MSc Applied Communication Science

Master Thesis

"Of course sustainability is important, but … "

A discursive perspective on identity in relation to sustainable food consumption

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Wageningen University, March 2015

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Abstract

In recognition of the harmful effects of food production, a shift towards more sustainable food consumption should be stimulated. Despite the acknowledgement of identity as an essential factor to influence sustainable behaviour, the relation between identity and sustainable food consumption has not yet been researched from an everyday life perspective. Therefore, this thesis takes a discursive perspective to analyse what identities people *themselves* construct in interaction. Data have been collected at a citizen consultation organized by Rathenau Institute, resulting in an analysis of almost two hours of group discussions among twenty-six Dutch citizens.

Results show that participants displayed four identities in relation to sustainable food consumption. First, participants displayed a 'guilty' identity with regard to their not-so-sustainable behaviour, while at the same time managing potential blame by showing goodwill to behave more sustainably or showing interest in the subject. Second, participants displayed a 'casual' identity by using three strategies that were aimed at undermining that the participant would take sustainable food consumption 'too far'. Third, participants displayed a 'sceptical' identity with regard to industry and government. Fourth, participants did not display an 'ethically aware' identity often, but when they did, they could expect little support and could be dismissed as 'idealist'.

This thesis presents three main conclusions: 1) although the importance and desirability of sustainability were 'of course' acknowledged, 2) the participants did not present sustainable practices as something to be proud of. 3) Sustainable food consumption is only one of many practical concerns in everyday life. It is discussed how (Dutch) policy makers may take these findings into account when designing food policy and engaging in a societal dialogue. If a substantial increase in sustainable food consumption is to be achieved, engagement therein should no longer lead to a non-preferred identity. This shift may be aided by openly discussing interactional concerns regarding accountability, reasonability and distrust.

Preface

It is not possible for me to start this preface in any other way than by thanking my supervisors Hedwig te Molder and Bea Steenbekkers for their enthusiasm and guidance throughout the process. Furthermore, I am grateful to André Krom and Annick de Vries of Rathenau Institute for their interest in this thesis and naturally their permission to collect data at the consultation. This thankfulness is also meant for the participants, as they have provided me with such interesting material and some have been so kind to wish me the best of luck at the end of one of the recordings. As it has also been a struggle from time to time, I would like to thank all who have supported me, in particular Riny van Stigt for her help with transcriptions and Annaloes Herderschee for all our useful discussions.

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1. Introduction

The production of food has major environmental impacts and a shift towards more sustainable food consumption can help to reduce these harmful impacts (Miller & Spoolman, 2009). In general, sustainable food consumption refers to the use of those foods that are produced in an economic, ecological and socially sustainable manner, for example foods that are organic, local, seasonal or fair trade (Mahadevan, 2014). It can be considered to be even more inclusive; sustainable food consumption may also include reducing packaging, reducing or composting food waste at the end of the chain or even reducing the total amount of food consumption (Miller & Spoolman, 2009).

In numerous ways, people are increasingly stimulated to make more sustainable food choices. Recent examples thereof are the growing number of sustainability labels on food products in the European Union (Nilsson, Tunçer, & Thidell, 2004), the official advice of the Dutch government to eat less meat (Rijksoverheid, 2014) and the marketing of food products in combination with 'a bowl with lid for easy storage of left-overs to reduce food waste' (Honig, 2014).

In order to stimulate sustainable behaviour, identity has been acknowledged as an essential factor (Clayton & Opotow, 2003; Zavestoski, 2004), even though the precise relationship is not yet clear (Kempton & Holland, 2003). Clayton and Opotow (2003) argue that identity mediates behaviour, as identity prescribes behaviour that is in line with someone's sense of who they are. Therefore it is important to understand identity, they argue, since attempts to change behaviour to more sustainable ways without taking people's underlying identities into account may only have a short-term effect. The sustainable behaviour may disappear when the incentives are removed. This can be illustrated by someone who only buys seasonal foods when they are on discount; this is in contrast to someone for who 'being a sustainable consumer' may be a meaningful identity and normally prepares meals with seasonal foods on the basis of this self-image.

Many studies on identity in relation to sustainability show that morality is an important aspect: people say they changed their behaviour according to their moral beliefs on sustainability (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Degenhardt, 2002; Zavestoski, 2004). This is consistent with psychological research on sustainable behaviour which for example shows that perceiving environmental problems as a form of injustice, motivates people to reduce this dilemma and to engage in more sustainable behaviour (Kals & Maes, 2002). Others however argue that price is still most important for the majority of consumers, as people themselves refer to price as an important factor and admit unethical behaviour (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Further research on sustainable *food* identities shows that people relate to all kinds of identities, such as 'being a picky eater' or an 'enthusiastic eater', but not to being an 'environmentalist' (Bisogni, Connors, Devine, & Sobal, 2002). It seems for instance that organic consumers and vegetarians (both food choices that are more sustainable than average) are motivated most by health and respectively natural content and animal welfare, not environmental concerns (Fox & Ward, 2008; Lockie, Lyons, Lawrence, & Mummery, 2002).

Interestingly, there are hardly any studies that focus on the everyday life context in which these sustainable identities are established and made relevant, let alone sustainable *food* identities. To understand how people *themselves* deal with identity in social contexts, identity can be analysed as a discursive concept. Discursive refers to discourse, meaning the use of language in text or talk. By

analysing language, it becomes possible to study how people understand *each other* and in everyday interaction define and redefine their identity (Potter, 1996).

In order to analyse how people – consciously or not – construct identities in interaction, a discursive perspective is needed. With discursive psychology it becomes possible to analyse language as a tool that is used by people to perform all sorts of interactional goals, such as to construct an identity, manage issues of responsibility or interest, make a compliment or build expertise. Talk is thereby not approached as the result of cognitive processes, but as a social practice. In other words, an important aspect of discursive psychology is that talk is considered to be action-oriented. This can be illustrated by an example from a study by Sneijder (2006): one may construct a vegetarian identity to show care about animal welfare, while at the same time use the identity of occasional meat-eater to show responsibility about health. This shows that people may use different and sometimes even conflicting identities at the same time to achieve different interactional goals. As such, identity is very flexible and can be adjusted according to the situation.

In general, people strive for a positive social identity (Tajfel, 2010) and for food identities that are accepted and provide self-esteem (Bisogni, Jastran, Seligson, & Thompson, 2012). Therefore, it is interesting to examine what identities people construct and how they account for their (possibly undesirable) behaviour. What identities people construct may tell a lot about the subject at hand. For example vegans have been found to stress the 'ordinariness' of being a vegan, which as a result resists the negative association that veganism might be complicated (Sneijder & te Molder, 2009).

To conclude, a discursive perspective allows for analysis of identities in everyday interaction. It provides an action-oriented view on talk to examine how people understand *each other.* How people react to a particular utterance may show whether of not an attempt to construct a particular identity is accepted, ignored or rejected by others (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

Before turning to the research question and aim of this thesis, let us first take a more extensive look at why sustainable food consumption is needed and what behaviour it may include.

1.1 Background information on sustainable food consumption

1.1.1 Harmful effects of food production

The production of food has major environmental impacts on biodiversity, human health and the quality of soil, water and air (Miller & Spoolman, 2009). The harmful effects are so numerous that for this thesis a few examples will have to suffice; food production for example leads to erosion and degradation of soil in many parts of the world, to the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change and to a decrease of biodiversity due to the large areas of land needed for crops, livestock and poultry.

Especially the production of meat is very energy intensive and inefficient. It causes high levels of nitrogen and greenhouse gas emissions, requires large amounts of land, energy and water and produces huge amounts of animal waste (Miller & Spoolman, 2009). Citizens of the European Union consume on average 50% too many proteins, which are mainly consumed in the form of meat (PACITA, 2014a). Westhoek et al. (2014) have found that if the consumption of meat, dairy products and eggs in the European Union would be halved, nitrogen emissions would be reduced by 40%,

greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by 25% to 50% and there would be 23% per capita less cropland needed for food production.

Another important aspect of food production is the use of pesticides and fertilizers (Miller & Spoolman, 2009). These lead to pollution of the environment and as a result compromise biodiversity and human health. Although conventional pesticides work fast and increase food production, they also promote genetic resistance and often kill beneficial insects and parasites too.

1.1.2 Defining sustainable food consumption

The harmful effects of food production can be decreased by consuming food in more sustainable ways. As much as sustainability is an often-debated term, sustainable food consumption likewise has many definitions (Mahadevan, 2014; Miller & Spoolman, 2009). It can be said that it refers to those foods that are produced in an economic, ecological and socially sustainable manner (Mahadevan, 2014). In other words: sustainable food consumption should be economically viable, preserve the environment and reduce social inequality. Food consumption that is more environmentally sustainable would for example be a shift towards more organic foods to reduce the use of pesticides or towards more seasonal and local foods to reduce the emissions used for greenhouses and transportation. From a more social perspective, one may purchase foods that pay farmers a fair price or even cook meals with enough fruits and vegetables to support health and well-being. Numerous labels, for instance MSC and Fair Trade Original, have proven that it can be economically viable to sell food products that take environmental and social values into account (Fair Trade Original, 2013; Marine Stewardship Council, 2014).

Sustainable food consumption can be regarded as more inclusive than the actual consumption of foods; it also includes reducing the total consumption of food, especially products from animal origin. With regard to waste at the end of the chain, it is better for the environment to minimize and compost food waste (Longfield, 2013; Miller & Spoolman, 2009), just like minimizing packaging or buying packaging that is reusable or biodegradable (Winter & Koger, 2004). One may for instance avoid bottled water to reduce packaging and transportation (Longfield, 2013). While consumption conventionally associates with purchasing, growing ones own food can also be regarded as sustainable food consumption (Miller & Spoolman, 2009).

1.1.3 Achieving sustainable food consumption

Although sustainable food consumption is widely recognized as desirable, not only what it precisely entails is contested as also how it should be achieved. De Bakker and Dagevos (2012) for example propose three different 'routes' that take different values, motivations and mind-sets into account, because people differ in the degree to which they engage in sustainable consumption. The authors apply these routes to meat reduction. Possible routes are change by stealth, such as buying plant-based meat replacements, and moderate involvement, such as incorporating a meatless day. These two routes are examples of weak sustainable consumption; individuals do not have to make encompassing lifestyle changes. This is in contrast with strong sustainable consumption and the accompanying third route; individuals are stimulated to make structural changes or changes to their cultural values, such as stop eating meat altogether.

Schösler et al. (2012) have come to more specific policy advise on meat reduction. They have examined Dutch consumer opinions on several meat substitution options and conclude with four policy pathways: incremental change towards more health-conscious vegetarian meals, using the trend towards convenience, stimulating reduced portion size and helping people to gain familiarity and skill with vegetarian meals.

1.2 Problem statement and research question

Regardless of the recognition of the need of sustainable food consumption and the importance of identity therein, the relation between identity and sustainable food consumption in everyday talk has not yet been researched. As argued however, this is where identities are constructed and people are held accountable for their behaviour. Knowledge on the identities that people use to account for sustainable or unsustainable food behaviour may provide valuable insights that can be used for communication purposes. This leads to the following research question:

What identities regarding sustainable food consumption do citizens construct in interaction and to what interactional goals?

1.3 Research objective

The data for this thesis are retrieved from a citizen consultation in eleven European countries. This consultation was part of Parliaments and Civil Society in Technology Assessment, a four-year project financed by the European Commission in order to provide policymakers with input from citizens (PACITA, 2014b). Parts of the consultation focused on sustainable food consumption, the topic of this thesis. By analysing the identities that participants construct regarding sustainable food consumption, the aim of this research is to aid (Dutch) policymakers. They may take this knowledge on identities into account when designing policies or engaging in a dialogue between government and citizens.

Previous research on identity construction has proven that this kind of research can indeed provide valuable information for communication strategies and even give advise on more broader societal dialogue. Bouwman et al. (2009) have for example shown that people do confirm that healthy eating practices are important, but do not want to come across as 'health freaks'. This contradicts the assumption often made by marketing or policy that people want to exhibit their healthy behaviour and therefore implicates that people should be approached differently. Furthermore, the authors argue that a new standard is needed in society, namely one in which healthy eating is the favoured image and does not lead to being seen as a 'health freak'. As this thesis will show, similar findings apply to sustainable food consumption.

1.4 Thesis structure

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. It starts with an overview of aspects that have been recognized as relevant for identity in relation to sustainable food consumption. The adoption of a discursive perspective is further clarified, just as the theoretical principles that underline this perspective. It also shows some discursive studies on food identities and on sustainability. Subsequently, the third chapter covers the methodology. It elaborates on the usefulness of group discussions as data collection, the organisational context of the citizen consultation and the setup of the group discussions, as well as the analytical procedure. Chapter four presents the results of this thesis, which shows that participants mainly constructed four identities with regard to sustainable food consumption. The fifth chapter presents three main conclusions and a discussion how these relate to literature. Recommendations are made on an instrumental level for communication strategies and policies as well as on starting points for a wider societal dialogue.

2. Theoretical framework

As the aim of this thesis is to provide insight into the identities that people construct with regard to sustainable food consumption, this chapter starts by providing an overview of literature on aspects that seem to be relevant for sustainable food identities. The second paragraph explains the adoption of a discursive perspective and provides some theoretical background thereof.

2.1 Relation between identity and sustainable food consumption

2.1.1 Identity as a moral category

Identity is a complex and broad concept, but is often recognized as a self-definition; it is about having a sense of who one is, where one is going in life and how one fits into society (Erikson, 1963). Plenty of research exists on sustainability and the role of identity therein. A frequently recurring theme is ethics: asking oneself questions about what the moral thing to do is. In this section, a few of these studies will be discussed.

In multiple studies with (in-depth) interviews, participants often referred to their moral beliefs as reason for their behaviour change towards sustainability. Degenhardt (2002) has for example conducted in-depth interviews with twenty two self-determined 'sustainable lifestyle pioneers': people who have successfully adjusted their behaviour in accordance with sustainable norms. This research shows that the participants were emotionally affected by the devastation of nature and increasing inequality. They had a sense of responsibility and decided that they did not want to make the situation worse by their actions.

These results are in line with research of Connolly and Prothero (2008) in which participants also felt a sense of moral responsibility that resulted in a change of consumption. This qualitative study involved seven participants in Dublin who consider themselves 'green consumers': those consumers who voluntarily engage in environmentally friendly consumer practices and for whom 'being green' is a fundamental aspect of their identity. The study further shows several difficulties with consuming this way. Participants acknowledged that they have to make compromises in order to maintain their social relations or to be able to fulfil certain behaviours, such as 'needing' a car in a large family for transportation. Certain specific behaviours were excluded from the moral beliefs that people most of the time did apply to the rest of their behaviour. Participants justified these inconsistencies by describing their own consumption as 'basic' in contrast to other people's consumption as 'too much'. The authors suggest that these inconsistencies are partly the result of feelings of individual power to address environmental problems, but not knowing what 'the right thing to do' is (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). This uncertainty further raises feelings of guilt, ambivalence and compromise. Interestingly, the authors also found that participants not only consume in a green way because of concerns about harm to the environment, but also because of concerns to their own health. As a result they mostly bought organic products, avoided processed foods or certain ingredients and some participants had their own organic vegetable garden or were involved in permaculture.

Zavestoski (2004) interviewed participants of a workshop for 'deep ecologists': those who include nature in their sense of self. In a way, the participants may be regarded as already having defined themselves as deep ecologists by participating in the workshop. The author however also

measured their self-concept by ten statements, such as 'Who am I?'. Of the participants, 63% gave at least one answer coded to 'ecological identity' and many gave two or more. Only participants who gave answers coded to 'sense of altruism or compassion' were more frequent, namely 83%. Zavestoski (2004) argues that participants did not draw upon these identities more often, because they 'fail to elicit the feedback from other social actors that is necessary to maintain them'. He found that deep ecologists often seek surroundings in their everyday life that maintain their ecological identity. They do so for example by seeking out jobs where being a deep ecologist is accepted or even expected, by engaging more in religion due to the similarity as a source of values and by visiting events for like-minded people to build social networks. The author proposes that participants actively seek these surroundings, because in this way their ecological identity becomes meaningful.

Kals and Maes (2002) support this moral perspective in their literature review of psychological research on sustainable behaviour. They argue that specific moral cognitions and emotions are decisive for sustainable behaviour. Cognitions that are of influence are for example awareness of ecological problems and the belief that people as individuals or powerful others have the power to make a difference. Also, if people deny responsibility for the environment or attribute responsibility to powerful others, this leads to unsustainable behaviour and the more people perceive the socio-ecological conflict as a dilemma of justice, the more they are willing to contribute to the (re)establishment of justice. Next to these rational cognitions, several categories of emotions have a powerful and stable influence on sustainable behaviour (Kals & Maes, 2002). Moral emotions consist of feelings, such as indignation about insufficient pollution control and political measures, anger about too much pollution control and its restricting side effects and feelings of guilt about one's own insufficient sustainable behaviours. Also 'love of nature' and ecological fear are of influence. Fear has the most effect when moderate, because too little fear leads to denial of ecological problems, while too much fear leads to rejection of problems in order to avoid panic.

The authors note that especially the attribution of ecological responsibility and the justice appraisals reflect the notion that the decision to behave sustainably or unsustainably results from the moral choice between self-interest and the interest of society as a whole (Kals & Maes, 2002).

2.1.2 The price-conscious consumer

Clayton and Opotow (2003) argue that identity is relevant for environmental behaviour – or more inclusively sustainable behaviour – since 'an environmental identity also prescribes a course of action that is compatible with individuals' sense of who they are'. Although it is not identity research, it may still be relevant to note that many authors have identified a gap between intentions and behaviour on sustainability (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates, 2010). Carrigan and Attalla (2001) confirm that consumers care about ethics, but argue that they do not care about ethics in their purchases. Their explorative pre-study included group discussions with ten university-educated participants in the age of 18 to 25 years to examine consumers' awareness of the ethical behaviour by corporate businesses and consumers' intention to act upon unethical behaviour. Here too, contradictions were present. On the one hand participants stated that they would adjust their consumption if they knew more about unethical behaviour of companies, but on the other hand they seemed only willing to be selectively ethical: they admitted to still buy products from certain clothing brands while having negative information about these companies. The authors also found that

animal rights were for instance attributed more importance than unethical working conditions and that consumers do not want to be inconvenienced in the form of increased costs, quality loss or having to 'shop around'. Respondents justified their behaviour by their own helplessness and by cynicism that probably all companies are unethical to some degree. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) come to the conclusion that the main criteria will probably always remain product value, price and quality and that although people care about ethics, the 'ethical consumer' is largely a myth. Indeed, for example in the UK, only 8% of the total amount of food sales is ethical foods (The Co-operative Bank, 2010) and other research shows that consumers are not willing to pay a higher price for more sustainable food products, except for organic meat (Vanhonacker, Van Loo, Gellynck, & Verbeke, 2013).

A distinction that is often made in literature and which might be relevant here is the difference between being a consumer or citizen. Although de Bakker and Dagevos (2012) argue that this distinction is an artificial one made in literature and that motivating factors cannot be separated, they acknowledge that the typical consumer is portrayed as someone who is price-conscious and makes practical and short-term choices in the supermarket. This identity gives people the power of consumption to demand change, for example by boycotting, while a citizen on the other hand can exert his rights in relation to the state, such as demanding to be free from environmental risk (Spaargaren & Oosterveer, 2010). The typical citizen is in literature characterized as idealistic and concerned with ethics and politics (de Bakker & Dagevos, 2012). This distinction might be of particular interest, as the participants in this thesis are specifically addressed as citizens by the organisers of the discussion groups (see next chapter).

2.1.3 Identity in food choice

This thesis examines specifically sustainable *food* consumption in relation to identity. Eating practices have been argued to be an important marker of identities, because eating is an activity that people engage in every day (Caplan, 1997). Research on food identities by Bisogni et al. (2002) has shown that people mainly relate to three types of identities when it comes to food choices. The study included focus groups and in-depth interviews with in total seventeen participants varying in gender, occupation, age, education and household composition. The type of identity that most frequently surfaced was related to eating behaviours: the range of foods that participants preferred (i.e. 'being a picky eater') or types of foods (i.e. 'being a fast-food eater'). Being a 'picky' or 'fussy' eater was often seen as something negative, whereas being a 'flexible' eater had a positive connotation. The second identity related to other personal characteristics, such as being a 'health-conscious', 'impulsive' or 'enthusiastic' eater. Thirdly, identities related to reference groups and social categories. These participants referred to normality in comparison to other people, such as being an 'average' eater. Also, they referred to groups as a source of identity such as age, gender, occupation and social class, like one woman stated that she ate "what is normal for an older woman". Bisogni et al. (2002) also concluded that people seek identities that they see as positive and providing self-esteem. Interestingly, participants did not relate to being an 'environmentalist'. This finding might be supported by other studies which showed that even vegetarians and organic consumers are not motivated the most by care about the environment, while both eating practices are more sustainable than having an average diet (Fox & Ward, 2008; Lockie et al., 2002; Millets, 1997). Organic

consumers are mostly motivated by health and natural content (Lockie et al., 2002) and vegetarians by health and ethical treatment of animals (Fox & Ward, 2008).

The identity of 'vegetarian' however, might not be as clear-cut as it seems, as showed by Millets (1997). In her study, most of the twenty-three self-defined vegetarians did not eat any meat at all; the rest ate mostly chicken and fish, but also red meat. This was no obstruction to their identity as vegetarian, since the consumption of meat was constructed as a momentary 'lapse'. This could be due to social factors, such as not wanting to be impolite, due to a weakness for bacon or steak, or due to a loss of control, usually after an evening out. 'Lapses' were defined as unforeseen events and could also for example happen every three weeks. The identity of 'vegetarian' can therefore be a very fluid one. In the eyes of meat-eaters however, vegetarians who ate meat were seen as hypocritical. Non-vegetarians justified their meat consumption with several arguments, such as cultural tradition and force of habit ("a proper meal contains meat"), the time and effort to prepare vegetarian meals, the essentiality of meat for health and that people are also designed to eat meat.

2.1.4 Summary

Literature on identity and sustainability repeatedly shows that morality is an important aspect that people refer to as the cause of behaviour change. Other authors however argue that the ethical consumer is largely a myth and show that people mostly refer to price and effort as reasons for their unsustainable behaviour. Literature on identity and food consumption shows that people relate their identity to many aspects of their eating practices, but hardly to sustainability.

The mentioned studies however have analysed identity mostly as a rather stable cognitive concept. Although this provides many insights, treating identity as the result of what people think and feel does not include the everyday context in which identities become relevant. The following paragraph will explain how a different perspective on identity can add value to the understanding thereof.

2.2 Towards a discursive perspective on sustainable food consumption

As identity is a concept that is established through the use of discourse (the use of language in text or talk), identity can be perceived as something that is constructed and negotiated in interaction. Whereas some studies consider identity as the result of a thought process, discursive studies consider identity as explicitly part of an interactional context; it is in everyday life that people *themselves* define their identities (Potter, 1996). By adopting a discursive perspective, it becomes possible to analyse how people understand *each other* and strive for an identity that is 'interactionally appropriate'. People give accounts and hold each other accountable for their behaviour in interaction.

The aim of this research is to understand what identities people construct regarding sustainable food consumption in interaction and to what interactional goals. Discursive psychology provides a perspective that is very appropriate for this thesis, because it perceives the use of discourse as a tool for social practice: people may perform all sorts of social actions by the way they talk, such as

constructing identities (Potter, 1996). It provides a non-cognitive approach, meaning that the goal is not to determine whether people really think, feel or believe what they say, but on what interactional goals people achieve with their descriptions. Therefore no judgement will be made if people consciously or unconsciously try to construct a certain identity, but rather what identities they ascribe to themselves and others and how they do so.

2.2.1 Theoretical principles of discursive psychology

There are three theoretical principles of discursive psychology (Potter & Wiggins, 2007). The first is that talk is action-oriented, meaning that discourse is seen as a tool to perform all sorts of interactional goals. These interactional goals may for example be to construct an identity, manage issues of accountability or interest, to accuse, compliment or build expertise.

The second principle is that talk is constructed, meaning that it consists of words, descriptions and categories that together form discourse. Next to talk being considered as a construction, it is also considered to be constructive. This means that as there are infinite ways of describing the reality around us, the speaker always has to select words to give a description. Therefore, discourse constructs a particular version of reality (Potter, 1996).

The third principle is that discourse is situated. Discourse cannot be seen as separate from the context that influences the conversation. This context can be related to the physical environment, the cultural time in which it takes place, the people who are engaging in the conversation (or who are not), but also the direct sequential context; what is being said before and after an utterance. Even the presence of possible alternative versions of reality (i.e. the description not chosen by the speaker) can be seen as context, which people can rhetorically undermine.

2.2.2 Identity construction

An important aspect of identity construction is the ascription to membership of certain categories (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) such as being a father, consumer, vegetarian or person-who-likes-gardening. Each category brings about inferences about what characteristics that category is commonly known to have. If someone belongs to the category of vegetarians, then this suggests that this individual does not eat meat, has some reason for pursuing this diet and knows more vegetarian recipes than average. Characteristics imply categories as well. If someone has the legal age to be married and wears a wedding ring, this person will probably be categorized as husband or wife.

Categories can also bring about certain rights or entitlements to feelings, knowledge or experience (Potter, 1996). A doctor for example usually has the right to speak about health issues and a witness of a car crash is entitled to feel shocked, whereas someone who only hears this story is not. Categories, entitlements and implicated characteristics are not fixed and have to be worked up and negotiated in interaction. Membership of a certain category can be accepted by others, but also rejected, ignored or renegotiated (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). As people can belong to many categories at the same time and the possible categories are endless, the interest lies in which categories people select for themselves or others.

Another issue that is relevant for identity construction is the management of subjectivity (Edwards, 2007). The management of subjectivity relates to how people talk in such ways that they are not

predisposed to talk in a particular way. There are two general ways in which people do so. They may present themselves as people who do not make too much of things. If they do not easily exaggerate a story, then the logic follows that the current description is not an exaggeration either and must be true. People may also present themselves as reluctant to admit negative things. If they do not easily complain or take a prejudiced perspective, then the same logic follows that the current description is not biased and must be true.

The construction of identity may be used as a tool to perform other interactional goals with, or may be a goal in itself (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). If the first is the case, then identity may for example be used to account for behaviour or provide the speaker with a certain entitlement to speak and/or make knowledge claims. Identity can be used to perform many social actions, which leads people to regularly use different and sometimes conflicting identities at the same time (Sneijder, 2006). The construction of identity may however also be a social goal in itself (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998), as people may try to protect their sense of achievement or autonomy (Swierstra & te Molder, 2012).

2.2.3 Discursive studies related to food identities and sustainability

Various discursive studies have examined the way in which people construct food identities. Veganism is the only food identity that has been studied discursively and can be related to sustainability; vegans do not eat any animal products and veganism can be said to be an ideological food choice. Although the participants in the studies of Sneijder and te Molder (2009; 2004) do not relate their food identity to sustainability but mostly to health, the studies are still illustrative of discursive strategies that people can use to defend their food identity. In several ways, participants of an online food forum on veganism systematically resisted certain negative implications of veganism. They presented vegan meals for example as ordinary and easy to prepare, thereby undermining that veganism would be complicated (2009). With respect to health problems such as a vitamin deficiency, participants firstly used conditional formulations to attribute responsibility to individuals instead of veganism as food choice (i.e. “if you eat a varied diet, there shouldn’t be any problems”)(2004). Secondly, methods of preventing problems, such as adding supplements, were constructed as mundane and simple actions, thereby again resisting the possibly complicated nature of veganism in relation to health protection (2004). Sneijder and te Molder thereby showed that vegans systematically resist the notion that their diet is complicated or unhealthy.

Food choice in relation to health has also been studied by Bouwman et al. (2009) among thirty Dutch consumers varying in age, gender, social living situation and education level. The authors show how participants confirm the importance of healthy eating, but avoid portraying themselves as too self- and health-conscious eaters by using three repertoires. In the first repertoire, participants portrayed healthful eating as ordinary and only a matter of routine by emphasizing the self-evidence thereof. The second repertoire focused on the uncomplicatedness of eating for health as well as for pleasure by emphasizing the relaxed manner in which participants dealt with both. In the third repertoire, unhealthy eating was presented as something that one can easily compensate for (i.e. “I do take my vitamin pill on time”). To be more precise, this third repertoire showed that because participants provided accounts for their unhealthy behaviour, they oriented towards the norm as being healthy eating. Using these repertoires, the participants confirmed that eating healthy is important, but also claimed to be relaxed about it (Bouwman et al., 2009).

Another study of Sneijder and te Molder (2006) further showed how participants of an online forum on food pleasure constructed a very specific food identity; participants presented themselves as 'gourmets'. An important manner in which they did so, was by claiming independent access to 'good food' when other participants had already made a first food evaluation, so as to present their second assessment as 'independently arrived at'. Participants for example made objective evaluations ("this is tasty") instead of subjective evaluations ("I find this tasty") and thereby claimed to *know* what good food is instead of only having an opinion.

Hardly any discursive research on sustainable identities can be found, but the following study still provides interesting insights in constructions of sustainable behaviour. Kurz et al. (2005) have argued that the ways in which people talk about natural resources may pose barriers to more sustainable behaviour. Their study draws upon nine interviews with citizens from Perth, Australia to analyse how they construct water and energy use. Participants presented water as a finite, precious and shared resource that was not to be wasted. They accounted for their water use by presenting themselves as wanting to conserve water, but having the social obligation to maintain the appearance of their gardens. Energy on the other hand was presented as something that is produced, therefore also replaceable and rather *used* instead of *wasted*. The participants focused on the varying impacts of different ways of energy generation, which is the result of choices made by policy makers. Another dominant pattern was that people tended to present their own consumption in contrast to that of others. Participants positioned themselves as conserver of resources, while others were wasting them, and even maintained this when participants were faced with contradictions in their statements. The authors came to the conclusion that participants use several discursive strategies to construct the environmental impact of their actions as minimal or unavoidable. This consequently hinders the promotion of more sustainable behaviour, as participants can successfully defend their possibly unsustainable behaviour.

Kurz et al. (2005) also critically reflected on their own behaviour and the potential irony thereof. They noted that they as well might have positioned themselves as wanting to conserve resources (by studying how others account for water and energy use), but having social obligations, in this case having to print many drafts of the study for revision:

"Of course, the amount of paper used in such a process could have been halved if single, rather than double, spacing had been used. However, as 'we all know', double spacing is 'a necessity of academic life'. We were not wasting paper; we were simply using it!" - Kurz et al. (2005)

2.2.4 Summary

This thesis adopts a discursive perspective as this includes the everyday context in which people themselves construct identities. The theoretical principles of discursive psychology consist of talk being considered as action-oriented, constructed and situated. This chapter has examined aspects of identity construction such as the ascription of categories and subjectivity management. Lastly, some discursive studies on the construction of food identities and sustainability are discussed. Hardly any discursive research has been done on sustainable food identities.

3. Method

This chapter first explains why the collection of audio data on sustainable food consumption has taken place using group discussions. The second paragraph elaborates on the specifics of the group discussions as they took place in the context of a citizen consultation on sustainable consumption. It also provides information on the participants. The third paragraph covers the analytical procedure, including analytical principles that have been used and the data transcription and analysis.

3.1 Group discussions as data collection method

In order to analyse how people themselves construct identities and to what interactional goals, the data to be analysed needed to consist of talk, preferably in the most naturalistic setting as possible. Naturalistic materials are preferred because it avoids influence on the everyday context as much as possible, although natural occurring data will always be contaminated in some way (Silverman, 2013). Naturalistic settings are those situations that happen in everyday life, such as conversations at the hairdresser, phone calls or online discussions, and show the most natural reactivity of people. The influence of a speaker should be avoided as much as possible, for example by a question format of an interview and interviewers' assumptions (Potter & Wiggins, 2007). Although group discussions during a citizen consultation cannot be called a naturalistic setting, they do resemble informal talk in such as way that participants are relatively free to talk about the given topic. From a more practical point of view, the citizen consultation is the most naturalistic setting in which recordings could be made on sustainable food consumption and have been analysed as such.

3.2 Citizen consultation on sustainable consumption

3.2.1 Organisational context

The data have been collected at a citizen consultation on sustainable consumption (including sustainable *food* consumption) on October 25th 2014 at Jaarbeurs in Utrecht. The goal of the consultation was to provide policy makers in Brussels with the opinions of citizens on sustainable consumption and was held in eleven European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain (PACITA, 2014a). In the Netherlands, the consultation has been organized by Rathenau Institute. This is an independent research institute that for example studies developments in science and technology and stimulates the societal debate thereon in order to support decision making (Rathenau Institute, 2014b).

The project of the citizen consultations was called Europe Wide Views on Sustainable Consumption, which was again part of a wider project called PACITA (PACITA, 2014a). This stands for Parliaments and Civil Society in Technology Assessment and is a four-year project financed by the European Union with the aim to increase knowledge-sharing, clarify differences and to critically reflect on existing Technology Assessment practices (Rathenau Institute, 2014a).

3.2.2 Setup of the citizen consultation internationally

The programme of the citizen consultation was as much as possible kept the same across countries, including the translation of materials. A few weeks in advance, the participants received an information brochure on the several topics that would be discussed. The consultation was divided in different sessions:

1. Introduction to sustainable consumption
2. A shift towards more sustainable consumption
3. A reduction of consumption
4. A reduction of waste

As sustainable consumption is a very broad concept, participants were asked to focus on food, transport, housing and electronic goods. These four aspects were the focus, because together they account for 70% of environmental pressure caused by greenhouse gasses, ozone depletion, acidification and resource consumption (PACITA, 2014a).

Each session started with a short movie that contained most of the information given in the brochure. The sessions consisted of roughly an hour to discuss the topic and ten minutes to fill in a questionnaire.

Next to the four international sessions, each country could end the consultation with a fifth national session, which in the Netherlands was on sustainable food consumption. This session was different in setup, as will be explained in the next paragraph.

3.2.3 Setup of the citizen consultation in the Netherlands

The consultation officially started at ten o'clock in the morning with some short speeches. Mr. Staman, director of the Rathenau Institute, elaborated on the goal of the consultation, namely bringing the opinions of citizens on sustainable consumption from across Europe to the policy makers in Brussels. He emphasized the difference between citizens and consumers (as in relation to government and industry) and addressed all participants specifically as citizen. Next, prof. dr. ir. Zoeteman gave a short presentation on the history of sustainable consumption, after which the participants received information on the time schedule and guidelines for the discussion. These were for example to show respect, listen carefully, ask questions and to not interrupt each other. The setting was explicitly informal and participants should call each other on a first-name basis. They were also told that the goal was to form an opinion instead of to convince others and to 'be yourself' instead of being a member of an organisation, political party or company. It was stressed that Rathenau Institute had no interest in the outcome of the consultation; it did not matter whether participants were in favour or against sustainable consumption.

Food and drinks were provided, during the first session a group photo was taken and during the second session a Skype connection was established between the Netherlands and Lithuania. These countries were partnered with each other and the video connection showed the participants they were involved in an international project in which citizens in another European country participated at the same time. Around half past four the consultation ended.

3.2.4 Setup group discussion on sustainable food consumption

The first four sessions started with informational videos on sustainable consumption with some references to food and the fifth session started with a presentation on sustainable food consumption. This short presentation was given by Ms. de Hoog of the Scientific Council for Government Policy on their report about food policy in the Netherlands (WRR, 2014). The participants were provided with this information in order to create a common knowledge base and have meaningful discussions. A summary of the provided information on sustainable (food) consumption can be found in Appendix B.

The fifth session on sustainable food consumption was different in setup than the other four. This session took half an hour and started with a question about participant's current sustainable food behaviour before turning to discussing the following statements (translated):

1. Citizens carry the greatest responsibility to change their consumption pattern.
2. Citizens are actually capable to change their consumption pattern.
3. Producers should only be allowed to sell sustainable products, so that supermarkets only sell free-range meat, fair trade products and other products with sustainability labels.
4. The government should collect taxes on products that are not produced in a sustainable manner.

Using statements for the group discussions has a great impact on the course of the conversation. As well as the statements steer the discussion in a certain direction and participants are not entirely free to talk about a given subject (e.g. what is your opinion on sustainable products?), the statements may also carry implications in them. Therefore, the statements, just like the facilitators' influence, are part of analysis as well.

This session ended with a questionnaire like the other sessions, only the participants were now required to fill in whether or not they agreed with the statements ('maybe' was not an option).

3.2.5 Participant recruitment and facilitation

Around a hundred participants have been recruited by an external agency to best match the Dutch society. Participants were selected on basis of the following criteria: age, gender, ethnicity, geographical zone, educational level, occupation, family size and membership of environmental organisation. The last criterion was added to prevent an overrepresentation of participants with a preference for sustainability. This was also avoided by refusing self-application and explicitly selecting participants. If participants rejected the invitation, others were invited from a reserve list.

Specific attention was paid that only lay people would be invited and no professionals, scientists, politicians or government officials working with environmental issues or sustainable consumption. These could arguably have an input that would be too dominant for the discussions.

All participants received a compensation of €65,- and could receive a refund for travel costs.

The participants were divided over the discussion groups according to the same criteria, which resulted in discussion groups that consisted of eight of nine citizens and one facilitator. The

facilitators received several instructions that were primarily aimed at the organization and time schedule of the day. With regard to the discussions, the facilitators were instructed to guide the discussion in such a way that all the questions/statements on the questionnaire were discussed before the end of the session. Furthermore, they were instructed to be as neutral as possible and make sure all participants had a chance to speak.

3.2.6 Data collection

Permission was given by Rathenau Institute to make audio recordings at three discussion groups. At the start of the consultation I received permission from all participants of the selected groups to tape the discussions for my thesis. Hereby I explained that the recordings would be analysed and stored, all participants would stay anonymous (including on the stored recording) and that I had no interest whatsoever in the outcome. During the consultation I have listened in at one group without taking part of the conversation, writing down some notes. The recorders have been on during the whole consultation, and the recorders were largely disguised in a flowerpot to minimize the participants' awareness thereof.

The three recorded discussion groups consisted of eleven male and fifteen female participants and three female facilitators. Their introductions indicated a wide range of age, occupation and residency in different parts of the Netherlands.

3.3 Analytical procedure

3.3.1 Analytical principles

In order to gain insight into the identities that citizens make relevant with regard to sustainable food consumption, a discursive perspective is taken. There are two main principles to analyse what actions are being done in discourse.

The first analytical principle is the next-turn-proof-procedure (Sneijder, 2006; te Molder, 2013). This means that the turn-by-turn development of interaction is used to make sense of the social activities that are accomplished. In this way, it is ensured that the interpretation is not merely imposed by the researcher, but is determined by the participants themselves. For example, one might say "there are dirty dishes on the table" to which the second speaker responds "I am not cleaning those, they are not mine". The first utterance could have been a simple statement, but is taken up as a request to clean the dishes. The action performed by the first turn depends on the second turn.

The second analytical principle is that of rhetorical analysis (Sneijder & te Molder, 2009; te Molder, 2013). By constructing their own version of reality, people continuously resist or undermine alternative versions. Analysing these alternative versions can also help to understand what social actions are being done: what interactional goal would not be accomplished if another version would be used? The rhetorical nature of talk can help the interpretation of what is being done in interaction. Closely related to rhetorical analysis is the analysis of variation in word choice (te Molder, 2013). When people refer to something in various ways, this often indicates that some action is being performed.

It is important to stress that people themselves make certain aspects relevant in their talk and that a researcher only analyses this. With a discursive perspective the goal is not to interpret the meaning of talk or why people formulate their talk in a certain way, the goal is to analyse what actions are being performed and to what end (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

3.3.2 Transcription and analysis

Three discussion groups have been recorded during the whole consultation. Sustainable food consumption was at times referred to in the first four sessions and was the subject of the fifth session. Therefore, the data that have been transcribed are people's introductions in the first session, some fragments in the first four sessions and the complete fifth session. In total, almost two hours of data have been transcribed. This could have been more if all the references to food in the first four sessions had been transcribed as well, but I have not done so due to time limitations.

The first transcription was on word-level after which the material was carefully read and reread. Recurring key words and themes have been noted down to get a feeling of what the participants often referred to. With respect to identity construction, extra attention has been paid to how participants introduced and described themselves and to utterances that refer to categories, such as 'vegetarians', 'citizens' or 'being sceptical'.

Those fragments that were of particular interest have been analysed further using the analytical principles of discursive psychology. This means that the analysis focused on what interactional goals were achieved by the participants by reacting in a certain way. This appeared especially valuable when participants disagreed with each other. Searching for patterns was an iterative process. For example, when reading the transcripts it soon became clear that participants were not 'showing off' with their sustainable behaviour. This led to a focus on how participants downplayed their sustainable food consumption. Fragments in which this seemed to be the case were gathered and compared to each other, which resulted in a further specification of potential patterns. Each time the transcripts were reread and scanned for more fragments with a better focus on what to look for. Some patterns indeed occurred more often, while others were deviant cases.

It lies in the definition of a pattern that some phenomenon occurs more than once. However, it should be kept in mind that the aim of qualitative research is to explore the *quality* of certain phenomena instead of the *quantity* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore this thesis does not strive for representativeness, but rather to show the nature of patterns and the variation therein.

Those fragments that have been used as exemplary of the patterns they contain, have been transcribed in more detail according to the transcription method of Jefferson (2004) (see Appendix A). This method is relatively easy to work with and uses common conventions (Potter & Wiggins, 2007). More importantly, it gives the possibility to transcribe those features of interaction that are important for proper discourse analysis, such as emphasis, overlap and pause length.

After analysis, the data has been made anonymous by changing the names of the participants. Also, information that might make identification possible, such as residency in combination with age and occupation, has been replaced by a remark that reflects the content. Information has only been replaced if participants did not treat it as interactionally relevant.

4. Results

This chapter presents the main results that are derived from the interaction between the participants on sustainable food consumption. During the citizen consultation, audio recordings have been made at three discussion groups. Each group consisted of eight or nine participants and one facilitator.

A discursive perspective allows for analysing how participants understand and react to each other. It shows how participants consciously or unconsciously use talk to achieve interactional goals, such as constructing identities or managing blame. The results will answer the research question: *what identities do citizens construct when accounting for sustainable and unsustainable food consumption and to what interactional goals*?

The dominant patterns that emerged from the discussions will be explained in this chapter and illustrated by exemplary fragments of interaction. In order to properly understand the fragment, see Appendix A for a list of transcription symbols. The participants are referred to by name and the facilitators are referred to by 'Fac' followed by the group number (i.e. the facilitator of the first discussion group is referred to as Fac1). Some fragments have omitted lines for the sake of brevity or clarity; those can be found in Appendix C including missing lines.

It is important to remark that there are noticeable differences between the discussion groups with regard to the energy level of the participants and outspokenness of their opinions. Discussion group #1 was moderate in energy level and outspokenness of opinions. Discussion group #2 was most energetic and had most participants with a pronounced opinion. This group had the most conflict, which is interesting from a discursive perspective because it explicitly shows participants' reactions to each other and what aspects of the conflict they make relevant. Participants from discussion group #3 were least energetic and although they seemed to be quite reserved from the start, the energy level was especially low during the last session on sustainable food consumption (which is understandable as most participants had been present since 9.30 and the last session started around 16.00). This resulted in short answers and little disagreement. The main patterns were mostly found in discussion groups #1 and #2. Albeit less frequent, discussion group #3 displayed each identity as well, except the 'guilty' identity.

4.1 Displaying a 'guilty' identity

This paragraph shows how participants constructed a 'guilty' identity. They did so by acknowledging sustainability as important and desired, but 'admitting' to not acting upon this view. Participants hardly related their 'guilt' to unsustainable practices, they related it rather to not being engaged (enough) in sustainable practices. At the same time, they managed potential blame to different degrees, mostly in two manners; either by showing goodwill to behave sustainably (i.e. I do want to and am trying) or by showing interest.

Participants mainly made their 'confessions' in their introductions, meaning that participants constructed their first impressions as people who are aware of their 'guilt'. The pattern of presenting oneself as 'guilty' has been found 10 times, of which 6 times in combination with goodwill and interest and 4 times in combination with interest.

Note that participants introduced themselves at the start of the first session, so they provided information in relation to sustainable consumption in general, not yet specifically to sustainable *food* consumption.

4.1.1 Displaying a 'guilty' identity and managing potential blame by showing goodwill

Many participants acknowledged the importance and desirability of sustainability and as a result 'admitted' that they in fact did not behave as sustainable as they would wish. In doing so, participants clearly oriented to sustainability as the norm. Although participants 'admitted guilt', they also protected themselves against possible accusations by underlining their goodwill and interest with regard to sustainability.

The first fragment shows how Renate introduces herself, after the facilitator had asked the participants to introduce themselves including their age, residency and reason for their presence. Renate 'admits' that her efforts on sustainability are only minimal.

Fragment 1
Discussion group #1

1	Renate	Renate ((last name)), k woon in ((town name)),
2		ben tweeënzestig jaar, ben arbeidstherapeut (0.8)
3		e::n <u>ja</u> ik interesseer me in duurzaamheid
4		dus het onderwerp sprak mij aan
5		en ik probeer der <u>wel</u> wat naar te leven=
6		=al is het <u>heel</u> <u>mini</u>maal.
7	Fac1	Ja.
8	Renate	Dat ben ik me bewust.
9	Fac1	Ja, ja, bedankt.

Renate introduces herself with her name, residency, age and occupation (line 1-2) and provides the reason for her presence; her interest in sustainability (line 3). She could have stopped there, as she had given all the information that was requested by the facilitator, but she continues her sentence with a further remark on her interest in the subject (line 4), thereby stressing that she is not only interested; she *does* put in some attempt to change her lifestyle accordingly (line 5). Up until now, Renate has established sustainability as something that interests her and to which she shows goodwill to engage in. As such, her immediate continuation in line 6 ("*[ook] al* is het heel minimaal") serves as a 'confession' that her efforts are *very* minimal. It also presents her behaviour as something positive, regardless of this minimalistic nature. By showing her awareness (line 8), she further constructs her minimal effort as something that is not good enough and she may receive criticism on. Renate's introduction shows similarities to a stake confession (Potter, 1996), in the sense that she does 'confess' that she is aware of only minimally acting upon her just established norm of sustainability. We may only guess to what her stake could be: she may for example be 'blamed' of hypocrisy by saying one thing and doing another or of not behaving in an ethical manner. Whatever the stake, a 'confession' can work disarming in its honesty and puts a potential critic in the position to make a point that has already been made (Potter, 1996). If Renate were to be accused of not acting according to her own established norm of sustainability, this would actually prove her point.

Furthermore, Renate constructs sustainable behaviour as a black-box: she does not specify what sustainability entails and in what ways she is trying to change her lifestyle. By constructing the knowledge as supposedly so well-known that it does not need further explanation, Renate relieves herself from the need to provide specific examples. Participants did refer to 'sustainability' in general as well, but as we will see, the use of sustainable behaviour as a black-box occurs more often when participants 'admit' to not being as sustainable as they would like.

By introducing herself in the way she did, Renate constructed a 'guilty' identity and at the same time managed potential blame. It seems that a 'guilty' identity is something to be strived for, as Renate did not have to continue after showing her interest in sustainability and could have avoided adding her 'confession'.

In fragment 2 Miriam introduces herself in a similar way and likewise displays a 'guilty' identity. She manages potential blame for her not-so-sustainable behaviour in a different manner.

Fragment 2

Discussion group #1

1	Miriam	Ik ben Miriam ((last name)), ik ben veertig, ik kom uit ((town name)),
2		eh ik ben webdesigner (0.8) en ik ben <u>ook</u> wel geïnteresseerd in
3		duurzaamheid, maar bij mij botst het ook vaak eh op financieel vlak
4		eh dat is wel eh::, ja dat is wel iets wat eh ik probeer het <u>wel</u> te zijn,
5	Fac1	[Ja.]
6	Miriam	ik probeer er in de loop der jaren <u>wel</u> <u>steeds meer</u> bewust
7		van te worden maar (.) ja financieel is het gewoon niet altijd haalbaar.
8		((10 lines omitted of the introduction))

After mentioning her name, age, residency and occupation, Miriam states that she, like the participants before her, also has some interest in sustainability (line 2) and contrasts this interest with a financial account (line 3). Note how she uses the verb "botsen" which implies a total incompatibility. Miriam acknowledges that sustainable behaviour is desirable and shows her goodwill: she is indeed trying to act in sustainable ways (line 4). The credibility of her account is increased by the referral to the long period of time that she has been trying to become increasingly more aware: "in de loop der jaren" (line 6). Therefore, her second account for why she is still trying and not acting upon sustainability is constructed as reluctantly arrived at: by presenting sustainability as something she does strive for, she 'admits' that it is not always feasible (line 7). This second account is less grave than the first, but again she 'blames' finances for her less-than-desired sustainable behaviour (line 7).

Renate (fragment 1) and Miriam (fragment 2) both manage accountability after they 'admitted' to not behave as sustainably as they would like. They show their goodwill to act more sustainably; who would 'blame' someone of not trying hard enough when this person is already aware of it and 'admitting' it?

4.1.2 Displaying a 'guilty' identity and managing potential blame by showing interest

Other participants 'admitted guilt' without showing goodwill, but still managed potential blame by showing their interest in sustainability. By showing interest they undermined the possible accusation of not engaging with the subject at all. Even within one and the same sentence, participants could make two seemingly conflicting statements; one about their inaction or unawareness of sustainability and the other about how they *did* take sustainability into account one way or another.

This will be illustrated by fragment 3, which shows another example of an introduction in the first discussion group. Sterre combines two statements that appear contradictory and with which she displays 'being guilty' while managing blame at the same time.

Fragment 3
Discussion group #1

1	Sterre	Ik ben eh Sterre ((last name)), ik kom uit ((town name)).
2		Ik heb gestudeerd, maar ik ben momenteel werkzaam in de horeca.
3		(1.1)
4	Fac1	Wat heb je gestudeerd?
5	Sterre	Criminologie. (1.5) E::n ehm (1.6) ik ben het tegengekomen via het
6		TNS NIPO en eh ik vind het een belangrijk onderwerp,
7		maar ben er <u>totaal</u> niet bewust mee bezig.
8	Fac1	Oke.((Laughs shortly))
9	Patrick	En je leeftijd?
10	Sterre	Zesentwintig.

Sterre introduces herself by her name, residency and occupation, but unlike other participants omits her age at first (line 1-2). As she drops a pause, the facilitator asks for further information (line 4) to which Sterre answers (line 5). She continues with an account of her presence by relating to the manner in which she came across information on the citizen consultation and how she thinks sustainability is an important subject (line 5-6). Unlike previous introductions (among which those in fragments 1 and 2), she is not only interested in sustainability, but explicitly adds that she finds it important. Within that same sentence, she positions her behaviour in contrast to her acknowledgment of importance: "maar ben er totaal niet bewust mee bezig" (line 7). The extreme case formulation "totaal" with emphasis indicates a rather great contrast. The facilitator accepts this 'confession' and her laughter indicates this was an unexpected or delicate utterance (line 8). Another participant, Patrick settles the matter by continuing with a question on something that might be regarded as part of a conventional introduction: her age (line 10).

Sterre accomplishes multiple interactional goals in the way she presents herself. Firstly, she states that she is interested in sustainability and acknowledges its importance. She shows that when she encountered the subject, she took an interest and acted upon it (after all, she is present at a citizen consultation on sustainable consumption). Secondly, Sterre constructs a 'guilty' identity, by first underlining the importance of sustainability, but 'admitting' that she totally does not act upon it. In using these seemingly contradicting elements, Sterre manages her accountability: she cannot be accused of being unaware of sustainability or not acting upon it at all, because her previous statements undermine exactly that. This fragment further shows that Sterre can 'get away' with this

potential delicate contradiction, as no more attention is paid to it as Patrick continues the conversation (line 10).

This pattern of displaying interest to manage accountability for 'being guilty' is even present when participants speak out against sustainability. Let us take at a look at how Gerrit claims not to be interested in sustainability and at the same times *does* show an interest.

Fragment 4
Discussion group #2

1	Gerrit	Eh, mijn naam is eh Gerrit, je mag ook Gerrie zeggen,
2		maarreh dat maakt niet zoveel uit.
3		Negenenveertig jaar. Ben sportinstructeur, personal trainer.
4		E:::h duurzaamheid. (1.0) ↑Ja::, >ik heb er niks mee.<
5	((others))	((Good natured laughter))
6	Gerrit	[Enneh] ja nee, ik ik vind het wel mooi het verhaal.=Ik heb ook
7		periodes gehad met afval en noem maar op.
8		Maar echt daadwerkelijk iets mee hebben, nee ↓sorry.
9	Fac2	Oké, dat is ook goed, dat we ook die m(h)eenemen.

Gerrit's introduction consists of his name, age and occupation (line 1, 3) and he displays a certain relaxedness (line 1-2). Several aspects indicate that Gerrit's next utterance in line 4 may not be approved of. First, he prolongs his hesitation to start his sentence and move on to sustainability: "E:::h duurzaamheid". Second, he drops a pause that in this case seems to build tension. Third, he pronounces his opinion faster than his other talk, as if to get it over with. The delicacy of his negative opinion on sustainability is further shown by the laughter that follows in line 5 and which reduces possible tension. Subsequently, Gerrit downplays his negative view on sustainability by saying that in some way he does appreciate sustainability (line 6). He expresses his appreciation in a rather vague manner, almost as figure of speech: "wel mooi het verhaal". Drew and Holt (1998) have shown that such expressions are mostly formulated at a point where some conflict may be expected by the speaker and provide a robustness that is difficult to undermine: it is not easy to challenge Gerrit's utterance without having more information about what he precisely means. Next, Gerrit provides an example of his engagement in sustainability (line 6-7), which again presents sustainable behaviour as a black-box. He presents "periodes met afval" (line 8) as something that is so obvious that it does not need specification. However, we do not know how he managed waste more sustainably; i.e. did he decrease his waste, recycle it or separate it? His further explanation does not provide a better clarification: "en noem maar op". After this interest in sustainability and sustainable behaviour, Gerrit comes back to his original statement to not *really* be interested in sustainability and even apologizes for this (line 8). The facilitator acknowledges that his opinion is different than the others and a bit laughingly reassures him that his opinion is welcome as well (line 9).

Gerrit's whole introduction orients towards sustainability as the norm for which he has to account; by presenting his opinion as deviating and undesired, by still acknowledging some aspects of sustainability that are 'positive' and most explicitly by apologizing for his opinion. Gerrit presents himself as 'being guilty' as he is not interested in sustainability. However, he manages the potential blame for his pronounced opinion by showing some 'positive' interest in sustainability and even

some sustainable waste behaviour. Although he 'admitted' so himself (line 8), he cannot be accused of inaction or unawareness.

4.1.3 Summary

This paragraph has shown how participants admitted to 'being guilty' in their introductions and subsequently managed potential blame to different degrees. They did so in two major ways: by showing goodwill to behave more sustainably and by showing interest in the subject. Participants clearly oriented themselves to sustainability as being the norm for which one should account.

It is especially important to note that participants constructed themselves as 'being guilty' in their introductions, because it shows that participants do not treat sustainability as something to show off with or as an important part of their behaviour.

4.2 Displaying a 'casual' identity

The second pattern showed that participants constructed a 'casual' identity. They undermined that they might be 'too' sustainable or would go out of their way for it. Participants used different strategies that displayed that they were only 'casually' sustainable. First, participants showed that they did not really pay attention to sustainable food consumption. It was rather something they engaged in incidentally; only when convenient. Second, if participants did describe examples of their active engagement with sustainable food consumption, they undermined that they were taking things too far with regard to effort. Third, in theoretical situations, they showed that they did not always prioritize sustainability over other concerns, such as paying a higher price or having limited freedom of choice. In this sense, the participants did orient towards sustainability as important and desired, but not as taking precedence over other concerns. Those instances in which sustainability was not oriented to as the norm are excluded from this pattern, as this could mean that participants did not present themselves as 'casual' about it, but plainly 'against'.

As we will see, the interactional environment in which these patterns occurred differs. Participants used the first two strategies mostly in moments of self-presentation, such as their introductions or when they were asked to describe their current sustainable food practices. The third strategy however was mostly used during the discussions on the statements and as such were discussed as part of theoretical situations.

Constructions of a 'casual' identity occurred twenty-seven times, of which eight times in combination with 'not really paying attention to it', four times in combination with 'not taking things too far with regard to effort' and fifteen times in combination with 'not taking things too far with regard to price (nine) and freedom of choice (six)'.

4.2.1 Displaying a 'casual' identity by not really paying attention to it

Participants displayed a 'casual' identity by showing that they did not really pay attention to sustainability. They did however display some sort of engagement in sustainable food consumption. This pattern was most noticeable in participants' introductions and when the facilitators asked in what way they engaged in sustainable food consumption. Without exception, the participants

mentioned examples of their sustainable food practices. This might partly be explained because when people are asked for something specific, such as an opinion or a certain description, people generally provide an answer (Myers, 2004). However, it is still interesting to see how participants presented their behaviour as incidental and not something they were actively busy with.

In order to illustrate this strategy, let us take a look at fragment 5. Rutger presents his moderate commitment to sustainability as something that is self-evident, but he does not pay extra attention to.

Fragment 5

Discussion group #2

1	Rutger	Ik ben Rutger ((last name)). (1.5) Ben negenenzestig jaar. (1.8) Eh
2		(1.0), ik ben gepensioneerd. (1.2) Wel een beetje te:: (.) verwachten.
3		Maarreh, ik ben <u>ook</u> (.) <u>deels</u> <u>wel</u> met milieu bezig en,
4		maar eigenlijk, voor zover dat binne::n (.) de 'normale' omgang.
5		Ik <u>zoek</u> het niet echt op, maar ik >ga der ook niet omheen.<
6		En <u>daar</u> waar ik <u>keuzes</u> kan maken, maak ik de keuze (.) die het meest
7		milieuvriendelijk is, maar ik <u>let</u> er niet speciaal op.
8		(1.5)
9	Fac2	Nou, wel heel diverse posities, dat is wel leuk.

Rutger introduces himself with name, age and occupation (line 1-2). When turning towards the reason for being at a citizen consultation on sustainable consumption, he states that he too is somewhat engaged in environmental behaviour (line 3), but only to a certain extent: "binnen de 'normale' omgang" (line 4, the quotation marks around 'normal' are audible). In the following lines (5-7), he explains what he means by that: he is not *actively* engaged in sustainability, but when encountered with different options, he will choose the option that is best for the environment. In this way, he presents his sustainability as a bonus when it happens. He ends his explanation by again emphasizing that he does not pay any extra attention to it (line 7). Notice how 'sustainability' and what is 'normal' is again treated as a black-box: it does not need further explanation, because it is self-evident and everybody supposedly knows what he means by it.

Fragment 6 gives another example of participants who present themselves as people who only engage a little in sustainability and not that actively. In the following fragment, the facilitator makes a circle so that all participants can answer her question: if and in what way they engage in food and sustainability.

Fragment 6

Discussion group #2

1	Fac2	Hugo?
2	Hugo	Ehh, ik gooi nooit voedsel weg volgens mij.
3		Eh, (.) eten, één of twee keer per week vlees, (best wel)
4		((clears throat)) vleesvervangers of vis.
5		(1.0) Dus ehh, daar zijn we niet echt mee bezig ↓ofzo.
6	Fac2	Ja.

7		(0.8)
8	Gerrit	Ja net als hij eh (.). Bewust inkopen doen. Ik eet niet elke dag vlees.
9		Ik eet ook vleesvervangers, ko- of ehh, vegaburgers, schnitzel enzo.
10		Dus ik probeer het toch wel wat op vegetarisch gebied te gooien,
11		zeker twee twee keer in de week.
12		En daarnaast eet ik sowieso toch wel één keer in de week vis. [°Dus] ik
13	Fac2	[Hm.]
14	Gerrit	wil sowieso wel één keer in de week vis eten.°
15		En voor de rest, gooien wij heel weinig weg.

Several aspects will be highlighted to show the manner in which Hugo and Gerrit construct their identity regarding sustainable food consumption. Firstly, Hugo uses the extreme case formulation 'never' to show that he does engage in sustainable food consumption, which he subsequently weakens by "volgens mij" (line 2). He relates sustainable food practices in line 3 to meat consumption, which he eats once or twice a week. We cannot know for sure, because part of his talk is inaudible, but it seems like he presents meat substitution and fish as of the same category: sustainable options (line 4) (meat substitution was mentioned in the presentation as sustainable, fish was not). More importantly, he concludes that he and his wife are not really busy with sustainable food practices and his thoughtlessness is enforced by his use of "ofzo" (line 5).

When Gerrit starts his turn, he implies that he, just like Hugo, is not that actively involved in sustainable food practices either: "Ja net als hij" (line 8). He adds that he pays attention to his groceries and stresses he does not eat meat every day. Interestingly, nobody corrects him when he states he does not eat meat everyday, mentions schnitzel (which is meat) and concludes that these are examples of vegetarian meals (line 8-10). The manner in which he constructs his choice for vegetarian food underlines that his attempts at consuming more sustainably happen when it is convenient and hardly cost effort ("probeer het toch wel wat op vegetarisch gebied te gooien", line 9), but do pay off: at least two vegetarian meals a week (line 11). Further, he seems to make the same association as Hugo, namely that fish is an example of sustainable food consumption or at least less unsustainable than meat (line 12). Again, this behaviour is presented as hardly costing effort ("toch wel", line 12) and as something that is to his liking (line 14). Lastly, also reducing waste is presented as something that costs little effort, as it is only the remainder of his relaxed behaviour (line 14). Note that Gerrit displays more effort than is likely assumed on the basis of his introduction in fragment 4 ("E:::h duurzaamheid. (1.0) ↑Ja::, >ik heb er niks mee.<").

In sum, participants constructed a 'casual' identity by describing their sustainable behaviour as requiring little thought and effort. They presented themselves as only incidentally acting upon sustainability. This strategy already shows some resemblance to the next pattern, in which we will take a closer look at the management of effort.

4.2.2 Displaying a 'casual' identity by not taking things too far – effort

Specifically when the facilitators introduced the session on sustainable food consumption and asked participants to describe their current sustainable food practices, participants presented their behaviour as not requiring 'too much' effort. They would provide examples of their sustainable food

consumption, but would construct their behaviour as remaining within 'reasonable' limits and thereby constructed an identity of someone who only 'casually' engages in sustainability.

In the following fragment, the facilitator has asked the participants in what way they engage in sustainable food consumption. She makes a circle and when it is Isaac's turn, he provides two specific examples which present his behaviour as staying within certain limits.

Fragment 7

Discussion group #1

1	Fac1	Jij?
2	Isaac	Oh we doen dus eh:: we zijn met z'n tweeën, kinderen zijn allemaal
3		het huis uit. We proberen kleinere porties eh te kopen,
4		dat is wel ↑lastig. Dat is fysiek in de supermarkt, hoe omvangrijk
5		alles is, dan is het gewoon lastig om kleinere porties te kopen.
6		De andere is dat we <u>heel</u> <u>heel</u> consequent zijn in afvalscheiding,
7		en ehh we composte- ik maak m'n eigen compost.
8		Eh de gemeente heeft een compostcontainer verstrekt
9		en die gebruiken we al een aantal jaar. ((inaudible))
10	Fac1	Hebben jullie ook je eigen moestuin?=
11	Isaac	=<u>Nee</u>, nee, dat niet. Op zandgrond is dat (.) wat lastig.
12	Fac1	Ja, ja. Oke. En jij?

Several things may be noticed from this fragment. First, Isaac indicates that he and his wife (becomes clear from the rest of the discussions) are trying to buy food for smaller portions sizes (line 3), which would result in a smaller amount of food consumed or wasted. However, on the account of practical knowledge, he states that this is a somewhat difficult thing to do (line 4-5). His account implies that he is not actually succeeding in buying smaller food amounts: he is trying (line 3). Thereby showing that his own experiences have led him to be realistic about sustainable behaviour and acknowledge that is it is difficult. Second, he constructs a rather sustainable identity by stating that he *very* consistently composts his food waste (line 6) and indicates that he has been engaged in sustainable food behaviour since several years (line 8-9). By asking about a vegetable garden, the facilitator presents a garden as a logical result or association with composting food waste (line 10). He immediately denies this, but accepts the suggestion as logical ("dat [dan weer] niet" (line 11)). He rejects this notion on the account that having a vegetable garden on sandy soil is *"wat* lastig*"* (line 11).

In both examples of his sustainable food consumption, Isaac rejects the notion that he would take this any further than 'somewhat difficult' (line 3, 11). He thereby undermines that he would put in more effort than is to his liking and than can reasonably be expected.

As the facilitator at discussion group 1 gives all participants a turn to share their sustainable food consumption, at some point Claudia is next. She is the most elaborate in her description of her current sustainable food consumption. Even though she has previously displayed her commitment during the first four sessions of the consultation, she still manages the amount of effort sustainable behaviour takes her. Let us take a look at the first part of her description of her sustainable food consumption.

Fragment 8

Discussion group #1

1	Fac1	Oke mooi. Claudia?
2	Claudia	Ehm::, ja ook (.) minder eten. Niks in potjes en zakjes, Ik koop
3		eigenlijk niks kant en klaar. Eh ik heb samen met de buren een
4		moestuintje.=
5	Fac1	=Oh! Leuk. Ook aan huis of ergens anders?=
6	Claudia	=Eh nee, het is ergens anders.=Wel in de buurt, maar ik woon in een
7		flat, dus ik heb wel een balkon waar kruiden en dingen tomaatjes enzo
8		op staan, maar- eh::m ik ben ook lid van een gezamenlijke co-op,
9		we doen samen eh gezamenlijke inkopen bij bij de boer.
10		Dan één keer in de wee:k, eh op vrijwilligers, we wisselen ook [af, bij]
11	Fac1	[Leuk.]
12	Claudia	men[sen] die een kratje op[hal]en één keer in de week.
13	Fac1	[Ja.] [Ja.]
14		((11 lines omitted))

Claudia starts her reasonably specific description by first referring back to previous participants who also mentioned consuming less (including Isaac in fragment 7), which implies she is like everyone else (line 2). When she states she has a (small) vegetable garden with her neighbours, the facilitator directly provides a positive evaluation (line 5). The facilitator asks whether or not the garden is near her home (line 5), thereby making the closeness to home relevant (e.g. she could also have asked whether or not home-grown vegetables taste better). Due to the manner in which the facilitator asks the question, she treats the vegetable garden being near her home as the preferred option. Claudia immediately denies this, but also immediately adds that it is close by and accounts for it by living in a flat (line 6-7). She states that therefore she has herbs and tomatoes on her balcony and her "maar" in line 8 implies that this is not the same as a garden, but she continues with a different sentence. As such, Claudia presents herself as someone who likes gardening. The amount of effort needed for Claudia's next example is also managed. She highlights that buying products from a farmer is a shared effort, only once a week and the effort is rotated amongst the buyers. She uses a diminutive to describe the crate (line 9), which undermines that people would have to strain themselves in order to carry it.

This first part of Claudia's elaboration on her sustainable food consumption presents her behaviour as taking no more effort than she finds acceptable. She does so by portraying her sustainable food practices as not more than that of others, by establishing her want for a vegetable garden, which is not too far from home, and by highlighting the minimum amount of effort it takes to buy products from a farmer.

4.2.3 Displaying a 'casual' identity by not taking things too far – price and freedom of choice

The third strategy used to construct a 'casual' identity, was by displaying not to prioritize sustainable food consumption over all other concerns. Sustainability was still acknowledged as important and desirable, but was not presented as necessarily taking presence over other concerns. Often

mentioned other priorities were increased price for sustainable food products and a limited freedom of choice, but other priorities such as taste were also used.

These priorities were mainly used during the discussions of the statements. Particularly the third statement[1] elicited many referrals to freedom of choice, probably because this statement provided the participants with a theoretical situation in which they would not longer have the freedom to choose unsustainable products.

Let us take a look at fragment 9, which shows part of a discussion on the third statement. Kirsten receives assistance from the government and explicitly shows she has other priorities than sustainable food consumption, while Esmee tries to discuss the desirability of sustainability apart from costs.

Fragment 9

Discussion group #3

1	Kirsten	Dus als nou de consument <u>eigenlijk</u> gedwongen wordt om (0.9) via de
2		producent alleen maar duurzaam, dan is die keuze weg.
3		En die verantwoordelijkheid, die eigen verantwoordelijkheid,
4		daarom onthou ik mij even (0.6) van de stelling.=
5	Fac3	=Nja, eigenlijk ben je het er dus mee oneens. Als ik dat zo=
6	Kirsten	[Ja] =Ja.
7	Esmee	In principe zou, stel nou dat het alleen maar zou zijn,
8		dan zou dat voor jou misschien best wel fijn zijn, want dan (.)
9		je zit in de bijstand en dan (heb je, dan weet je dat)
10		je altijd kiest voor de goeie pro[ducten.]
11	Kirsten	↑[Oké, m]aar dan moet het
12		kostenplaa::tje goed zijn.
13	Esmee	[Ja,] maar ik de[nk als °dat we alleen maar°]
14	Kirsten	[Als, als nou in de] supermarkt
15		allee::n maar duurzaam te krijgen is voor twintig procent meer,
16		Dan (.8) zoals het nu, zoals het nu gaat hè. Duurzaam, biologisch,
17		is (1.0) x duurder <u>dan</u> (1.3) [gewoon].
18	Esmee	[Maar] als dat het enige is wat
19		aangeboden wordt, stel dat het tegen dezelfde prijs zou zijn (1.1)
20		zou je het dan ↑oké vinden, of zou je t dan alsnog vinden
21		dat je in je keuzevrijheid [beperkt wordt?]
22	Kirsten	[Ja, maar ik kan,] kan ook een suiker fix
23		krijgen, kan ik dan ook nog naar MacDonalds,
24		waar blijft mijn (1.0) <u>complete</u> keuzevrijheid?
25	Esmee	Jah.

Several aspects with regard to having other priorities than sustainability are interesting in this fragment. Kirsten opposes the statement and explicitly uses “gedwongen wordt” (line 1), which is a

1. [1] The third statement: Producers should only be allowed to sell sustainable products, so that supermarkets only sell free-range meat, fair trade products and other products with sustainability labels.

verb that may elicit many negative associations, to describe her want of choice and own responsibility (line 2-3). In contrast, Esmee describes only being able to buy sustainable food products as something positive: “fijn” and “de goeie producten” (line 8, 10). She carefully refers to Kirsten receiving assistance and argues that it may be beneficial for Kirsten if there would be no difference between products (line 7-10). Before Esmee can finish her sentence however, Kirsten already refers to price (line 11-12). While Esmee tries to form another argument (line 13), Kirsten interrupts her again to continue her argumentation on price to argue against sustainable food products (line 14-17). When Esmee takes price out of the discussion in (line 18-19), she already orients to freedom of choice as argument against only sustainable products in supermarkets (line 20-21). Subsequently Kirsten implies with her rhetorical question that she rejects an ‘all-sustainable-assortment’. She stresses that she wants ‘complete’ freedom of choice (line 24) to be able to eat unhealthy and possibly unsustainable food products (line 22-23).

In this way, Kirsten does not contest the desirability of sustainability, but she does argue that it is not important enough to justify a higher price or a limitation in freedom of choice. Participants did not imply that sustainability would not be desired as such, but rather presented possible disadvantages thereof as resulting in taking things ‘too far’. In that sense, sustainable food consumption would no longer be regarded as ‘casual’. By showing that there are other concerns that compete with sustainability, participants showed that they are not taking things too far and constructed a ‘casual’ identity.

Participants not only acknowledged having other priorities themselves; they also attributed this identity to others. Fragment 10 starts directly after the facilitator gives the fourth statement: the government should collect taxes on products that are not produced in a sustainable manner.

Fragment 10

Discussion group #2

1	Hugo	Ja.
2		(1.0)
3	Fac2	Hugo zegt ja.=
4	Hugo	=Ja, tuurlijk.
5	Fac2	Maar wat zijn jouw redenen daarvoor?=
6	Hugo	=Nou, financiële prikkel aan de consumenten geven
7		anders komt dat nooit aan.
8		(1.2)
9	Christa	Ja, das waar.

Hugo is the first to react to the statement and agrees with a clear “Ja” (line 1). When the facilitator repeats his answer as to elicit a further response (line 3), he immediately reacts with another confirmation and adds an extreme case formulation to his statement: “ja, tuurlijk” (line 4). Pomerantz (1986) has showed how people can use extreme case formulations to counter possible challenges to the legitimacy of amongst others accusations. Hugo states that his reason for agreeing with the statement is that consumers need the financial incentive, because otherwise they will not act upon sustainable food consumption (line 6-7). As this answer is oriented towards sustainability as something to be strived for, the selection of price over sustainability may be seen as an accusation. Again, he uses an extreme case formulation to strengthen his claim (“never” line 7) and Christa

subsequently agrees with his argument (line 9). By stating that 'of course' (line 4) consumers need a financial incentive, Hugo implies that other have other priorities than sustainability as well.

3.2.4 Summary

Participants used three strategies to construct a 'casual' identity. Firstly, they displayed a certain thoughtlessness about sustainable food consumption to construct their sustainable behaviour as occurring only incidentally. Second, if participants did actively engage in sustainable food consumption, they would show that the amount of effort was to their liking and that they were not putting in 'too much' effort. Thirdly, participants showed to be concerned about other aspects of food consumption as well. In using these three strategies, participants still oriented towards sustainability as the norm.

These strategies were again mostly used in moments of self-presentation: when introducing themselves or describing their actual behaviour. Only the third strategy was mostly used during the statements, when participants were not individually asked for their opinion and could therefore contribute to the discussion if and whenever they liked. This may partly be due to the theoretical nature of the statements, particularly the third statement elicited reactions on freedom of choice.

4.3 Displaying a 'sceptical' identity

The third pattern that emerged from the discussion groups is that participants constructed a 'sceptical' identity. They displayed institutional scepticism, which Wynne (2006) uses to refer to science and government, but in which I will include industry as well. Whereas government (specific governmental institutions or in general) was presented as not to be trusted, participants presented industry as not to be trusted specifically due to its supposed commercial motives.

A 'sceptical' identity was mostly displayed during the discussion of the statements and occurred five times with regard to industry and four times with regard to government.

Let us take a look at fragment 11. The fragment follows on a discussion in which unsustainable food consumption was discussed: cookies that are sold with three layers of packaging. Wendy reacts to this by mentioning an example of sustainable food consumption, to which Rick displays scepticism.

Fragment 11
Discussion group #2

1	Wendy	In Amersfoort [is overigens een] winkel geopend waar ze <u>geen</u> verpakking gaan
2	Christa	[Maar dan denk ik-]
3	Wendy	gebruiken.
4	Christa	↑Handig. ((agreeing))
5		((1 line omitted))
6	Wendy	Ik wil zo nu en dan ook gewoon even hè, er bestaan projecten die p(h)ositief zijn.
7	Christa	>J(h)a.<
8	Rick	Dat zal de NVWA wel weer gaan achter komen dat het onhygiënisch is.=
9		((1 line omitted))

10	Wendy	=Jah, en in Duitsland hadd[en ze er ook één-]
11	Willemijn	[Ja, maar vroeger] kreeg je ook alles in papieren zakken.
12	Rick	Vroeger werden we nooit ziek kennelijk. (0.6) Tegenwoordig worden we overal
13		ziek van.=
14	Willemijn	=Ja. (0.4) Tis allemaal te schoon.
15		(0.6)
16	John	Tuurlijk. Dat is het.

Wendy provides an example of sustainable food consumption that has already been implemented and which therefore may be regarded as realistic (line 1,3). According to her this is a positive example (line 6), to which Christa agrees (line 7). Note how Christa calls a store with no packaging 'handy' (line 4). Wendy presents it as the counterpart of unsustainable food consumption and therefore as being distinctively sustainable, but Christa implies that her first evaluation of the initiative is positive due to practicality instead of sustainability. Rick however implies in line 8 that the project will probably be made difficult or even impossible, because the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (translation of "NVWA" (NVWA, 2011)) will discover it does not reach hygiene standards. He presents his judgement of the situation using a script formulation (Edwards, 1994). A script formulation constructs an event as routine or expectable: if this, then that. In this way, Rick implies that *if* there is a positive project, *then* it is to be expected that the "NVWA *wel weer*" discovers a problem (line 8). As the reactions show, others support his judgement. Wendy, who provided the example, agrees directly with his judgement in line 10 and starts a next sentence about a store without packaging in Germany, but is interrupted by Willemijn (line 11). Willemijn, Rick and John subsequently reach an agreement that in earlier times paper bags were used and people in general ("we" line 12) did not get ill (line 11-12). This is presented as in contrast to current days (line 12-14), because hygiene rules are too strict (line 14-16).

In this way, Rick displays institutional scepticism that when a positive and sustainable project finally exists, the NVWA will create a problem. Other participants accept this scepticism and affirm this view of a governmental institution that takes rules too far and becomes overprotective. As such, the participants construct a 'sceptical' identity with regard to institutions.

Fragment 12 shows another example of participants who display institutional scepticism. The discussion starts after the participants talk about difficulties associated with the fourth statement: the government should collect taxes on products that are not produced in a sustainable manner. Christa questions the sustainability claims on food products made by industry.

Fragment 12

Discussion group #2

1	Christa	En misschien ook de vraag gaan we niet- gaan bedrijven niet meer
2		sjoemelen met eh:: hè, t buiten EU, [of in] ander[e land, [en dan maar een]
3	John	[Jaha.] [Tuurlijk. Ja.
		Tuurlijk.]
4	Christa	[stickertje plakken van] (.) hè tis duur[zaam gema-.]
5	(male)	[Tuurlijk gebeurt dat.]
6	John	[>Gebeurt nu al hoor.<]=
7	Christa	=Het wordt nu al gedaan, maar dat het nog meer op grotere schaal zal

8		worden gedaan, omdat ze denken van ↑hé [(0.2)] we we doen het- we
9	(male)	[Ja.]
10	Christa	doen het in Hongarije, voor tachtig cent. Wat normaal in Nederland
11		één tachtig zou kosten, en we zetten neer van het is duurzaam gemaakt.

Christa brings in that 'maybe' it should be questioned whether companies would 'cheat' with claiming that a product is sustainable, while it in fact may not be (line 1-2,4). John and another (unidentifiable) male participant agree with her (including extreme case formulations) before she is even done clarifying how companies "sjoemelen" with claiming sustainability (line 3,5). Her "hè" in line 2 and 4 also seem to appeal on knowledge that may be shared: "you know, right?". Although Christa implies that companies already cheat and would cheat even more if taxes would be collected on unsustainable products ("gaan bedrijven niet meer sjoemelen" line 1-2), she does present her utterance cautious: "misschien" in line 1 and no emphasis on "*meer* sjoemelen". The other male participant and John however repeatedly undermine that there would be any doubt (line 3, 5-6), to which Christa interrupts her sentence to agree that cheating is indeed already happening, but presents her point being that it would happen *even more*. The reason she gives for these unjust claims on sustainability is that companies are focussed on profit and in her argumentation, she uses 'active voicing' that starts in line 8 "hé (0.2) we we doen het-" and continues until line 11 "en we zetten neer van het is duurzaam gemaakt." Christa is actively giving voice to the hypothetical thoughts of companies in general (it is very unlikely that she has once been in a situation with 'companies' in which they told her what they were thinking). Several authors have studied 'active voicing', meaning that the speaker gives voice to what has once been said without it referring to a hypothetical situation (i.e. "and then he said …"). Holt (1996) argues that 'active voicing' is meant to give the listener 'access' to what was said or thought and Potter (1996) explains that it is generally not meant to give a literal description, but rather 'the *kind* of things that were said or people would have said' (emphasis in original). As such, Christa not only states she knows what companies (hypothetically) think, she may increase the credibility of her claim by enacting these thoughts. Lastly, note how Christa refers to a plural of companies: "bedrijven" in line 1, "ze" in line 8 and "we" in line 8. She does not mention one particular company and does not needs to specify what kinds of companies she is talking about for others to agree with her: the focus on profit is accepted as prevalent among all sorts of companies.

4.4 Displaying an 'ethically aware' identity

From the material we have seen so far, sustainable food consumption has not been presented as something that participants eagerly engage in. It was only in few cases that participants explicitly presented themselves as 'ethically aware'. This term is chosen, because when participants gave reasons for sustainable food consumption, these not only included sustainability but also other ethical reasons, such as health and animal welfare. Participants constructed an 'ethically aware' identity when they explicitly used ethical motivations for their opinions or behaviour; there could be no doubt that they were ethically motivated. To illustrate this point: stating that one does not buy strawberries in winter due to the travel miles is explicitly presented as motivated by sustainability, whereas reducing food waste without further explanation may be motivated by sustainability, but might as well be motivated by financial reasons. This 'ethically aware' identity was however not

often displayed and if so, then it could expect little acceptance. As the following fragments will show, participants could for example be 'accused' of idealism.

When the interactional environment in which participants displayed 'ethical awareness' was their introduction, there were generally no reactions. Negative reactions were typically given when participants described their current sustainable food consumption as ethically motivated or when they displayed 'ethical awareness' during discussions of the statements.

An 'ethically aware' identity was displayed ten times, of which two times it received positive responses, four times there was no response and four times a negative response.

The following fragment shows how Wendy treats the label 'idealistic' as an accusation and as a result downplays her 'ethical awareness'. The fragment follows a discussion on the price difference between normal and sustainable salmon. Some men argue that due to the difference, almost nobody buys the latter. Gerrit notes however that the sustainable ones reach their expiration date and are lowered in price 'because nobody buys them'. Let us see how the discussion continues.

Fragment 13

Discussion group #2

1	Gerrit	Er is niemand die hem koopt namelijk.
2	(male)	°Nee° ((agreeing))
3	(others)	((inaudible talk for 1.3 sec))
4	Wendy	Ik koop de duurzame zalm wel.
5		((Laughter for 0.8 sec))
6	Gerrit	Ja::, oké maar ja, jij bent jij bent natuurlijk daar idealistisch in.=
7	Wendy	=Nou:, dat valt mee, valt mee. [Ik doe al] m'n zuivel en vlees, eh:
8	Rutger	[Gewe:ldig.]
9	Wendy	dat doe ik eh: duurzaam. Ook vanuit dierenoverweging zeg maar.
10		Eh:m, groente niet, omdat dat gewoon echt te duur is
11		en eh (0.7) dan, dan zeg maar de g(h)evoelens van de pl(h)anten.=
12	John	=Jij bent duurzaam mits tenzij.
13	Wendy	Ja, precies. Dus-

After Gerrit gives a clarification in line 1 of sustainable salmon getting a discount because they are not sold and another male participant softly agrees in line 2, Wendy makes the statement she *does* buy the sustainable salmon (line 4). This is a clear contradiction to what Gerrit said and as a result evokes laughter, which also softens the situation (line 5). Gerrit accepts that apparently his statement that nobody buys it, is false "ja::, oké" (line 6). His continuation however implies that Wendy is not like everybody else and 'of course' only acts in this sustainable way because she is driven by idealistic motives (line 6). Wendy treats this as an accusation, as she immediately reacts and mostly refutes Gerrit's assumption: "nou dat valt mee, valt mee" (line 7). In the mean time, Rutger says "gewe:ldig" as if enjoying the situation in front of him. Wendy continues to argue why she is not that idealistic by explaining that she is selective in her sustainability: she only buys sustainable diary and meat products (line 7). She adds that she also buys the sustainable version of these products for animal welfare (line 9), which is less comprehensive than sustainability in general; she stresses that she does not buy her *vegetables* sustainable, since those do not have feelings and are not included in animal welfare (line 10-11). Lastly, by mentioning that buying sustainable

vegetables are really too expensive (line 10), she presents herself as part of the group that does not prioritize sustainability over cost per se. In accordance with the discussion earlier about sustainable salmon being too expensive, she attributes a 'casual' identity to those people that do not buy sustainable products at every price, partly including herself (see paragraph 4.2.3). John concludes that Wendy is sustainable on certain conditions (line 12), which she accepts. She starts another sentence (line 13), but another participant continues the conversation in a different direction.

Fragment 11 shows several things. Firstly, following the agreement of the men that practically nobody would buy more expensive and sustainable salmon, labelling Wendy as 'idealistic' implies that her judgement is clouded by idealistic motivations. As a response, Wendy downplays her 'ethical awareness' to 'only' animal welfare, which excludes vegetables. She further presents herself as much like everyone else by deploying a strategy to construct a 'casual' identity; she shows that she is not taking sustainability too far with respect to price (line 10). Subsequently, John concludes in line 12 that Wendy is sustainable on her own conditions, which is accepted by Wendy. Therefore, being an 'idealist' carries the negative implication that one would be 'too ethically aware' and as a result would be 'taking things too far'.

The next fragment covers some interaction on the third statement and shows another negative evaluation of ethical awareness. The conversation is picked up right after a discussion on why fair trade chicken would be undesirable and the facilitator turns the discussion by asking about reasons in favour of fair trade chicken.

Fragment 14

Discussion group #2

1	Fac2	En wat zouden redenen zijn om wel, om alle, alle kippen (0.5)
2		fair trade eh te maken?
3	John	Geen.=
4	Christa	=Minder E-nummers, minder eh water en minder troep. (0.6) Gezonder.
5	Rutger	Een dierlijk best[aan.]
6	Christa	[Geen,] en [geen eh]
7	Gerrit	>[Dan word]en we nog ouder.<
8	Christa	En en
9	John	Weet je wat dat kost?=
10	Gerrit	=We worden nog ouder en ouder en ouder. Weet je wat dat kost?

After the facilitator asks about arguments in favour of fair trade chicken, Gerrit reacts curtly that there are none (line 3). Christa however provides concrete ethical reasons in line 4, which all concern health, not sustainability. Rutger adds the ethical argument of animal welfare: "een dierlijk bestaan" (line 5). In line 6, Christa says "geen, en geen eh" in an attempt to give more examples of unwanted additives that non-fair trade chickens have according to her, but she does not finish her sentence as Gerrit interrupts her (line 7). He rejects those reasons as leading to an unwanted result, namely getting healthier and therefore older: "dan worden we nog ouder". Why he treats this as undesired is not clear at first, but John complements him with a rhetorical question: reaching high age will cost a whole lot (line 9). Gerrit again repeats their shared argument in more persuasive manner by stressing "nog" and "ouder" three times. We can only guess why ageing has a high price, but it may refer to an increasing amount of health care. More important however is what Gerrit and John achieve by their

reaction. They present themselves as 'being realistic' about the disadvantage of fair trade chicken. Also, they do not prioritize sustainability or health over price and thereby portray Christa as someone who *does* take things too far and/or as someone whose judgement is too clouded by idealistic motives to make a proper judgement. Christa's clear display of 'ethical awareness' results in her being dismissed as 'idealist'.

The fragments show that displaying an 'ethically aware' identity may elicit negative responses from others, thereby showing it is an identity that is less 'interactionally appropriate'.

5. Discussion and conclusion

A shift towards more sustainable food consumption could help to reduce the stress that food production lays on the environment. Despite the recognition of the importance of identity in order to stimulate sustainable behaviour, it has not yet been researched in everyday life context. Therefore this thesis has set out to study how people themselves construct their identities with regard to sustainable food consumption and account for their behaviour in interaction with others. A discursive perspective has been adopted to answer the following research question: *What identities regarding sustainable food consumption do citizens construct in interaction and to what interactional goals?*

This chapter will provide the main results and their embedding in the literature used. It will subsequently be discussed how these results may help policy makers design policy and engage in a societal dialogue with citizens. After the limitations of this study have been covered, this chapter will end with recommendations for further research.

5.1 Main results

The results chapter has elaborated on the four major identities that citizens construct regarding sustainable food consumption and to what interactional goals. These four identities have been named the 'guilty', 'casual', 'sceptical' and 'ethically aware'. It cannot be said that there are identities that are solely 'sustainable' or 'unsustainable'. Participants rather used elements from all four identities, depending on the interactional environment and goals to be achieved. In this sense, an (un)sustainable identity is a flexible concept, as Millets (1997) also found for vegetarians. They had no problems with identifying themselves as vegetarians while also regularly consuming meat; they for example constructed those occasions of eating meat as 'lapses'. As participants for example presented their behaviour as 'incidentally' sustainable, a 'sustainable' identity was not a straightforward identity either.

The following paragraphs will show which three main conclusions can be drawn from these four identities as to what is 'interactionally appropriate' with regard to sustainable food consumption (and sustainability in general).

5.1.1 Sustainability is accepted as important and desirable

Participants clearly oriented themselves towards sustainability as being the norm by accounting for their unsustainable or less-than-desired sustainable behaviour. They treated sustainability as important and desirable and therefore, as something to be 'guilty' of for not pursuing enough. As such, sustainable behaviour was presented as 'the morally right thing to do'. As this orientation was especially visible when participants introduced themselves at the citizen consultation and referred to sustainability, it can be said that sustainability in general is the norm (instead of solely sustainable food consumption).

This is in line with studies that show that a 'sustainable' identity is often connected to beliefs about what is right (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Degenhardt, 2002; Zavestoski, 2004). People, for whom 'being sustainable' in one way or another was an important part of their identity, often said

they adjusted their behaviour according to their moral beliefs. When this failed or compromises had to be made, this could result in feelings of guilt (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Kals & Maes, 2002).

The findings of this thesis however also indicate that sustainability is not per definition the reason that is given for sustainable behaviour, since the participants gave other ethical reasons for sustainable food practices as well. The participants also seemed to connect sustainable food consumption with health and although this has not been the focus of analysis, it does resonate with other studies which have found that people hardly connect their (sustainable) food identities to environmental concerns, but rather to other ethical reasons, such as health, animal welfare and natural content (Bisogni et al., 2002; Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Lockie et al., 2002; Millets, 1997).

5.1.2 Sustainable food consumption is not something to be proud of

The second main result of this thesis is that sustainable food consumption is not something to be proud of, despite the importance and desirability thereof. Participants managed the extent to which they presented themselves as engaged in sustainability: they introduced themselves as 'guilty' and displayed their sustainable food practices as only 'casual' efforts. Sustainable food consumption was presented as something that should not be taken 'too far', which also appeared from the reactions on displays of 'ethical awareness'. Giving ethical reasons for sustainable food consumption, even when these concerned health instead of sustainability, was not something that was easily done or accepted.

That sustainability is not something to be proud of seems to be in accordance with other studies. Zavestoski (2004) showed that 'deep ecologists' sought out surroundings in which their 'ecological identity' could become meaningful through interaction with like-minded people. They would find jobs or social environments in which their ecological identity was accepted or even expected. This implies that an 'ecological identity' is not a commonly displayed identity and in general does not receive positive feedback. Also 'green consumers' indicated that they had to make compromises in order to maintain their social relations (Connolly & Prothero, 2008) and even people without some sort of 'sustainable' identity stated that they tried to behave sustainably, but had to make compromises due to social obligations (Kurz et al., 2005). Specifically with regard to food identities, people have been found to avoid being seen as an 'extreme eater' (Bisogni et al., 2002), and vegetarians also reported to eat meat at occasions due to social factors (Millets, 1997).

There are further similarities with discursive studies on eating practices that show that people generally avoided 'extremeness'. Participants of a forum on veganism constructed their identities as being an 'ordinary' person and in this way avoided the negative association of being 'complicated' (Sneijder & te Molder, 2009). Especially the study of Bouwman et al. (2009) is striking in its resemblance with the participants' focus on 'casually' healthy eating. Participants acknowledged the importance of healthy eating as something that is self-evident, but avoided to be seen as a 'health freak'. They presented themselves as being relaxed about healthy eating to avoid being seen as 'taking things too far'.

5.1.3 Sustainable food consumption is only one of many practical concerns in everyday life

The third main result is that when participants discussed their engagement in sustainable food consumption, they presented it as being one of more practical concerns in everyday life, which was one way of 'casually' dealing with it. Again, no matter how important and desired, sustainable food consumption is presented as possibly overruled by other practical concerns such as the effort or cost associated with it and participants' freedom of choice in the supermarket. Furthermore, they displayed a 'sceptical' identity as well and presented themselves as not believing everything they are told, for example with regard to sustainability claims on everyday food products made by industry.

Other authors have also found that people may select some practical concerns in everyday life over sustainability. 'Green consumers' said they had to make compromises because of their 'basic needs' (Connolly & Prothero, 2008) and Carrigan and Attalla (2001) found that young consumers stated to select price and convenience over general ethical concerns. In that same study, Carrigan and Attalla have also showed that participants displayed a certain amount of scepticism on the ethical behaviour of companies because 'all companies are irresponsible to some degree'. This seems to align with another aspect of this thesis' findings: the display of a 'sceptical' identity, which presented not only industry, but also government as not to be trusted. The study of Macnaghten et al. (1995) showed that citizens of Lancashire (England) were sceptical as well towards industry and government to sincerely foster sustainability. In focus group discussions, the citizens showed distrust against industry and government as they were commonly perceived as tending towards self-interest and short-term goals.

5.2 Recommendations

The aim of this thesis has been to aid (Dutch) policy makers with information on identities to design communication strategies or policies, or engage in a societal dialogue between government and citizens. The findings may be taken into account in two ways: as leading to instrumental recommendations or in a wider societal context.

5.2.1 Instrumental recommendations

The identities that the participants constructed with regard to sustainable food consumption may lead to several practical recommendations on communication strategies. To start, strategies should not focus on those aspects of sustainability that have already been acknowledged. The participants did not contest the importance or the desirability of sustainability; they rather portrayed themselves as 'guilty' of not acting on what would be the morally right thing to do. The use of trying to convince citizens that sustainability is necessary and should be strived for, can therefore be questioned. This might even prove counterproductive, as the repeated propagation of an already acknowledged message may lead to irritation.

Participants further displayed identities that avoided them as coming across as 'being too sustainable'. Communication strategies and policies should acknowledge that these interactional

goals imply that people do not want to exhibit their sustainable food consumption and accompanying morality. Therefore, it should be considered to not focus on sustainability as the main aspect of communication strategies and policies, but rather something that is 'casually' incorporated in them or even as something that is merely a side-effect. Although this thesis does not strive to be representative, findings indicate that effort, price and freedom of choice are participants' greatest concerns.

The institutional scepticism that participants displayed does not appear suitable for translation into single instrumental recommendations, as this seems to be a deep-rooted problem that should be addressed at a wider scale (Wynne, 2006), and will be discussed as such in the following paragraph.

To return to the ways in which sustainable food consumption could be achieved as mentioned in the introduction, the findings support several suggestions made by de Bakker and Dagevos (2012) and Schösler et al. (2012). Both studies propose that there is not one clear option that should be used, but a combination of options. De Bakker and Dagevos for example argue that most people may be reached using the two routes of weak sustainable consumption: change by stealth and moderate change. This would match with the findings of this thesis as these routes require the least amount of effort and have the least amount of impacts on one's life. Of the four policy pathways of Schösler et al. (2012), especially the incremental change towards more health-conscious vegetarian meals and using the trend towards convenience may be supported by this thesis. This is due to the focus on health instead of sustainability as reason for consuming less meat and the focus on convenience.

5.2.2 Recommendations for societal dialogue

More importantly, recommendations may be given with regard to the societal dialogue on sustainable food consumption. It may be questioned whether the current way of dealing with sustainable food consumption is to be desired. Most environmental result would be achieved if more people engage in *strong* sustainable consumption and make structural changes to their eating habits (de Bakker & Dagevos, 2012). However, if people generally try to avoid being seen as someone who is taking things too far, then this does not provide a promising outlook for a substantial increase in sustainable food consumption.

As such, the societal dialogue could focus on different concerns that participants made relevant in their construction of identities. Firstly, issues of accountability seem to be an important part of participants interactional concerns. As it is now, participants treated it as 'interactionally appropriate' to display a 'guilty' identity for not behaving sustainably enough or not at all. Also, it was accepted to mention other practical concerns in everyday life which overrule sustainable food consumption, and an 'ethically aware' identity was generally less accepted. The societal dialogue could therefore focus on making these concerns of accountability the subject of discussion by openly naming them. In this way, a discussion can be held whether or not it is acceptable that people 'get away' with saying they do not act upon sustainability. Should people be held accountable for not prioritizing sustainable food consumption enough?

This focus on the negative aspects of people's sustainable food practices may also be questioned: does it help to focus on 'guilt' and 'blaming' for a lack of sustainable eating habits? If

people would no longer have to focus on managing potential blame, this may create space to focus on the sustainable behaviour that people *do* engage in. Komduur and te Molder (2013) have made similar recommendations when they found that overweight participants interpreted talking about food, health and genetics as negotiating blame and responsibility. The authors argued that talk on genes should not be a blaming device, but 'an accountable and nuanced incentive for healthy behaviour'.

A second approach to opening up the discussion on sustainable food consumption could be to focus on concerns of reasonability. Participants presented themselves as 'casually' engaged in sustainable food practices and tended to relate 'ethical awareness' with 'taking things too far' and possibly being an 'idealist'. These underlying concerns deserve to be discussed, because it may lead to questions as to what extent one can reasonably be expected to engage in sustainable food consumption? As explained in the introduction, the possible ways for one to engage in sustainable food practices are manifold and one could hypothetically invest endless amounts of effort, time and money. When exactly is sufficient sustainability reached or, is it even possible to reach 'complete' sustainable food consumption? If one would apply these questions not only to food, but also to other aspects of living that may at present be unsustainable (i.e. transport, housing and electronic goods), is it not unreasonable to keep striving for more and more sustainability?

By treating these concerns seriously instead of as excuses for not taking responsibility, the value they hold may be discussed, evaluated and taken into account. The government could for example design communication strategies to acknowledge that 'infinitely' striving for sustainability may be regarded as 'too much' and that citizens should make choices in their engagement in sustainability. They could play a facilitating role in providing information for choosing between different sustainable practices; the environmental profit thereof and the amount of effort, time and cost that are associated with it. Advising citizens to be selective in their behaviour may also decrease the focus on 'guilt' and 'blame', as it is acknowledged that not all behaviour could or should be sustainable and the focus may shift to what sustainable behaviour people *do* engage in.

The third approach surrounds issues of distrust. The participants displayed a 'sceptical' identity in which they displayed distrust against government and industry. Wynne (2006) has argued that institutional distrust arises from a lack of genuine understanding of legitimate public concerns. Although with institutions he refers to government and policy that is informed by science, industry may be included as they may also be supported by science. Also, both encounter scepticism in this thesis, as well as in the study of Macnaghten et al. (2006) which has shown that citizens of Lancashire do not trust government and industry to promote sustainability. Citizens showed doubts about their motivations, which are presumed to tend towards self-interest and short-term goals. Both Wynne (2006) and Macnaghten et al. (1995) propose that the public should be genuinely listened to in a dialogue aimed at understanding. Because, as the former argues, institutions should no longer label the public as having some deficit, such as not understanding science or being emotional instead of rational, but critically reflect upon themselves if they have genuinely listened to the public instead of imposed their own meanings upon them.

In sum, these concerns of accountability, reasonability and distrust should be openly discussed in a societal dialogue aimed at genuine understanding. In this way, a dialogue could maybe help to shift

the focus away from 'guilt' and 'blaming' and allow for engagement in sustainable food consumption to lead to a more preferred identity that people strive for.

5.3 Limitations

As Silverman (2013) argues; 'naturally occurring data are never uncontaminated', if only for the recording and transcription thereof. The setting of the citizen consultation may have had a more substantial influence than that, for the participants to talk in a different manner than if they were, say, at home talking to their relatives about sustainable food consumption. Despite the emphasis of the organization that the outcome of the discussions did not matter, a citizen consultation on sustainable consumption can be regarded as an institutional setting in which participants are asked for their opinions and own sustainable behaviour. They could be held accountable for their behaviour and this may have elicited the orientation towards sustainability as something to account for and as a result the 'confessions of guilt'. That being said, the focus on not being too 'complicated' has also been found in a non-institutional setting by Sneijder and te Molder (2009). They have found that vegans (also an identity that may be connected to 'ethical awareness') undermined the 'complicatedness' of their eating practices in an online forum. Other aspects of the setting that were of influence are the use of statements that guided the discussions towards certain topics and the presence of a facilitator. As much as one may try, a facilitator cannot possibly be entirely neutral. As we have seen, this was indeed not the case and therefore the facilitators' utterances have been included in analysis. To mention another example: natural reactivity of participants could be influenced as well because the facilitators were instructed to make sure all participants had a chance to speak.

As explained in the methodology, in accordance with the nature of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), this thesis does not claim any representativeness of the findings among a wider sample. The aim has been to show the range of identities that participants constructed and the nature thereof. The results are based on (only) two hours of interaction and could therefore inspire analysis of a larger sample of (more naturalistic) data.

5.4 Further research

Due to limitations in scope and time of this thesis, some aspects have not received the attention they deserve. Especially three aspects emerged from the data that seemed to require further investigation, namely health, responsibility and the distinction between citizens and consumers. Health has been mentioned before; health examples were used often (especially during the second statement[2]) and participants seemed to relate sustainable food consumption to foods that are healthy, unmodified and natural. A second aspect that has not been chosen for further analysis is responsibility. Participants sometimes took full responsibility for sustainable food consumption, while at other times placed responsibility with government or industry. This focus could be combined with an examination of how people talk about having the capability or power to make a change. The

[2] The second statement: Citizens are actually capable to change their consumption pattern.

third aspect is that participants did not seem to differentiate between a 'citizen' identity and 'consumer' identity and associated characteristics. This seems to be in line with the argumentation of de Bakker and Dagevos (2012) that the distinction between citizens and consumers is an artificial one, made by literature in general. However, it is unknown what the influence is of addressing participants specifically as citizen, as happened at the citizen consultation. It might be that as a result, participants were prompted to only speak of citizens and neglected the potential difference altogether. Further research could show whether or not people themselves make a distinction between a 'citizen' identity and 'consumer' identity and associated characteristics.

Although the focus of this thesis has been on sustainable food consumption, there are clear indications that similar findings might be present in interaction on sustainability as such. The participants displayed a 'guilty' identity in their introductions, which were on sustainability in general and not yet specifically sustainable food consumption. Also, the identities that participants constructed show similarities in the sense that sustainability is generally not presented as something to be proud of. Therefore further research could focus on this possible 'general trend' towards 'not-being-too-sustainable' and examine whether it is also present in talk on sustainability in general and/or in different fields of sustainability, such as transport, housing and electronic goods.

In correspondence with the recommendations of this thesis, further research could focus on ways in which these concerns of accountability, reasonability and distrust can be properly discussed in societal dialogue and examine whether this, as proposed, would aid a shift towards the engagement in sustainable food consumption as leading to a more preferred identity.

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Appendix A - Transcription symbols

A simplified and adjusted version of the Jefferson Transcription System (Jefferson, 2004)

[ ]	Start and end of overlapping speech
(.)	A brief interval that is too short to measure (approximately a tenth of a second)
(0.4)	Elapsed time in seconds
( )	Inaudible speech
(word)	Dubious what was said or who said it in case of speaker
((laughter))	Clarifying information
W(h)ord	Laughter within speech
<u>Word</u>	Some form of stress
°Word°	Softer than surrounding speech
WORD	Louder than surrounding speech
Wo-	A cut-off or self-interruption
=	No break or gap
:	Prolongation of the immediately prior sound
↑↓	High or low pitch
>word<	Faster than surrounding speech
<word>	Slower than surrounding speech

Appendix B - Summary of information in videos and presentation

A summary and translation of relevant information provided to participants in videos and presentation.

Information on sustainable consumption:

The goal of sustainable consumption is to improve the current quality of life, without decreasing possibilities for future generations. Sustainability takes people, planet and profit into account to do so in a balanced manner.

The definition of sustainable consumption is consumption that uses the least possible amount of natural resources and reduces pollution as best as possible. Sustainable consumption also increases social equality and prosperity.

Sustainable consumption is important because of multiple reasons. There are not enough natural resources on earth to sustain our current level of production and consumption forever. If consumption remains at the current rate, a second planet is needed around 2030. Our consumption not only has local, but worldwide impact. Many of the products that are consumed in Europe are imported from abroad, like jobs, electronic products, energy and cars.

There are three manners in which sustainable consumption can be achieved. The first manner is to keep consuming at current rates, but shift towards sustainable products. The second manner is to reduce consumption. The third manner is to produce as least waste as possible.

Three important stakeholders should be taken into account to create effective policy measures: the government, industry and societal organizations. Together they form the 'triangle of change'. Each group has own targets and tries to influence the other groups. The trick to create successful policy is to align these groups.

Policy measures can be created, implemented and maintained at different levels: locally, nationally, internationally or worldwide. Each level has advantages and disadvantages in terms of conformity and speed of implementation.

There are four categories of policy: education, regulation, financial incentives and suggestion. Each has advantages and disadvantages with regard to effectiveness, costs, resistance and duration.

Change can be achieved in two manners: top-down or bottom-up. There are many ways in which citizens can exert influence, e.g. with buying power, political influence or by setting a good example.

Even if the consumption in developed countries would decrease, the worldwide consumption would probably still increase.

Information on sustainable *food* consumption:

European citizens are on average for 60% dependent of meat for their protein intake. The production of meat requires huge amounts of water, land area and feed. The pressure of meat on natural resources is further increased because European citizens on average consume 50% more protein than needed. If European citizens would halve their consumption of meat and diary, the emissions of greenhouse gases by agriculture would probably decline with 25% to 40%.

Every year, 90 million tonnes of food is wasted in the EU. That is the same as 180 kg per person. One third thereof is still suitable for human consumption. Farmers, producers, retailers and consumers produce food waste in each phase of the food chain. In the EU 40% of the waste is produced by end users or consumers. Reducing food waste has several advantages. If 40% less food is wasted, an area of 30.000 square km land would not be needed for food production. Such a land area is almost the same area as Belgium.

The introductory presentation at the start of the fifth session on sustainable food consumption discusses several options:

- Reduction of consumption: The average Dutch person consumes around 70% too much protein and 40% too much calories, so consuming less would be better.

- Reduction of food waste: The FAO estimates that about one third of all food is wasted worldwide. Estimations for the Netherlands are that 50% of food is wasted by consumers, 25% by agriculture and 25% by industry.

- Increase of food with labels: It is more sustainable to buy food with labels. However, confusion exists due to the increase of labels.

- Shift from animal proteins to plant proteins: It is more sustainable to consume less meat, and possibly also other animal products such as diary, and to consume more vegetables and fruit. This is important because meat production imposes a heavy burden on land and water.

- Increase of new products: Insects, for example grasshoppers, are other sources of animal protein that are much more efficient in their energy efficiency than meat.

- Increase of local food: Science has proven however that transport only emits a very small amount of CO^2 emissions of food production. On first sight it seems to be an attractive alternative, but when taking actual CO^2 emissions into account, it might easily prove to be better for CO^2 emissions to buy tomatoes from Spain instead of the Netherlands in wintertime.

Appendix C – Fragment 2

Fragment 2

Discussion group #1

1	Miriam	Ik ben Miriam ((last name)), ik ben veertig, ik kom uit ((town name)),
2		eh ik ben webdesigner (0.8) en ik ben ook wel geïnteresseerd in
3		duurzaamheid, maar bij mij botst het ook vaak eh op financieel vlak
4		eh dat is wel eh::, ja dat is wel iets wat eh ik probeer het wel te zijn,
5	Fac1	[Ja.]
6	Miriam	ik probeer er in de loop der jaren wel steeds meer bewust
7		van te worden maar (.) ja financieel is het gewoon niet altijd haalbaar.
8		En ik vind ook, dat eigenlijk dat eh:: de gemeentes en het rijk,
9		dat dat gewoon wel mogelijk is. Afval scheiden en dat soort dingen.
10		Kan het theoretisch heel leuk zijn, maar in de praktijk (.) is het lastig.
11		Wat het wel bijvoorbeeld is, eh afval scheiden dat je per vuilniszak
12		nu gaat betalen, dat is heel goed om bewust ervan te zijn, >maar dan
13		zit je in de zomer bijvoorbeeld< met heel veel plastic dat gaat sti:nken.
14	Fac1	Ja.
15	Miriam	Nou goed, daar is dan heleboel discussie over van van hoe kan je
16		dat nou aanpakken.
17	Fac1	Zullen we het ook nog over hebben, denk ik zo. ((Laughs))

Appendix C – Fragment 8

Fragment 8

Discussion group #1

1	Fac1	Oke mooi. Claudia?
2	Claudia	Ehm::, ja ook (.) minder eten. Niks in potjes en zakjes, Ik koop
3		eigenlijk niks kant en klaar. Eh ik heb samen met de buren een
4		moestuintje.=
5	Fac1	=Oh! Leuk. Ook aan huis of ergens anders?=
6	Claudia	=Eh nee, het is ergens anders.=Wel in de buurt, maar ik woon in een
7		flat, dus ik heb wel een balkon waar kruiden en dingen tomaatjes enzo
8		op staan, maar- eh::m ik ben ook lid van een gezamenlijke co-op,
9		we doen samen eh gezamenlijke inkopen bij bij de boer.
10		Dan één keer in de wee:k, eh op vrijwilligers, we wisselen ook [af, bij]
11	Fac1	[Leuk.]
12	Claudia	men[sen] die een kratje op[hal]en één keer in de week.
13	Fac1	[Ja.] [Ja.]
14	Claudia	Ehm, ik let ook inderdaad altijd op de afgekeurde dingen. Als ik dan in
15		de winkel ben, dan neem ik inderdaad en beetje die lelijke courge::tte,
16		die mensen dan niet willen. Ik gooi zelden iets weg. Komt eigenlijk
17		nooit voor. Ehm, ja ik let dan toch op lokaal, nou ja dat is dan heb ik

18		inderdaad ook de laatste tijd is daar steeds meer over bekend (en dan
19		kunnen we daar-), maar ja ik koop ook in het seizoen. Dus ik let ook
20		altijd op waar komt het vandaan, komt het wel uit de buurt.
21	Fac1	[Ja.]
22	Claudia	Ja wat ik nodig heb, ehm ik eet biologisch grotendeels:, eh en
23		vegetarisch en geen zuivel.
24	Fac1	Ja. (1.0) Ehm, jij?

Appendix C – Fragment 11

Fragment 11

Discussion group #2

1	Wendy	In Amersfoort [is overigens een] winkel geopend waar ze <u>geen</u> verpakking gaan
2	Christa	[Maar dan denk ik-]
3	Wendy	gebruiken.
4	Christa	↑Handig. ((agreeing))
5	(male)	In België [((inaudible))]
6	Wendy	[Ik wil zo nu en] dan ook gewoon even hè, er bestaan projecten die
7		p(h)ositief zijn.
8	Christa	>J(h)a.<
9	Ron	Dat zal de NVWA wel w[eer gaan achter komen] dat het onhygiënisch is.=
10	(male)	[In België ((inaudible))]
11	Wendy	=Jah, en in Duitsland hadd[en ze er ook één.]
12	Willemijn	[Ja, maar vroeger] kreeg je ook alles in papieren zakken.
13	Ron	Vroeger werden we nooit ziek kennelijk. (0.6) Tegenwoordig worden we overal
14		ziek van.=
15	Willemijn	=Ja. (0.6) Tis allemaal <u>te</u> schoon.
16		(0.6)
17	John	<u>Tuurlijk</u>. Dat is het.