

Food for Thought

How can we relate worldviews and behaviour? A case study of sustainable food consumption in the Netherlands

A PhD research under supervision of Prof. J.J. Boersema

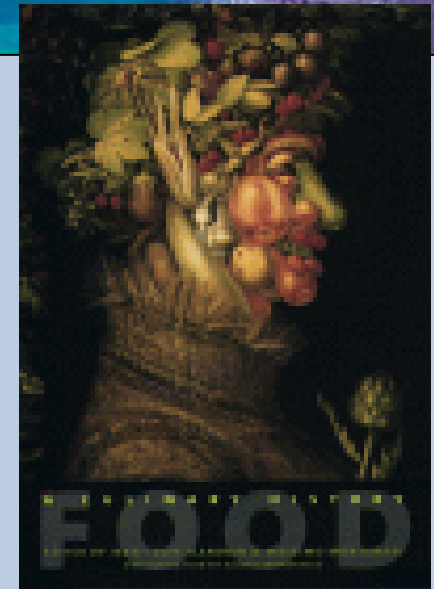
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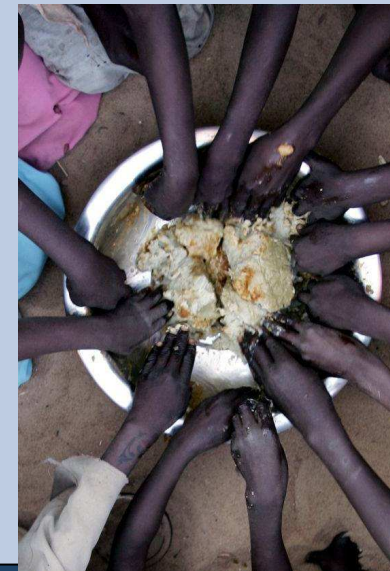
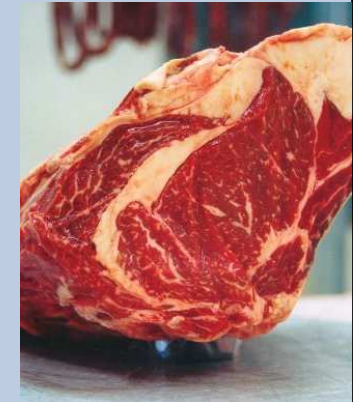
Overview

1. What's at issue with food and sustainability
2. Food is culture
3. How can we relate cultural values to behaviour
4. Methodological considerations
5. Ongoing fieldwork
6. Preliminary conclusions



Why is food consumption relevant to sustainability?

- Environmental and social issues
- What's more sustainable
 - Reduced consumption of meat and fish
 - Less and animal friendly meat
 - Environmentally friendly production methods
 - Attention to provenance and “food miles”
 - Reduction of food waste



Theoretical background – what's the role of culture?

- Food is culture
 - Personal and group identity
 - Male or female
 - Clean or unclean
 - Belonging or distinction
 - Communication
- Food culture is changing



-> Changing food consumption patterns means addressing culture

Where will changes take us?

Global market
(A1)

A1: De prestatie maatschappij
Door een vrije markt, meer economische groei en meer
individuele welvaart



B1: Het internationale en nationale gemeenschappelijk welzijn
Zorg en welzijn in de hele wereld en onze eigen samenleving



Global
solidarity (B1)

Safe region
(A2)



A2: De besloten, veilige en leefbare samenleving
Behoud van onze welvaart en cultuur



B2: Een samenleving met gevoel voor gemeenschapszin
Zorg en welzijn in onze eigen, directe sociale leefomgeving

Caring region
(B2)

Figuur 2.2.2. Visualisatie van wereldbeelden (RIVM-MNP en TNS-NIPO, 2004)

Values matter – but how exactly?

- Values and behaviour
 - ~ 25% in NL with universalist values
 - ~ 2% organic consumption
 - ~ 4% vegetarians



- Structural barriers to act according to your values?

A case study of sustainable consumption

Method

- Selection of consumers based on behaviour (ie. organic shops, farmer's markets)
- Ethnographic interviewing with consumers (Spradley, 1980)
- Visual ethnography of shops



Why ethnography?

- Meaning is embedded in artifacts (language, objects, patterns of action)
- Entrance to tacit knowledge of values and beliefs
- Understanding how individual views the world



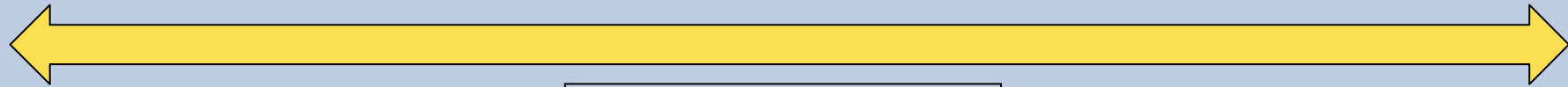
Outcomes

The heavy user

(almost exclusively organic, farmer's market etc)

The light user

(incidental sustainable choice)



Good eating is quality of life

Food has intrinsic value, just as animals and nature do

Food deserves respect

Season and provenance crucial

Autonomy, creativity

Deeply reflective of choice

Emotional awareness

Shared
Importance of animal welfare, environment

Health

Meat has inferior position in menu

Food not essential to happiness

Health result of little fat, calories

Trade-off mentality

Follow structure offered to them

Structural obstacles like prices

Preliminary analysis

- Cluster of values points at shared worldview
- Food choice trajectories (Devine, 1998)
- Trade-off mentality versus principal mentality
- Do we need a combination of values and reflective practice?
 - To facilitate autonomous behaviour
 - To connect body and mind

Implications for sustainable consumption patterns

- Outlook light consumers: high potential for behaviour change (trajectory)
- Structural adjustments are necessary
- Reflective practice can be facilitated

