain of ‘good taste’ and contrasted this with a construction of the average consumer as not paying attention to ‘good taste’. Subsequently, building this ‘superior’ identity with regard to *good taste* depicted participants as being able to notice its disappearance better and in an earlier phase than the average person can. Hence, this presented their concerns as based upon evidence and superior experience with *good taste*, which made their claims regarding *good taste* as a public concern (even though the negligent general public might think otherwise) appear plausible and worth considering.

In contrast, in the discussion on *naturalness* participants positioned themselves *within* the group of average consumers while building an identity as *a consumer with a comprehensive and intangible, but therefore not less sincere desire, referred to as naturalness*. Positioning themselves within the group of average consumers entitled participants to voice their personal interpretations of the desire for naturalness as *a consumer perspective* (Potter, 1996). Subsequently, participants could upgrade these personal interpretations and experiences by suggesting them to be *potentially applicable to consumers*

*in general* (Myers, 2004). In addition, in these personal – and potentially more widely applicable – statements about the interpretation of naturalness, participants presented naturalness as a *legitimate though comprehensive and vague umbrella concept*. They did so by emphasizing the importance of aspirations and needs consumers might have with regard to food, that do not need to be objectively linked to nature or naturalness, but that they attach to and give voice through this concept. As a result, consumers' interpretations and associations with naturalness appeared key to effectively deal with this public desire, rather than responding to it on the basis of a narrow or literal definition of the word 'naturalness'. In addition, this reinforced participants' construction of naturalness as a legitimate topic for public debate, on the basis of being a generally voiced public desire that is inadequately responded to by industry. That is, when a comprehensive public desire like naturalness is responded to in a superficial and strategic way, this is unlikely to address the deeply-rooted desires consumers are suggested to give voice through naturalness.

### **5.1.3. Presenting the current situation with regard to *good taste* or *naturalness* as ongoing through constructions industry and average consumers**

Lastly, participants in both discussions constructed industry as deliberately prioritizing maximum profit and product sale, rather than safeguarding good taste or adequately dealing with the public's request for naturalness. In addition, participants in the discussion of *good taste* also presented the average consumer as not paying attention to good taste and instead buying food products that are high in salt or sugar, easy to prepare or low in price. To achieve these constructions participants mostly made use of scripting (Edwards, 1994) and emphasized particular synonyms when referring to industry or consumers that underscore particular (negative) interpretations of their behaviour with regard to good taste or naturalness. Incorporated in these representations of industry and the consumer, there appears to be the implicit suggestion that the current situation with regard to good taste and naturalness is *ongoing*. It logically follows from (deliberate) choices and common behaviour of major actors involved. Hence, this depicts industry (and in case of good taste also the average consumer) as unlikely to change this situation, thereby allowing *good taste* to continue disappearing and *naturalness* continue being inadequately dealt with as long as no one else takes action.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

Although the scope of this study was inevitably limited to a select group of people that took part in specific discussions and further research to verify the results is needed, the observations still seem to indicate some implications for how good taste and naturalness might be discussed effectively. These implications will now be presented as they may comprise useful recommendations for how to effectively incorporate *good taste* and *naturalness* in the topical agenda of public debates.

### **5.2.1. Towards a fruitful public debate on *good taste***

'Taste' and 'taste evaluations' often get portrayed as subjective and private topics that are unaccountable and inaccessible for debate (Shapin, 2011). This also underlies why 'taste' tends to get treated as 'soft' in the public debate on food technologies, as taste evaluations cannot be discounted or undermined because of their private and subjective character (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress). As a result, taste evaluations are mentioned in the public debate and used to reject food products, but

they do not really become available for discussion (ibid). In contrast, the current study showed how participants of the *good taste-discussion* presented themselves as a knowledgeable elite group that pointed out that *good taste is actually disappearing*. Participants even effectively used this construction (combined with its depiction as *potentially detrimental*) to present the disappearance of good taste as a legitimate topic for public debate. Hence, this suggests that presenting the disappearance of good taste as not merely subjective and private, but rather presenting it as observable and ‘out there’, can foster making this ‘soft impact’ debatable. This depicts the disappearance of good taste as more ‘real’ and ‘tangible’ and suggests that everyone has independent access to this phenomenon and is therefore entitled to judge it (Heritage and Raymond, 2005). In line with this, a study of talk on an online food pleasure forum also found that people constructed themselves as a ‘gourmet’ that has access to and actually knows what good food *is*, instead of voicing subjective opinions. This allowed them to take ownership over taste and claim expertise and knowledge in this domain (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2006). Hence, it may be recommended to avoid portraying notions of good taste as subjective and private issues in a public debate, but rather construct them as tangible, concrete and observable in reality.

According to Shapin (2011), one way to specify and concretize a private and internally felt response like taste is to point out the objectively existing aspects of the object under scrutiny that evoked this aesthetic response. These aspects are available for everyone and can therefore be discussed (ibid). Thus, when discussing (good) taste, the aesthetic judgement itself might be private and subjective, but the aspects of the food product that elicit this response (e.g. particular flavours, textures, smells, etc.) are available for everyone and debatable. To some extent participants in the current study succeeded in presenting their concerns over good taste as tangible and concrete. However, they primarily focussed on its *disappearance* and presented this *disappearance* as actually existing and legitimately requiring public attention. Meanwhile, participants barely explicated what ‘good taste’ *is* (or aspects of good taste) and what they intended to achieve by safeguarding it. They seemed to legitimize *public debate* about the disappearance of good taste, but did not take the step to discuss *how this concern could effectively be dealt with in the food sector*. Therefore, to effectuate a public debate on good taste that renders concrete and executable options for dealing with good taste in the food sector, it may be recommended to explicitly focus on what ‘good taste’ *is* (or aspects of, and requirements for ‘good taste’), how it could be secured and advanced in the current food system and what is aimed to achieve by safeguarding it. In line with the above, this discussion should pay attention to concrete and identifiable aspects of good taste and processes related to it that can be pointed out, discussed and potentially implemented. This would allow a more fruitful public debate about good taste and potentially desirable processes, regulations or quality assurances that can be developed to safeguard and advance good taste.

In addition, the observation that participants presented themselves as a particularly knowledgeable and experienced elite group that is concerned about ‘good taste’, suggests that knowledge, expertise and awareness of (good) taste can be used to claim rights to judge good taste. Hence, it may be useful to ask some food- or taste experts (e.g. cooks, gourmets, molecular gastronomists etc.) to give presentations – preceding a public debate about good taste – about objective aspects of food products

that can affect tasting. This would provide participants of a public debate with some basic knowledge about how personal taste evaluations can be objectified, which may help them to pin down the aspects of a food product that make *them* appreciate or dislike its taste. This would assist people to explicate and concretise their taste evaluations, making these become available for public debate, thereby providing input for a discussion of concrete and executable options for safeguarding a desired level of 'good taste'.

### **5.2.2. Towards a fruitful public debate on *naturalness***

The observations of this study indicate that the desire for naturalness may function as a comprehensive umbrella concept that represents other aspirations and desires consumers have with regard to food and food production as well. Potentially, these interpretations and associations people attach to, and give voice through, naturalness might even be key for actually grasping the essence and function of this public request. If so, this indicates that a public debate on naturalness should bring together a representative group of 'ordinary consumers' and the central focus should be on *their interpretations of naturalness*. These interpretations should be acknowledged as essential elements of the meaning of naturalness, rather than limiting the scope of its definition to a narrow or literal interpretation of the word itself. Potentially, if naturalness indeed represents a comprehensive umbrella concept, actual 'natural food' might not even be what consumers are asking for when they demand naturalness, thus making it of importance that the production of 'natural food' does not become a goal on itself. Better would be to *use* this concept as a means to open up the discussion on what consumers are actually searching for when they refer to 'naturalness'. This *might* (also) be natural food, but that does not necessarily have to be the case.

In addition, the observations indicate that people may be inclined to construct statements about the meaning of naturalness as *subjective statements* or *incorporate caution* in these statements, rather than producing objective and general claims. Limiting the general validity of a statement in this way makes a statement appear less robust and certain, which reduces a speaker's accountability and responsibility for the general validity of a claim (Sneijder and Te Molder, 2005). Likewise, subjective claims also reduce the need for the listeners to agree with or respond to the voiced statement, thus leaving room for other opinions as well (Wiggins and Potter, 2003). Therefore, as constructions of subjectivity and caution can be deployed for a reason, it might have been the case that participants' subjective and cautious representations of claims regarding the meaning of naturalness were functional as well. For example, these constructions might have made it easier for participants to voice statements about the meaning of a complex concept like naturalness or reduced the chance that participants were held accountable or accused of lying. Hence, it may be recommended that when discussing people's associations and interpretations of naturalness in the public debate, people should be allowed to construct their statements as subjective and/or uncertain claims.

Nevertheless, this gathering of personal interpretations should only be a *first step* in the process of incorporating naturalness in the public debate. Since, in order to prevent naturalness from getting privatised and treated as 'soft' again, its meaning should be made available for *collective discussion* instead of being depicted as private and known (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Swierstra and Te

Molder, 2012). A *second step* might therefore be to ask participants of a public discussion on naturalness to start negotiating – on the basis of these gathered opinions – what ‘the common interpretation’ of the group about the meaning of naturalness might be. A way to structure such a negotiation and make it more concrete, could be to ask an independent facilitator to draw a Mind Map – in collaboration with the group – of the concept ‘naturalness’ that visualises the associations and interpretations initially voiced by the individual members in a graphical image (Budd, 2004). This Mind Map could be used as the starting point for further discussion about what *the group* considers essential elements of naturalness. Throughout this discussion it can be adjusted as to turn it into a representation of what the group jointly means with naturalness.

Although this may be an effective way to incorporate naturalness in the public debate, solely developing a common interpretation of naturalness without suggesting concrete and executable options for dealing with this request, still insufficiently addresses this public desire. Hence, to stimulate the explication of concrete and executable options for dealing with naturalness in current food production systems, additional steps need to be taken. For example, (although a bit beyond the scope of this research) a next step might be to ask a group of professionals (e.g. food technologists, food industry- and food marketing actors and policymakers) to look at the feasibility and potential negative consequences of putting aspirations and desires attached to naturalness into practice in the food production system. Subsequently, such information may be used as a starting point for a second public debate that brings together people from various parts of the food sector (e.g. food technology experts, food industry actors, policymakers and consumers). These people could jointly discuss what concrete and feasible implications the request for naturalness – including the identified aspirations and desires attached to this request – should have for the current food production system.

### **5.2.3. Implications for the public debate around food in general**

A general lesson that can be learnt from this thesis is that the meaning consumers attach to a (‘soft’) concern can deviate from an objective or literal interpretation of the word used to voice this concern. Yet, these concerns are still legitimate and ‘real’ in the minds of consumers, which makes it important to genuinely consider them on their own terms during product development. Also, it is recommended to incorporate *good taste* and *naturalness* in the public debate by first defining and concretizing their meanings collectively, and on the basis of this knowledge continue the debate on potential implications. This aims to foster a collective interpretation of what is being dealt with, which makes these ‘soft impacts’ more concrete and tangible and may allow a collective exploration of their potential implications. Yet, this is also likely to bring about a lengthy and intensive public discussion. Therefore, since both good taste and naturalness are central themes in the public debate around food technologies (and this recommendation may be valuable for dealing with other difficult to pin down ‘soft impacts’ as well) this has implications for the public debate as a whole. For example, it may be advisable to pay attention to optimal group sizes for discussing ‘soft impacts’ of food technology in the public sphere, as large groups make a discussion less interactive and reduce contributions of the individual members (Fay, Garrod and Carletta, 2000), while small groups are less representative for ‘the public’s opinion’. Potentially, multiple small-scale group discussions are most effective. In

addition, a skilful facilitator that assists the discussion in actually moving forward towards more concrete conceptions and solutions might also be helpful.

### 5.3. Strengths and limitations

Selecting these particular discussions for data analysis is a particular strong aspect of this study, as they provided very fruitful material for answering the research questions. First, both discussions focused on issues that were already identified to be central 'soft impacts' of food technology (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). Hence, observations and recommendations based on analysing these discussions would be particularly relevant for the domain of food technology development. Second, preceding the discussions participants were told about problems related to 'soft impacts' and they were asked to try to avoid such problems this time and instead discuss *good taste* and *naturalness* on the basis of accepting joint responsibility for dealing with 'soft impacts'. This increased the chance that participants would try to legitimize public debate about *good taste* and *naturalness* and make these 'soft impacts' negotiable. Revealing *how this could be done* was exactly the aim of this study. Third, studying group discussions allows participants to speak rather freely and unconstrained by questions. This increases the likelihood that participants voice their statements and concerns *on their own terms*, which is suggested to be crucial for actually understanding peoples' reactions to innovative food technologies (Veen et al., 2011). Fourth, collecting data of two different 'soft impacts' from a similar research setting and comparing the resulting observations shed light on some interesting differences in the way they were talked about. This also underscored the importance of tailoring the way a 'soft impact' is incorporated in the public debate to this particular 'soft impact' and how this is talked about and given meaning in everyday life.

Another strength of this study is the usage of discursive psychology as method for data analysis. That is, since actually understanding people's reactions to innovative (food) technologies requires considering these *on their own terms* and taking into account the interactional context in which they get voiced (Veen et al., 2011). Discursive psychology is considered successful in this (Te Molder, 2012b; Veen et al., 2011) and has therefore also been used repeatedly to study 'soft impacts' (Sneijder and Te Molder in progress; Stinesen, 2012; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012; Te Molder, 2012b; Veen et al., 2011; Veen et al., 2012). Likewise, it also showed useful in this study.

In contrast to the strengths mentioned, the way the discussions were chaired is expected to have weakened the findings. That is, both discussions started with a 30 minutes introduction given by the discussion facilitator that already contained a particular representation of *good taste* or *naturalness*. This is likely to have steered the way participants talked about *good taste* and *naturalness* and how they legitimized these 'soft impacts'. More specifically, in the introduction of *naturalness* emphasis was put on claims like 'natural' and 'pure' that are currently put on food labels, which might have encouraged participants to construct *naturalness* as an existing concern among the public. Likewise, preceding the discussion of *good taste* the facilitator pointed out a potential linkage between *good taste* and decency, elite groups and gourmets. This may have stimulated participants to present themselves as 'considerably experienced and knowledgeable in the domain of good taste' when voicing their concerns. In addition, throughout the discussions the facilitators contributed significantly,

especially in the discussion on *good taste*. Yet, as the facilitators also performed the role of chair of the discussions, their remarks are expected to have had impact on participants and the way they discussed *good taste* or *naturalness*. Hence, it would have been better when the discussions were facilitated by a more awaiting and non-directive facilitator.

Moreover, when looking at the kind of participants that joint the discussions it appears that food technologists and other food industry representatives were underrepresented. In contrast, participants that are deployed in the information-, marketing- or non-profit sector (the 'social' side) of the food industry were much higher represented. Therefore, since people draw upon their backgrounds and frames of reference when making sense of issues as well as discussing them (Orlikowski, and Gash, 1994), the predominance of the 'social perspective' on food technology is expected to have influenced the way *good taste* and *naturalness* were being constructed and discussed. Hence, it would be better when more food technologists would have taken part in these discussions and perhaps also some 'ordinary consumers' or policymakers, since this would have brought more diverse perspectives to the table.

In addition, since ordinary tape- and video-recorders were used and the discussions were conducted in large rooms with bad acoustics, the quality of the recordings was limited. This complicated transcription by causing more parts to be barely – or not – understandable. Moreover, the video-recordings of the discussion on *naturalness* only recorded 15 minutes of the in total 60 minutes of discussion. This made the identification of speakers more difficult and increased uncertainty with regard to who said what. Fortunately, most parts could still be transcribed and used for analysis, making this only a minor weakness of this research. Nevertheless, it would be advisable to use higher quality recorders next time or ideally even give participants small (hands free) microphone.

#### **5.4. Further research**

This study focussed on discussions of *good taste* and *naturalness* as two important 'soft impacts' of food technology. However, the differences between these discussions indicates the need to incorporate different 'soft impacts' in a different manner in the public debate. Therefore, additional research is needed to find out how other social, moral or political public concerns of food technology that are treated as 'soft' could best be incorporated in the public debate.

Moreover, *good taste* and *naturalness* appear to fulfil a twofold function in the public debate around food technologies. First, they tend to be voiced as important '*soft impacts*' of food technologies on their own (Stinesen, 2012; Swiersta and Te Molder, 2012) which was also the case in the discussions examined in this study. Second, *good taste* and *naturalness* can also emerge as *means to achieve another end*. This could be managing an identity of critical consumer or claiming knowledge entitlements that allow consumers to judge food products on the basis of something else then scientific and technical criteria for good food (Sneijder and Te Molder, in progress; Swierstra and Te Molder, 2012). Hence, it could be the case that trying to deal with *good taste* and *naturalness* as a 'soft impacts' on their own, this does not adequately address these issues when emerging in their other function. Perhaps, effectively incorporating concerns related to *good taste* or *naturalness* in the



public debate even impedes their usage by consumers to claim knowledge entitlements to judge food innovations based on these issues. Whether this is indeed the case, and how this could best be dealt with in the public sphere would be an interesting topic for further research.

Lastly, since in the discussions analysed for this study 'ordinary' consumers, policymakers, food technologists and other food industry actors were underrepresented, future research could look at discussions conducted among these groups or mixed groups as well. This could bring other perspectives on *good taste* and *naturalness* to the table and render other observations that can supplement the finding of this study.

## **5.5. Acknowledgements**

I herewith like to thank a few people that helped me during this thesis process. First, both my supervisors, Prof. dr. Hedwig te Molder and Prof. dr. Henk Schols, for their feedback, enthusiasm and confidence in me and this project. This definitely improved my work and also helped me to finish it. Second, I would like to thank Dr. Petra Sneijder and Dr. Dirk Haen for organizing and tape-recording the convention 'Zachte zorgen, harde gevolgen: een publieke agenda voor voedselinnovatie' and providing me with their recordings of the analysed discussions. Third, I like to thank Britt Stikvoort for her comments on an earlier draft of this report. Fourth, Tineke Huiskamp and Henrieke Lamers for our discussions and their comments regarding my conclusions and potential recommendations. Lastly, I like to thank Niels van Mossevelde for his help with the design of the cover page.

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## Appendix A

### *a simplified version of the Jefferson transcription method*

(Based on Jefferson Transcription System; Jefferson, 2004)

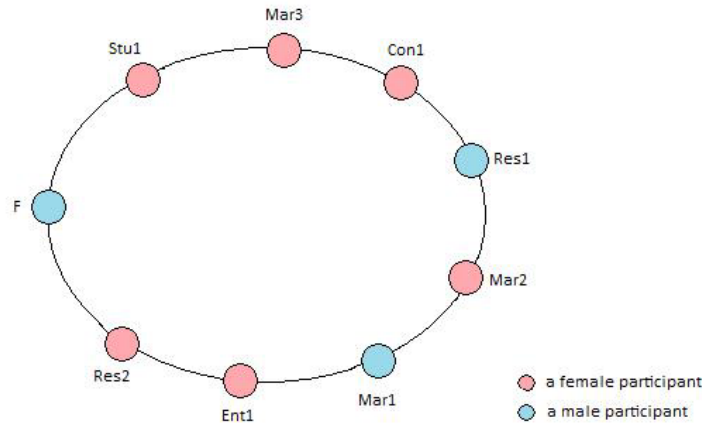
[ ]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech.
<u>Underscoring</u>	Underscoring signals vocal emphasis
CAPITALS	Capitals signal speech that is considerably louder (than the surrounding talk)
°quite speech°	Degree signs indicate speech that is quieter (than the surrounding talk)
*heheh*	Asterisks indicate a creaky vocal delivery
(0.4)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses in tenths of seconds
(.)	A dot in round brackets indicates a micro-pause, hearable but too short to measure (approximately a tenth of a second)
N(h)ee	Laughter within speech is signalled by ‘h’s in round brackets
:	Colons signal a prolongation of the preceding sound
↑↓	Arrows indicate a rise or fall in intonation
((laughter))	Double brackets (italicized) refer to transcriber’s descriptions of features or non-verbal aspects of the interaction
.hh	A dot preceding (a row of) ‘h’s indicates an inbreath (if the dot is placed behind the ‘h’s, it indicates an outbreath)
>text<	‘Greater than’ and ‘lesser than’ signs enclose speeded-up talk, (when occurring in reversed order, they mark slowed-down talk: <text>)

## Appendix B

### *schematic representation of discussion setting & detailed participants list*

#### The discussion on 'good taste'

##### DISCUSSION SETTING:



##### PARTICIPANTS:

###### **Participants working in the food marketing and communication sector**

- MAR<sub>1</sub> a man working at the innovation and marketing organisation the 'Food Agency'  
MAR<sub>2</sub> a female intern at 'Schuttelaar en Partners' which is a communication and advice organisation focussing on agriculture, food and health, technology and corporate social responsibility  
MAR<sub>3</sub> a woman working as a freelance marketer in the food sector

###### **Entrepreneur in food design**

- ENT<sub>1</sub> a woman that has her own organisation for 'strategic food design' and focuses on food packing as well as food development

###### **Researcher/philosopher**

- RES<sub>1</sub> a male philosopher/researcher that is interested in social transitions and has done research about 'soft impacts' of technological innovations  
RES<sub>2</sub> a female researcher that had organised the convention and only observed during the discussion

###### **Student**

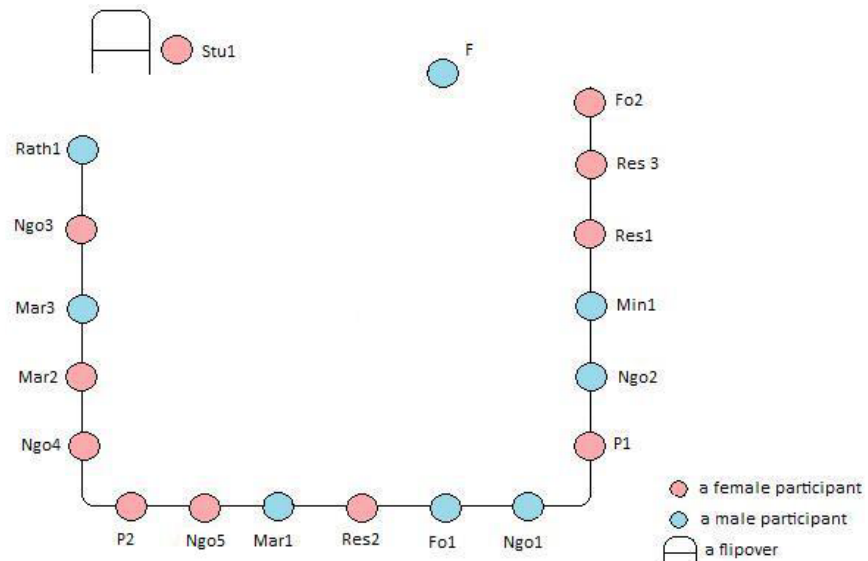
- STU<sub>1</sub> a female Master student Business- and Consumerstudies from Wageningen University

###### **Consumer**

- CON<sub>1</sub> a participant that is not professionally involved in the food sector, but joint because of personal interest

## The discussion on 'naturalness and authenticity'

### DISCUSSION SETTING:



### PARTICIPANTS:

#### Participants working in the food *marketing and communication* sector

- MAR<sub>1</sub> a man working at the innovation and marketing organisation the 'Food Agency'  
 MAR<sub>2</sub> a woman working at 'Schuttelaar en Partners' which is a communication and advice organisation focussing on agriculture, food and health, technology and corporate social responsibility  
 MAR<sub>3</sub> a male communication- and news-professional, that has a background in journalism and has his own communication agency

#### Participants working in the *food industry*

- FO<sub>1</sub> the director of CSM Bakery (male), one of the leading suppliers of bakery products  
 FO<sub>2</sub> a female food technologist that mainly focuses on food security

#### Participants working food related *NGO's*

- NGO<sub>1</sub> a man that works for 'Slow Food Netherlands'; an NGO that focuses on food in relation animal welfare, health, fair trade, sustainability, good/tasty food etc.  
 NGO<sub>2</sub> a man involved with the organisation of the Food Film Festival  
 NGO<sub>3</sub> a woman working for the 'Youth Food Movement', which is a youth network in the Netherlands linked to 'Slow Food'  
 NGO<sub>4</sub> a woman working for 'Stichting Voeding Leeft', with advocates the role of food as preventive medicine  
 NGO<sub>5</sub> a woman working for the Dutch consumer organisation 'De consumentenbond'

#### Researchers

- RES<sub>1</sub> a female social scientist that has done research about 'soft impacts'  
 RES<sub>2</sub> a female philosopher  
 RES<sub>3</sub> a female Master student Applied Communication Science from Wageningen University who only observed the discussion

#### Rathenau Institute

- RATH<sub>1</sub> a male 'senior researcher technology assessment' that works for the 'Rathenau Insitute' and looks at developments in biotechnology, genomics and synthetic biology

#### Participant working for 'InnovatieNetwerk'

- INN<sub>1</sub> a man working for 'InnovatieNetwerk'; an organisation that is created and financed by

the ministry of Economic Affairs, and researches/develops innovations for the domain of food, agriculture, agribusiness and nature

**Other participants**

- F affiliate professor on Journalistic Criticism of Art and Culture of Maastricht University and the University of Amsterdam, Maarten Doornman, who facilitated the discussion
- P<sub>1</sub> a female participant that did not introduced herself
- P<sub>2</sub> a female participant that did not introduced herself
- STU<sub>1</sub> a female Bachelor student Communication Sciences at Wageningen University who took part to assist the organisation of the convention