

Freie Universität Berlin
Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology

Master thesis

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Summer Semester 2019

**Narratives on animal-based food in agri-food transitions –
From edible to animal**

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Master in Social and Cultural Anthropology

Semester VI

Submission: 6th September 2019

Abstract

In the global food system, it seems that animals rather hold the position of a commodity, a thing, than that of an actual living being. This thesis aims at examining how different actors seek to transform the position of the animal in the agri-food system. To this end, constructions of alternative discourses on animals in the animal-based food sector are analysed from perspectives of anthropology and transition studies. How can alternative voices about animals in the agri-food system be highlighted, countering dominant narratives about human-animal relationships? For investigating these questions, I analyse three case studies in the Netherlands, namely the Party for the Animals (PvdD), the Herenboeren (Farming Communities) and the Better Life label (beter leven keurmerk), all dealing with aspects of animal welfare and animal rights in the animal-based food sector. I see a potential in drawing more attention to the perspectives of animals for transforming the farming industry. All three initiatives promote very different approaches to transforming the position of the animal in the agri-food system.

Keywords: animal welfare • agri-food system • the Netherlands • positive discourse analysis • human-animal relations • anthropology of food • transition studies

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List of Abbreviations

APF	Animal Politics Foundation
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CDS	Critical discourse studies
EU	European Union
MaP	Multi-actor Perspective
MP	Member of Parliament
NGPF	Nicolaas G. Pierson Foundation
PDA	Positive discourse analysis
PvdD	Party for the Animal (Partij voor de Dieren)
WRR	Scientific Council for Government Policy

Humans believe they control everything, but they do not even control themselves. [Der Mensch meint alles zu beherrschen, aber beherrscht nicht einmal sich selbst.]

- Morin & Courchamp, 2018

1. Introduction

Food occupies a fundamental place in human existence. Everyone needs food. It can thereby be said to be inherently political in various ways. Access, availability and affordability of food, as well as food choice are connected to freedom, democratic processes and aspects of cultural identity, as much as to processes of exclusion, exploitation and oppression manifested in asymmetric power dynamics. In Europe severe discrepancies run through all kinds of processes surrounding food (Fourat & Lepiller, 2017; Spaargaren et al., 2012). Even for those who perceive their food choice as free and independent, it might not be as free as they would like it to be. Already after breakfast, we were dependent on thousands of people, working in the food industry, to provide us with our meal. Moreover, today it is almost impossible to retrace and comprehend the processes and paths our food has gone through before we consume it. Not only on the consumption side, food is connected to asymmetric power dynamics and our vanishing ability to co-determine how our food system should look like. On the side of production, hidden dynamics of oppression are often part of this system. People from Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary working in German slaughterhouses, for example, get exploited as cheap labour, working under unacceptable conditions (Balsler, 2015). Besides exploiting the planet and people for the production of palm oil, coffee or chocolate, just to mention some examples, we also use and kill animals for our lust for meat and other products that originate from animals.

Animals have always played a significant role in humans' lives. As provider of companionship they become our friends, as war instruments they boosted us to power, as supplier for clothing they keep us warm, and as source of food they become the steak on our plate. With the human population steadily growing on the global level, also the appetite for animal products, such as meat, fish, eggs or dairy products is rising. The production and consumption of food originating from animals rises on a global level (Fourat & Lepiller, 2017). This has severe implications for the planet and people, however, most directly for the animals. In the animal-based food sector, the power imbalance between humans and animals becomes particularly visible (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017). The increasing production of food

which originates from animals seems to be in line with global processes of the neoliberal commodification of nature (Hovorka, 2017; Vivero-Pol, 2017). In her ethnography *Animal to edible* (which inspired the subtitle of my thesis) Vialles describes humans as “paradoxical carnivores” (1994: 6), who eat meat but avoid to witness the slaughter of animals. It seems that animals rather appear as a commodity to us than as an actual living being with our relation to animals being rather schizophrenic.

On the opposite side, organisations and initiatives are sprouting up, speaking out for more animal rights, changing relations between humans, animals and nature, as well as the de-commodification of food. Within as well as outside of academia, a growing interest in the well-being of animals can be identified. In the field of anthropology, the study of food and eating, as well as the study of anthropological questions about relations between human and nonhuman animals, have a long and significant history, with early works dating back to the nineteenth century (e.g. Mallery, 1888). The pool of literature on food (inside and outside of anthropology) is rapidly growing, compounded by the linkage of food and eating to so many other subjects (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). With my work I want to combine anthropological insights about food and animals with knowledge from the field of sustainability transitions research (hereafter referred to as ‘transition studies’) and the increasing interest in animal welfare, human-animal and human-environment relations. This combination of research helps in understanding existing social and cultural constructions of animals in the farming system, as well as transformations of such constructions. My research questions focus on two aspects, first, how different initiatives construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system (as compared to mainstream or dominant narratives), and second, how this contributes to shifting the position of animals in the food system and to transforming our understanding of animal-human-nature relationships. I see a potential in drawing more attention to ‘the perspective of animals’ - parallel to discussions on veganism, vegetarianism, plant-based protein diets, algae proteins or artificially grown meat - for transforming the farming industry into a more sustainable and just system, turning animals from mere edible objects into conscious subjects with intrinsic value.

Geographically my research focuses on Europe and more specifically on the Netherlands. In Europe, the agricultural sector experienced enormous changes in the past century. After World War II, farms for example increased in efficiency and size to counteract famines and food shortages (Hassink et al., 2014). In the Netherlands, the agri-food sector is extremely

important for the national economy, with over 50% of the Dutch land area being used for agricultural activities, covering almost 10% of the Dutch economy and employment in 2011 (Zwartkruis, 2013). Moreover, the Netherlands are the world's second largest exporter of agricultural produce (after the US), including processed foods (Chivot et al., 2016) and is described as the “agricultural hub of Europe” (Nalon, 2019). Thus, the country holds a significant position in the global food system. In order to investigate how different actors construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system, three Dutch initiatives were chosen as case studies for the analysis, namely the Party for the Animals (PvdD), the Better Life label (BLK) and the Herenboeren (Farming Communities).

All three initiatives deal with aspects of animal welfare and animal rights in the animal-based food sector. For finding answers to my questions, in choosing the initiatives, it was important that they are oriented towards different institutional logics, involve various actors and have an active online communication. Moreover, all three initiatives were chosen in terms of their motivation for transforming the agri-food system. I use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework on discourses in combination with methods from Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). Additionally, the Multi-actor Perspective (MaP) serves as analytical tool for the discussion on the role of different actors and orientations towards different institutional logics. I mainly analyse the online communication (with a focus on the websites of the initiatives) of the three initiatives. Moreover, semi-structured interviews and participant observations help in sustaining my research.

In terms of the structure of this thesis, first, I locate the topic in the broader pool of literature in chapter 2, with a focus on perspectives from the field of anthropology and transition studies (section 2.1). Afterwards, I shortly discuss contested concepts that are important for my research (section 2.2), from there drawing on dominant narratives about the (Dutch) food regime (section 2.3). Second, the epistemological foundation, the methodological framework and the operational steps of this thesis are outlined (chapter 3), including a reflection of my position as a researcher (section 3.1), a merged theoretical and methodological foundation based on Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (section 3.2), the case study selection, based on the MaP (section 3.3), and the operational framework, which gives a systematic overview of the research and empirical questions and the structure of the analysis of the case studies (section 3.4). From there the analysis of the three case studies follows in chapter 4. In chapter 5, the different case studies are compared according to content- and process-related aspects,

discussing differences and similarities. In the conclusion, I provide answers to the research questions, outline the contribution to existing literature, and reflect on remaining questions and directions for future research.

It can be said that all three initiatives promote very different approaches to transforming the position of the animal in the agri-food system. They vary in their use of discursive strategies for constructing alternative discourses. The discourses of the different initiatives are compatible in some, and rather conflicting in other ways. The initiatives' operation on very different levels, their involvement of different actors and their reach of different audiences is particularly interesting in terms of shifting the position of the animal in the food system. Whereas the PvdD and the Herenboeren can be said to discursively shift the position of the animal in the food system towards a more egalitarian, co-determining, individual position, the BLK does not shift the position of the animal in the sense of discursively changing power dynamics. The Herenboeren and the PvdD seem to support each other with their discourses coming from different institutional logics, including different actors. The BLK, on the other hand, rather discursively sustains the position of the animal in the food system, however, making the animal more visible. They all develop alternative discourses throughout their online communication, some explicitly on animals, others more implicitly. More research has to be conducted about implicit communication in transforming social practices through text.

2. Human and nonhuman animals in the Netherlands and Europe: A literature review

This chapter serves the purpose of giving an overview of insights about food and food systems related to the position of animals in Europe, and in the Dutch farming system more specifically. I am drawing on literature from the field of anthropology, especially anthropology of food, and the field of transition studies. In section 2.1, I outline how these two research fields come together when examining the shifting position of animals in the European agri-food system. The literature review reveals three concepts that are particularly important in this context and in need of further discussion, namely the concepts of sustainability, animal welfare and the animal. In section 2.2, I critically reflect on these contested concepts. Finally, mainstream views and narratives about the Dutch farming sector and the position of the animal in it are discussed (section 2.3). This serves as a foundation to better understand how Dutch initiatives construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system as compared to dominant ones.

2.1 The fusion of anthropology and transition studies

The study of food and *foodways*¹ has always been integral to the discipline of anthropology (see Malinowski, 1921; Mintz, 1985). As the anthropologist Sidney Wilfred Mintz observed, much research of the nineteenth and twentieth century surrounds the study of food systems in societies with isolated, self-regulatory economic systems.² However, the discipline has been slow in studying more complex, global systems and its dynamics, especially in European countries (Mintz, n.d.). Therefore, this thesis will merge insights from the field of anthropology, more specifically anthropology of food, with the field of transition studies. Transition studies provides perspectives for better understanding large-scale societal transformations and the role of a variety of actors involved in such transformations. With the increasing scholarly interest in human-animal and human-environment relations, I want to tie the above mentioned foci to the importance of studying transitions towards a more sustainable and just food system. More precisely, since the perspectives of animals are rarely discussed in literature about agri-food systems and the transformations thereof, I want to contribute to this gap in literature.

¹ 'Foodways' can be described as regular food-related actions and activities (Von Poser, 2011: 185).

² As an example Mintz mentions Malinowski's work on the Trobriand Islanders (see Malinowski, 1921).

In theory building in the field of anthropology, the study of food and food systems helps in shedding light on broad societal processes, such as symbolic value-creation (Munn, 1986). Much anthropological work has focused on topics, such as food insecurity, and eating connected to rituals and identities (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Ethnographic studies more specifically dealing with food and the effects of societal change explored topics like mass production of foods (Mintz, 1985), biotechnology (Kloppenburg, 1988; Purdue, 2000), movements of people connected to food (Goody, 1998) and the globalization of foods (Miller, 1997). The perspectives of animals and aspects of human-animal and human-environment relations, however, have rarely been discussed in face of broad societal changes in the European food system. Much literature surrounding issues of (global) food systems deals with concerns of human health, environmental impact, food quality and safety, and global food security, taking macro-nutritional and macro-economic perspectives (Vinnari & Vinnari, 2014; Rockström et al., 2009; Holm & Møhl, 2000; Horton et al., 2017). Even some campaigns by animal rights organisations do not primarily address animal interests, but instead refer to aspects of human health and harm for the environment (Leuven, 2017: 4). Human-animal relationships, but also cultural aspects of eating, the symbolic implications of food or the social and cultural importance of certain food traditions connected to cultural identities, are discussed less from a socio-anthropological perspective (Fourat & Lepiller, 2017).

The animal presents the focus in large parts of our food system, namely that of the animal-based food sector. However, the perspectives of animals in this sector seem to be hidden, or presented in very specific and limited ways. Even in disciplines such as ethology or veterinary medicine, animal subjectivity is often marginal (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017). The concept of animal welfare, more specifically welfare of nonhuman animals that are kept for food purposes, seems to be used in very different ways, often aggregated in composite constructions of product quality, including aspects of ecological sustainability or notions of food quality (Miele & Bock, 2007). The concept's claim to mainly deal with the quality of life of animals is herewith diminished or vanishes completely. In his book *On Animals: Animal rights and human limitation* (2016), Precht discusses the human relations to animals. As Precht (2016) and others (e.g. Tester, 1991) notice, animal rights are not concerned with the elimination of suffering. Current animal rights legislations present an *Orientalism*³ (Said,

³ The term refers to Edward Wadie Said's book *Orientalism* (1978).

1978) of the animal, rather telling something about how humans see animals, with humans “arguing for those who cannot argue for themselves” (Cudworth, 2016: 245), than actually telling something about animals themselves and their needs.

This leads to an anthropocentric view on how animals “ought to be handled” (Korte et al., 2007), rather than scientifically examining animals’ actual needs and objectively representing their interests, acknowledging their intrinsic and individual values. History shows that the ideas people have about animals, their attitudes towards them, and the ways humans and animals relate to each other are extremely variable. In his work *What is an animal?* (1988), the anthropologist Tim Ingold draws attention to the culturally relative definition of what an animal might be, and by implication, what it means to be human. How should human cultural attitudes to animals be understood if we cannot even say what an animal is? This thesis will follow Ingold’s claim that human beings are animals in several ways too (1988), trying to reflect on the animal-based food system from that perspective.⁴ As the philosopher Richard David Precht elegantly formulates when criticising the treatment of animals: “You all know: there are two categories of animals. One believes there are two categories of animals and the other one has to suffer from it. One calls itself human, the other are simply just animals” (Biotopia, 2019).

‘Western’ moral philosophy, according to Descola and Pálsson, entails since Classical times that human animals have set themselves apart from all other nonhuman animals (1996: 2). The very discipline of anthropology still seems to be structured around a culturally constructed uniqueness of humans vis-à-vis other animals. Although the name and the field of ‘anthropology’ (ancient greek: ‘anthropo-’: man, mankind, human, humanity; ‘-logy’: explanation) still have an anthropocentric twist, more and more scholars argue for the inclusion of nonhuman animals in disciplines such as anthropology or sociology (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017; Hovorka, 2017; Cudworth, 2015). More and more researchers question the notion of human exceptionality and ask what the discipline of anthropology can contribute to the dissolution of the human-animal dichotomy, and what implications this would have. They call for critical reflection of the cultural and colonial politics and dynamics shaping human-animal and human-environment relations. Hamilton and Taylor for example argue for the

⁴ Following Ingold’s claim, I acknowledge that, in several meanings of the word, people are animals too. For convenience I will refer to ‘animals’ in my thesis when talking about nonhuman animals and refer to ‘humans’ when talking about human animals.

development of ethnographies through which the primacy of humans in social spaces and the research of those spaces gets questioned (2017: 4). Theoretically, some previously radical positions advocated by animal welfare movements have already become more mainstream in anthropology with interdependencies between different ‘species’ being acknowledged. However, empirically, with human population and consumption rising, also the (ab)use of nonhumans intensifies (Kopnina, 2017).

Questioning the position of the animal in the food system, is one of the many ways in which eating can be viewed as political. The exclusion of nonhuman animals from qualitative research presents “a silent but salient hierarchy” (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017: 3). Anthropology can contribute a great deal to breaking up this hierarchy, dissolving instead of reinforcing structural inequalities through learning from other cosmologies⁵, and with that also learning *about us*. By opening up for the perspectives of the silenced ‘others’ (human and nonhuman animals), we can expand our existing knowledges, practices and ethics. The transformation of our understanding of human-animal-nature relationships evokes a structural change of existing forms of social domination. For a better understanding of how such grand societal changes develop and how they can be supported, transition studies presents a useful perspective. It helps in thinking about radical transformative change and sustainable development, which is closely tied to aspects of animal welfare.

Transition studies is a thriving field of research, which seeks to better understand large-scale societal transformations in today’s society. Scholars in this rather young field of research have the ambition of building “a new, inspiring perspective on sustainable development” (Grin et al., 2010). In transition studies, researchers focus on questions of how and under what conditions structural systemic changes towards more sustainable and just societies take place (Hoffman & Loeber, 2016: 693). The field emerged in the past decades and is extremely inter- and increasingly trans-disciplinary⁶ in its nature. Besides domains such as energy, mobility, education and healthcare, also food is studied as a societal domain in which transitions to a more sustainable future emerge. From a focus on socio-technical perspectives on transitions, the focus by now broadened towards socio-economic, socio-ecological, socio-political and socio-cultural perspectives (Loorbach et al., 2017). In transition studies it is acknowledged

⁵ Here I am referring to cosmologies with no, or a lesser, Euro-American focus.

⁶ Transdisciplinary work is characterised by the combination of scientific and practical knowledge. It engages with the production and use of knowledge outside of academia, taking an action-oriented stance (Klein, 2004).

that numerous changes are involved in societal transition, and that transition takes place at different levels, in different domains, involving a kaleidoscope of actors that interact and reinforce each other (Loorbach et al., 2017).

A transition can be defined as “a radical, structural change of a societal (sub)system being the result of a co-evolution of economic, cultural, technological, ecological and institutional developments at different scale-levels” (Grin et al., 2010: 108). It describes “large-scale [nonlinear] disruptive changes in societal systems that emerge over a long period of decades” (Loorbach et al., 2017). An ideal-typical transition pathway, however, presents an exception. In systemic terms, a transition is rather characterised by a web of fast and slow developments, which result from different feedback mechanisms (positive and negative) spanning across several generations. The transportation sector or the food sector for example present different systems, which consist of networks of diverse actors (e.g. (groups of) human agents, firms, organisations), institutions (societal, technical and cultural norms, regulations and standards), material artefacts, as well as social structures (such as cultural frames or existing power relations). Various elements within and across such systems are interrelated and depend on each other, which has crucial implications for system transformations (Markard et al., 2012). Hence, systemic transitions and other severe transformations involve a broad and diverse range of actors, as well as shifts in power (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2010).

The agricultural sector becomes increasingly important in the strive towards more sustainable developments, with the global population growing and the consumption of especially animal-based food products rising (Vinnari & Vinnari, 2014). The production of enormous volumes of food at increasing efficiencies comes with flaws such as ecological impacts, corporate concentration, health risks and decreasing animal welfare. Various ‘alternative food initiatives’ develop around the globe, such as organic and small scale production, local farmer cooperatives, community supported agriculture, permaculture or urban agriculture. In this context, sustainability and globalization are identified as key organising principles for future food systems (Spaargaren et al., 2012). Transition studies can expand these perspectives by offering a helpful lens to investigate long-term systemic changes, which is needed to understand transformations of the agricultural system towards a more sustainable and just system. Whereas much literature focuses on the question of how to feed the world in a sustainable manner (Vivero-Pol, 2017; Springmann et al., 2018), literature in transition studies also deals with power imbalances, socio-cultural change and aspects of (in)justice in

food systems connected to question of global food security (Spaargaren et al., 2012; Cole, 2011; Flannery & Mincyte, 2010). However, the perspective of animals is still mainly discussed in terms of productivity. With my thesis I want to change that, using the combined lens of anthropology and transition studies.

2.2 Contested concepts

The literature review on the fusion of perspectives from anthropology and transition studies leaves us with some contested concepts that are relevant for this thesis. Therefore, this section provides a solid conceptual foundation regarding these concepts, namely the concepts of sustainability, animal welfare, and nonhuman animals. These concepts are important to consider in the exploration of alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system and the influence of such discourses on the shifting position of animals in it.

2.2.1 Sustainability

With the increasing interest in and support for ‘the concept of sustainable development’, it is crucial to consider the use of the concept of sustainability. From the description of sustainability presenting a “[...] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [...]” in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), discussions about the concept have far progressed. The concept of sustainability is intrinsically complex, normative, subjective, and ambiguous (Kasemir et al., 2003; Rotmans, 2005). It is context-specific and can be described as an ‘essentially contested notion’ (Lukes, 1974). Dozens of definitions have been developed about it, making it ‘notoriously fuzzy’ (Brightman & Lewis, 2017: 1). Although no agreed upon definition can be given, some basic features can be identified: it presents an intergenerational phenomenon, operates at multiple scale levels (Avelino, 2011), and it combines social, economic and ecological issues (Hopwood et al. 2005).

The anthropologist Anna Tsing describes sustainability as follows: “Sustainability’ is the dream of passing a liveable earth to future generations, human and nonhuman. The term is also used to cover up destructive practices, and this use has become so prevalent that the word most often makes me laugh and cry” (Brightman & Lewis, 2017: 1). Her statement emphasises the need to be careful in our use of the concept of sustainability, on the one hand, to make sure that it is based on principles of justice, including also nonhuman animals as well

as future generations in its logic, on the other hand, to unveil possible misuse of the term and unfold unsustainable and unjust practices under the umbrella of sustainability. The interest in and support for the concept has the potential of shifting our understanding of relationships of humanity with nature and nonhuman animals, as well as between people (Hopwood et al., 2005).

In terms of food, it can be said that human food production and consumption have significant (direct and indirect) effects on climate change. Particularly, the production of meat and other animal-based proteins add to greenhouse gas emissions (such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) (Beverland, 2014). Reducing the production and consumption of animal-based proteins, according to some ecologists, presents “the most important sustainability issue” (Carlsson-Kanyama & González, 2009). According to Stuart (2009), in Europe plant-based diets were replaced by meat only after World War II (Stuart, 2006). Sustainability transformations in the food sector include cultural changes in understandings of what is perceived as ‘normal’, ‘real’ or ‘edible’ food (Kirveennummi et al., 2013). Therefore, socio-cultural perspectives are highly relevant in the discussion about sustainability.

2.2.2 Animal welfare

The concept of ‘farm animal welfare’ first appeared on the political arena in the 1960s presenting a “shifting area of imbrication of ‘science’ and ‘society’” (Bock & Buller, 2013: 391). Due to various developments, such as the spread of animal epidemics like mad cow disease (BSE), ideas about welfare for animals in the farming system have changed in Europe. The EU recognised animals as “sentient” creatures in the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, having “a value of their own” (Korte et al., 2007). By European law, “cruelty, pain, fear, other suffering, severe disease, distress caused by environments which do not meet the animals’ needs, or distress caused by the genetic selection used in breeding” are to be avoided (Cao & White, 2016). Animals should be able “to stand up, lie down, turn around, stretch limbs and interact with conspecifics” (Korte et al., 2007). These ‘freedoms’, however, primarily focus on biological and physiological concerns, such as the health of the animal, for the achievement of efficiency and productivity (Bock & Buller, 2013). The law still mainly focuses on the reduction of suffering, whereas concepts such as joy barely find their way into legal manifestations of welfare of nonhuman animals that are kept for food purposes. Von Gall and Gjerris (2017) even say that joy is ignored in EU law as of economic disadvantages that go

along with the legal protection of animal joy. According to Yeates et al. (2011), animal welfare policies rather focus on economic efficiency of production, human health and disease control. It is important to explore animal welfare, or otherwise, animal suffering in context of its societal acceptance (Bock & Buller, 2013).

Furthermore, according to Korte, Olivier and Koolhaas, animal welfare research faces the problem of “being less scientific than claimed” (2007: 422-423), which in their view favours an anthropocentric subjectivity on how animals ‘ought to be treated’. Some researchers took steps towards developing new concepts of animal welfare. Fields like neurobiology and behavioural physiology for instance focus more and more on the relationships between emotional individual beings and their environment (Korte et al., 2007). Animal behaviour researcher Arndt, for example, speaks of the *dynamic* concept of animal welfare (Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Utrecht University, 2017). This concept acknowledges that humans, just as animals, do not live in a vacuum. Changes of external factors, such as seasonal changes, changes in temperature, availability of food or the presence of others, can affect our well-being. Also changes of internal factors, like changes in hormone levels, heart rate, health, the immune system or our emotions can influence us. Especially the emotional state of animals is difficult to evaluate. Behaviour, however, can tell a lot about an animals’ well-being (ibid.). How much importance we give to animal welfare, what we see as our responsibility in it and what we consider an acceptable state very much depends on our moral norms and values. Hence, the scientific study of animal welfare is inevitably tied to ethical debates.

2.2.3 Nonhuman animals

According to the advocate of animal equality Peter Singer, humans and animals share the capacity to suffer as much as the capacity to enjoy their lives (Leuven, 2017). Some of the political streams that emerged from animal rights and animal welfare movements are based on ecocentric and biocentric perspectives, referring to “the perception of wholeness” (Kopnina, 2017: 337). The question of who or what has an intrinsic value is rooted in the contribution to the stability of the ecological community as a whole, which can include individual organisms (such as animals, plants, fungi, or bacteria), species, habitats or entire biospheres (ibid.). From that perspective, nonhuman animals have an intrinsic value also in terms of their interdependence with and importance for the ecosystem.

As the scope of this paper does not allow for a detailed discussion of what an animal might be, acknowledging the difficulty to say what qualifies as “animals”, as pointed out by Ingold (1994), I here refer to animals as sentient and individual beings with intrinsic value. They present a heterogeneous group of beings. In this paper, I do not focus on all animals but concentrate on animals that are ‘kept’ in the European farming system for food purposes, such as cows, lambs, sheep, fish, pigs, turkey, rabbits, chicken and goats, only to name a few. According to Precht (2016), we (human animals) can only imagine how it is to be an animal through human perspective (*Vermenschlichung*). Humans might never be able to really understand what it entails and how it feels to be an animal. Following the acknowledgement of this limitation of human perception and knowledge, we have to accept that our conceptualisation of animal welfare is also limited to this perspective. A more humane approach to animal welfare, consequently must be a less human one (Bock & Buller, 2013).

2.3 Dominant narratives about the Dutch agri-food system

This section gives an overview of ‘dominant narratives’ about the Dutch and broader European food system. The overview is based on literature from journals about agri-food research and agronomy, as well as from interdisciplinary journals such as *Appetite* and *Sustainability*, and from online newspaper articles about the Dutch food system. It is not claimed that this overview is exhaustive. It only presents *one* of the mainstream views. The Netherlands developed into one of the biggest exporter of agricultural produce, influencing not just the European but the global food system. I want to explore how different initiatives contribute to the transformation of the agri-food system with their construction of alternative discourses on animals. To do so, we first have to look into the dominant or mainstream narratives in the (Dutch) food system.

2.3.1 From feeding the country to feeding the world

Global food security as the stable supply of food worldwide is described as one of the ‘grand challenges’ that humanity faces (Horton et al., 2017). By far not “all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2002). Especially after the Second World War, preventing recurring famines was on top of the agenda in the Netherlands. Between the 1950s and 1980s the agricultural sector in the Netherlands experienced an enormous, policy-

driven growth (Zwartkruis, 2013). The focus was on increasing farm productivity and efficiency to avoid future food shortages in face of an increasing Dutch population and decreasing agricultural areas in face of processes of urbanization (Meerburg et al., 2009). Hence, in the past century, many farms increased in efficiency and size, with decreased use of labour per hectare, to stay economically profitable, following incentives such as specialisation and profit. According to Ten Berge et al., at the turn of the century “traditional mainstream agriculture” (2000) in the Netherlands was characterised by large amounts of external inputs and minimal labour use per hectare with a simultaneous generation of high outputs. Food got transformed into a commodity (Vivero-Pol, 2017).

By today, the global agricultural system faces a kaleidoscope of problems. Enormous amounts of food are wasted, especially in Europe and America, biodiversity is on a steep decrease with plants losing their resilience to changing climate conditions (Oliver et al., 2018). Our soil transforms into a death desert and particularly the animal-based food sector increases the chance of diseases and epidemics to spread more frequently (Meerburg et al., 2009). With the homogenization of landscapes, increasing environmental pollution, spreading of animal diseases and decreased animal welfare, the Dutch agricultural sector lost much of its reputation (Hassink et al., 2014). Besides the above mentioned aspects, Meerburg et al. argue, that the decreasing number of people working in the agricultural sector, due to the minimization of labour force per hectare, additionally resulted in Dutch society being less connected to agricultural production (2009: 511). Moreover, global trade liberalisation favoured the increase of import and export of products and decision-making processes were left to local and regional authorities or supranational authorities on EU-level (ibid.). Big farming organisations, powerful processing industries, food retail and catering companies presented decisive actors in this development of disconnecting people from direct farming processes (Spaargaren et al., 2012).

With the focus on efficiency and rationalisation, also technological innovations such as labour-saving techniques or conservation technologies were implemented without much dispute (ibid.). An image of the Netherlands as world leader in agricultural innovation developed, with them “pioneering new paths to fight hunger” (Viviano, 2017) and maintaining “[w]orld class technology [...] by innovation” (Chivot et al., 2016). The country is described as technologically extremely advanced, with a “driverless tractor roaming the fields and a quadcopter in the air” (Viviano, 2017). Innovations and technological

developments seem to be promoted as solutions, allegedly allowing for continued growth without consequences. Despite the urgency of addressing environmental and climate problems, the overall food and economic system does not seem to be fundamentally questioned in mainstream discourses, it merely gets ‘improved’ in terms of efficiency and precision within its boundaries. By now, the notion of food shortage got replaced by an omnipresence of cheap food, farmers experienced a significant loss of power (especially middle and small scale farmers), and food supply chains are stretched over enormous distances around the globe (Spaargaren et al., 2012).

However, the above mentioned values, practices and policies of food production and consumption became more and more questioned, especially in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s (ibid.). Since the 1980s societal issues such as concerns about animal welfare, environmental sustainability and a renewed wish for self-determination concerning the production and consumption of the food we eat gain in importance (Bekke & De Vries, 2001). Since the last few decades, the role of agriculture has changed in the Netherlands. Citizens and stakeholder groups increasingly demand more involvement in designing the farming system. Agricultural policy development does not take place in isolation anymore. With that also the need for a shifting focus on innovation is needed, away from a focus on increasing production and efficiency to a focus on multi-actor involvement (Zwartkruis, 2013).

Today’s food system is composed out of a multitude of actors, not only including farmers, food (processing) and animal transport companies, butcheries and supermarkets, but also societal and (non)governmental organisations, scientists, policy-makers and citizens. With an increasing pressure on the agricultural sector and the changing demands of society, many (farmers) switch the focus towards innovative practices, such as environmental co-operatives, organic farming and multi-functional agriculture⁷, especially in the Netherlands (Hassink et al., 2014). New approaches and value-orientations to food production and consumption develop, replacing the focus on (technological) rationalisation and intensification within a national, regional and supranational economic and regulatory framework (Spaargaren et al., 2012). More awareness about the harmful impacts of certain agricultural practices, such as the use of chemicals and fertilisers, develops. However, not only the agricultural sector has

⁷ Care farming is an example of multi-functional farming. Care farms combine health and social services (for example to people with a mental illness, elderly persons, children, drug addicts, and persons with long-term unemployment) with agricultural production (Hassink, et al., 2014).

undergone changes, also the food processing sector, retailing and practices of consumption have already experienced various transformations towards increased sustainability. Also the cultural dimensions of food have changed with different groups of people using different food practices to express their socio-cultural identities (ibid.).

2.3.2 Animals in the Dutch farming system

The Dutch Animal Act from 2011 says that “[...], in the interest of the health and welfare of animals and in that of public health, it is desirable to lay down rules concerning animals, in particular human-held animals, recognition of the intrinsic value of the animal and taking into account ethical aspects [...]” (Staatsblad, 2011). In the past animals were defined as “agricultural products” in European law (Korte et al., 2007). By now they are described as ‘sentient beings’ with intrinsic value. However, the theoretical acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of animals in law and an increased public and scientific awareness about production procedures in the animal-based food sector do not necessarily decrease meat consumption. Rather a re-structuring of meals, assigning special reference to the role of meat can be observed (Holm & Møhl, 2000). Precht (2016) points out that there has been an enormous difference between the attitudes and moral standards of people and their actual consumption behaviour. Hence, even if consumers are confronted with the reality of how animal-based food is produced, we manage to maintain a strong wilful ignorance towards it.

Although many studies critically research the (Dutch) food system, investigating pathways towards more sustainable agri-food systems with a focus on innovation, examining sustainability transitions to plant-based diets, exploring environmental limits of the food system or changing food practices (Zwartkruis, 2013; Vinnari & Vinnari, 2014; Springmann et al., 2018; Spaargaren et al., 2012), no systematic attention is drawn to the perspective of the animal. On dairy farms, a “structured approach to animal health planning” is followed, based on concerns about the health of animals in terms of productivity (Speksnijder et al., 2017). Hence, not only in society the animal perspective is still lacking, also in food research only specific aspects of human-animal relationships and animal welfare are being researched. It has been argued that the consumption of meat is declining in some countries with the number of vegetarians rising (Richardson et al., 1993) and the interest for other cuisines flourishing – cuisines that provide more diverse alternatives for protein intake. Also in the Netherlands various alternative meat subsidies entered the market and numbers of vegetarians might

slowly rise in European countries, meat consumption still continues to rise on the global level with the Netherlands exporting most of its produce (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011: 2).

In conclusion, it can be said that the Dutch, but also the global, food system finds itself in a state of transformation. Transformations might sustain existing structures or counter them, opening up new possibilities. Food can be seen as a paradox with regard to humans' relation to animals and nature. On the one hand, food connects us to nature as a product of land, water and sun. On the other hand, we seem to become more and more disconnected from nature through food, with processes of production being spread globally and largely invisible to the everyday consumer, additionally to the influence of technological advances changing the way we produce food. The animal holds a special, though mainly objectified, position in our food system. The literature review shows that human-animal-relationships and conceptualisations of animal welfare are diverse and complex. However, emotions, such as experiencing joy, and less anthropocentric perspectives to animal welfare are largely non-existent. However, various initiatives and developments create alternatives to existing structures of social domination. With my thesis, I want to contribute to a better understanding of how such initiatives construct 'alternative' discourses on the position of animals and human-animal relationships, highlighting alternative voices and new paths in our creation of a sustainable and just food system. I use insights from discourse studies to analyse the construction of such alternative discourses. Therefore, the next chapter introduces the epistemological and methodological foundation for the analysis in chapter 4.

3. Epistemological foundation and research methodology

In the analysis of how different initiatives construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food sector and how this contributes to transforming the position of animals, and our understandings of human-animal-nature relationships more broadly, discourse studies provides useful tools. In this chapter, I first reflect on my own positionality as researcher and possible biases that could have influenced my research (section 3.1). Second, insights from discourse studies are outlined with the theoretical foundation being based on aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the method for data analysis drawing on insights from Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) (section 3.2). Critical approaches of discourse studies are particularly helpful for analysing the construction of alternative discourses of the three case studies. Third, the selection criteria for the case studies is presented, based on the MaP. Moreover, this section entails the method of data collection (section 3.3). Finally, the operational framework gives an overview of the structure of the case study analysis and the comparative discussion (section 3.4).

3.1 Positionality of the researcher

My interest for the position of the animal in the agri-food system and shifting understandings of human-animal relationships primarily stem from the way and place I grew up. Especially the northwest of Lower Saxony, Germany, where I was raised, presents an area that is intensively cultivated for the production of food originating from animals. This can partly be explained with the quality of the soil in this area, which is very wet and low in nutrients and therefore not very suitable for the cultivation of fruits or vegetables (Bäurle & Tamásy, 2011). My parents have a farm themselves with animals, which are not kept for food purposes, but rather as companions. When I was young, however, it seemed completely normal to me to eat animals. Being surrounded by very different approaches and experiences of farmers, over time I developed a strong preference towards organic farming and a critical attitude to animal-based food. In terms of my eating habits, I could be described as flexitarian, mainly eating vegetarian with the occasional consumption of meat, preferably from an animal of which I know how it lived. Concerning other animal-based products such as milk, cheese or eggs I experience the paradox that was explained by Precht with a difference between personal moral standards and my actual consumption behaviour. As long as I can remember, food fascinates me. However, I am of the opinion that the culinary desires and cravings of humans should not be placed above the well-being of other species. Therefore, I am convinced that we

need to change the way we produce, process and consume food, especially in terms of our relation to animals. Hence, my research question also results out of personal curiosity about my own position in the transformation of the position of animals in the agri-food system.

Concerning the research field, I have lived in different parts of the Netherlands for several years now and feel connected to the people and the place. As young, female, European researcher who is interested in food and the position of animals in our society, I started wondering how animal welfare and aspects of human-animal relationships are approached in the Dutch farming system. As I am convinced that the agricultural sector has to change, I got particularly interested in initiatives that seek to transform the Dutch and wider European food system, which is why my case study selection is rather biased. Therefore, I used the Multi-actor Perspective (MaP) as an analytical tool for selecting my case studies, making sure that they are diverse in the institutional logics they represent. During the time of my research, I did an internship at the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT) in Rotterdam. This definitely influenced my choice of focusing on the Netherlands, due to accessibility and the connection with DRIFT. In the Netherlands, I mainly use English for professional and personal purposes, which could have influenced my research. As my Dutch is not fluent, it presents a clear limitation to the analysis. Moreover, I am not a linguist and do not have profound knowledge about all linguistic concepts and feature, wherefore I focus on a discourse analysis on the macroanalytic level. Souto-Manning (2014: 160) points out that for CDA to be truly transformative, one has to critically assess for whom the analysed data is critical (to the researcher, the study participants or the subject studied). Using discourse analysis, I hope to draw more attention to the importance of ‘the animal perspective’ and a critical reflection of human-animal-nature relationships.

3.2 Building on insights from discourse studies

As the theoretical foundation and the methodological framework of my analysis are closely connected, both building on discourse analysis as a common base, they are presented as one coherent section to avoid repetitions.

3.2.1 Theoretical foundation: Critical Discourse Analysis

As a theoretical foundation I use insights from ‘critical approaches’ to discourse studies to answer how different initiatives construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food

system, and how this contributes to transforming the position of animals in the food system and human-animal relationships more broadly. More specifically, I will draw on the interdisciplinary framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for the analysis of text, video, image and interview materials, particularly on the approach developed by Fairclough. In CDA, discourse⁸ is seen *as social practice* (Fairclough, 1989). According to Fairclough, “discourse is an important form of social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations, and at the same time is also shaped by other social practices and structures” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011: 5). Hence, discourse shapes and is shaped by society and deals with the interplay between power and language in society (Souto-Manning, 2014). It presents “an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being” (Souto-Manning, 2014: 159). Further, discourse can be described as a mode of action through which people act upon the world, as well as upon each other. As a mode of representation, it presents the struggle for the power of representation (Wenden, 2005). Representation can here describe the language used in a text⁹ or talk to assign a certain meaning to a specific group or to their social practices, to events or social conditions within a certain structure or context (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 2002). Hence, in CDA, reality is seen as construed by linguistic and discursive representation, resulting in a competition over meaning, making discourse inseparable from the social world. Therefore, the role of discourse cannot be ignored in trying to understand complex relationships, such as the relation between humans and animals in the food system.

With his approach to CDA, Fairclough attempts to close the gap between what Teun van Dijk calls “the micro- and macro-analyses of social phenomena” (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough distances himself from structuralism, taking a more poststructuralist stance with his acknowledgement of discursive practice reproducing discursive structures on the one hand, but on the other hand also *challenging* it by using words that are positioned outside of such structures. The theoretical framework behind CDA is particularly helpful in investigating discursive change in its relation with social and cultural change. It presents an explanatory critique, which can be used for further democratisation through the promotion of more egalitarian and liberal discourses (ibid.: 24). As such, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) can be

⁸ Numerous definitions of discourse exist. Traditionally, discourse might be limited to linguistic features (Souto-Manning, 2014). In this work, however, discourse is seen in terms of describing more complex relationships between language and society.

⁹ Composed of speech, writing, visual image or a combination of these.

described as emancipatory project, producing and disseminating critical knowledge that helps in unfolding and breaking out of existent forms of social domination through self-reflection (Hughes, 2018). Theoretically, CDS focuses as much on power abuse, as it does on resistance to forms of oppression, for example by enabling suppressed or highlighting formerly absent voices. However, CDS scholarship largely focuses on the former (Hughes, 2018), wherefore I will put emphasis on the latter, namely the exploration of discursive practices of *resistance to and emancipation from* prevailing forms of social domination, such as the domination of humans over animals in the food system. Although the reproduction of dominant discourses should not be set aside, in this work I focus on the question of how initiatives construct alternative discourses about animals in the agri-food system through their use of language, what strategies they use to propel such marginal discourses into the mainstream, and how that might change dominant social and cultural practices. With this focus on analysing discourses that highlight alternative voices, rather than merely criticising dominant ones, Positive Discourse Analysis serves as helpful methodological framework.

3.2.2 Method of data analysis: Positive Discourse Analysis

As a methodological framework for the analysis, I make use of a rather new approach of discourse studies, that of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). As other critical approaches, PDA is based on the premise of the analysis having an effect on the social world (Macgilchrist, 2007). However, rather than focusing on discourses that we wish to criticise, PDA reflects on discourses that ‘we like’. It describes what texts ‘get right’ in our view (ibid.). Through PDA we can analyse the strategies through which marginal discourses get propelled into the mainstream and how dominant frames get contested. Macgilchrist argues that all discourses try to take on a dominant position, which however is never fully possible, wherefore ‘marginal’ or alternative discourses can enter the arena, taking over a more central position. As she describes it: “this constant struggle over meaning emphasises the ‘fluidity’ of what is predominant and what is dissenting, leaving space for alternative representations to shift into a mainstream space” (ibid.: 75). Such alternative or marginal representations, she describes as counter-discourse or emancipatory discourse. As much research using discourse analysis focuses on power abuse, I want to examine how certain forms of oppression are changed through textual representation. As Nelson Mandela said:

“If discourse analysts are serious about wanting to use their work to enact social change, then they will have to broaden their coverage to include discourse of this kind—discourse that inspires, encourages, heartens; discourse we like, that cheers us along.” (Hughes, 2018: 194)

Macgilchrist outlines five counter-discursive strategies: logical inversion, parody, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing (2007). I use these five discursive strategies for the analysis of how they are used in the construction of alternative discourses on animals in the animal-based food sector. For my analysis I do not dive into a detailed linguistic analysis but examine the use of language in the online presence of the three initiatives by looking into macro-strategies of dissent. Below I shortly outline what these counter-discursive strategies entail:

- **Logical inversion** describes the strategy of simply inverting a mainstream view. However, analysts (e.g. Lakoff, 2002) have argued that this strategy is not very effective to counter a dominant frame with logical arguments as it often gets ignored.
- **Parody** describes the use of means of satiric or ironic imitation to counter a dominant frame. The first two strategies are said to be rather simple and not very sophisticated (Macgilchrist, 2007).
- **Complexification** is already more refined in its discursive application. Describing an issue in more complex terms, not referring to it from a one-sided perspective, offering a more nuanced or detailed picture of an issue. It includes information that avoids a simple understanding of an issue. It opens up the possibility of a story to have multiple meanings, including elements from several narrative frames. Dominant frames get delegitimised for example through the use of words such as ‘claimed’ or a specific word choice.
- **Partial reframing**, an issue gets shifted away from its conventional frame and becomes restructured within a different set of knowledges. Hence, the issue gets assigned a different interpretation. Using the strategy, the mainstream view does not necessarily get questioned, but the author draws on an alternative frame.
- **Radical reframing**, on the other hand, attempts to break into the consensus, entirely turning around the reporting of an issue. This involves the use of other frames, as well as the inversion of the mainstream view.

As discussed in the literature review about transition studies, systemic transitions require a broad and diverse range of actors, as well as shifts in power. Therefore, for the analysis of the

construction of alternative discourses and the transformative effect to be meaningful, a diversity of actors at different scale levels and different institutional logics has to be taken into account. Therefore, the three case studies were selected based on their involvement of actors and their orientation towards different institutional logics.

3.3 Case study selection and method of data collection

For the analysis of shifting power relations in the food system and the animal-based sector in particular with a focus on the position of the animal in it, three different initiatives were chosen for the examination of the different ways through which they might contribute to transforming the animal-based food sector. I decided to search for case studies in the Netherlands, as the country's agricultural sector globally influences the food system. Moreover, as mentioned in section 3.1, during the time of my research I was located in the Netherlands, where I was co-supervised at DRIFT in Rotterdam.

3.3.1 Multi-actor Perspective

For the selection of case studies I use the framework of the Multi-actor Perspective (MaP) to guarantee a diverse and differing selection of initiatives for the analysis. This is important, as I am examining how the different actors, from different societal domains try to challenge dominant understandings and practices in the animal-based food system, surrounding aspects of animal welfare and human-animal relationships. I want to examine how the three actors contribute to shifting power dynamics regarding the position of animals and human-animal relations in the food system. Moreover, I seek to examine to what extent their use of language and discursive practices can be said to be complementary, conflicting or simply co-existing to each other, accelerating or decelerating more egalitarian practices in the food system. The MaP here presents a useful analytical tool for the selection of the case studies, making sure that they represent diverse institutional logics, involving diverse actors. Although this thesis focuses on the lack of the animal perspective, and the MaP obviously does not include the perspective of animals, it is still important to acknowledge the diversity of actors and institutional logics within the (limited) human world. This will help in understanding how the animal is constructed in the social context.

The Multi-actor Perspective (MaP), as a model from transition research to analyse shifting power relations, is particularly useful in asking questions of who exercises power and who is

empowered by and with whom (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016: 628). The framework distinguishes four different sectors (state, community, market, non-profit sector) and three different levels of aggregation (sectors, organisational actors, individual actors). Further, the four sectors are divided by three axes: (1) formal–informal, (2) public–private and (3) for-profit–non-profit. The market, for example, is characterised as formal, private and for-profit, the state as formal, public and non-profit, and the community sector as informal, private and non-profit. The hybrid sector, including the non-profit sector, then presents an intermediary sector in between the three others (ibid.). The figure below gives a visual idea about the framework and presents some examples of individual actors of each sector.

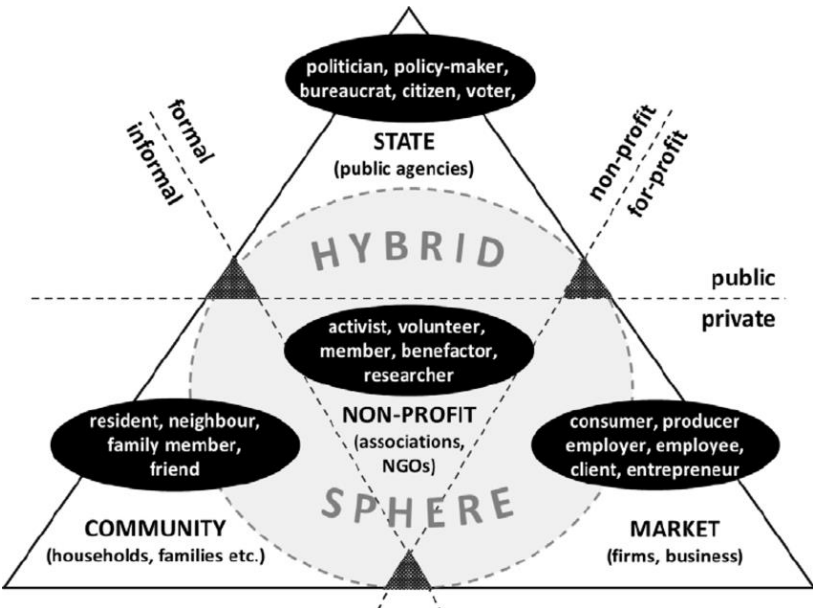


Figure 1. Multi-actor Perspective (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016)

The sectors are far from presenting fixed entities. Rather the boundaries between them are in constant motion. They are “contested, blurring, shifting and permeable” (ibid.: 634). One could imagine the market sector for example to be much bigger, meaning more dominant, than the other three sectors. One actor or organisation can be part of several sectors in varying roles. A consumer in the market sector can as much be a neighbour in the community sector and an activist in the non-profit sector. Hence, not only the boundaries between the different sectors shift, but also the roles of actors in and across such sectors. It can be expected that the different institutional logics represent different perspectives on the role of the animal in the food system. In the market-logic, for example, the animal is primarily perceived as a commodity. As the market-logic dominates current societal structures, the image of the

animal as commodity can be said to be rather dominant. In the state-logic, the animal becomes increasingly seen as ‘sentient’ being with intrinsic value in need for legal representation. In this sector, however, representation often stays at a rather theoretical level. In the non-profit-logic, the understanding of animals as commodity is more and more questioned with animal welfare and animal rights movements developing. In the community-logic, animals hold very different positions. They get categorised in different ‘types’ of animals, such as pets or food. Such categorisations contribute to the rather schizophrenic relations we promote towards animals.

3.3.2 Selection of case studies

For the selection of my case studies, it was crucial that they seek to transform the position of animals in the agri-food system, focusing on aspects of animal welfare and animal rights. Moreover, they should be oriented towards different institutional logics and involve various actors, in order to cover a broad range of perspectives on animals in the food system. Additionally, it was important that all three initiatives have an active online communication, on the one hand, to analyse the discursive strategies used for the construction of alternative discourses about animals in the agri-food system. On the other hand, it is important that these alternative discourses are disseminated to the public, as they are not effective in shifting power relations when they do not reach society. This thesis, however, focuses on the construction of alternative discourses, not on the dissemination and reception of such discourses.

For the analysis of the construction of alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system, three different initiatives were chosen for the examination of the different ways through which they might contribute to transforming the animal-based food sector and the position of animals in it. I decided to search for case studies in the Netherlands, due to various reasons that have been mentioned before. The actors that are analysed are the Party for the Animals (Partij voor de Dieren), the Herenboeren (Farming Communities) and the Better Life label (better leven keurmerk) from the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (SPA). Reasons for choosing these actors include the difference in approaches of how they try to achieve change, their different positions in society and their inclusion of very different actors (such as policymakers, governmental officials, supermarket managers, farmers, consumer-citizens).

All three initiatives deal with aspects of animal welfare and animal rights in the animal-based food sector. They are oriented towards different institutional logics and work across sectors. Further, they involve a multitude of actors and have an active online communication (through their websites, social media and magazines). Moreover, all three initiatives are devoted to changing the agri-food system. The PvdD is mainly state-oriented, however, with a strong tendency to the non-profit sector through its engagement with activists. It tries to influence the market through legislation, also on the European level, involving government officials and other politicians. Through the creation of awareness the party tries to reach citizens. Through its international network APF, the PvdD also involves a broader audience, including people who were not politically active so far. As a political party, the PvdD aims at keeping a neutral stance in cooperation, not working too close for example with other parties.

The BLK is strongly oriented towards the market sector, doing business with retailers, supermarkets and farmers. Here the initiative tries to determine what consumers can buy. As an initiative from the SPA, which is a non-profit organisation, it can be described as having a tendency to the non-profit sector. Towards the community sector the BLK sees its role in creating awareness. In the MaP framework the Herenboeren movement can be said to mainly be oriented towards the community sector with a tendency towards the non-profit sector, as they do not make any monetary profit. The community presents the foundation of the movement. According to the Herenboeren, the sector of the state should take a facilitating position, creating opportunities and creating space through legislation. The Herenboeren Nederland see themselves as sovereign to, though not disconnected from, the market. Members still pay a contribution to the cooperative and become shareholders. Further, the initiative cooperates with many actors from mainly the state sector and the non-profit sector, for example exchanging knowledge and experience with universities and municipalities. Herenboeren operates in a very informal and private way, with an 'alternative' sense of profit.

3.3.3 Method of data collection

The research period stretched from beginning of March 2019 to end of July 2019, with the main location in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The initiatives that were chosen for the empirical study can be said to be operating on the national level. Data collection mainly took place through reviews of the websites of the respective initiatives which serve as case studies.

Hence, the internet also presents the 'fieldsite' in my research (Abbots & Attala, 2017). Besides the actual text, also the web design presented one of the data sources. Further, document reviews (i.e. party programmes, fact sheets, online newspaper articles) and reviews of online interviews and talks (from video-sharing platforms like YouTube and Vimeo) were carried out. The scope of this thesis did not allow for a thorough review of the social media presence of the three initiatives (including interactions on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts), which would be interesting for further research. Moreover, interviews were held with one member of each initiative (three in total) and participant observations conducted during different events of each initiative (four in total). Additionally, at the beginning of my research, I conducted two expert interviews to better select my case studies and have a better orientation of actors and issues in the Dutch food system. The material was collected and coded using the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti, which helped in structuring and later comparing the results from the different case studies.

The interviews and participant observations provided additional information that could not be found on the websites and in the text material, and served as verification points of the analysis. Participant observations prove to be particularly vital not only for the collection of data and the immersion in different debates and perspectives surrounding the position of the animal in the animal-based food sector, but also for creating contact with members of the different initiatives. 'Being there' helped in building trust and creating the willingness of people to cooperate with an interview. Two interviews (with members of Herenboeren and the BLK) were conducted with people who have also been present during participant observations. Besides the participant observations, the recruitment strategy for interviews involved initial contact via e-mail. The three interviewees were very open for an interview. The interviews also helped in getting a glimpse of a more 'insider' perspective of the organisation, which was difficult through online (social) media. Therefore, it would have been favourable to conduct more interviews, which was not possible due to limited time. This triangulation of methods for data collection was perceived as complementary.

The interviews were structured as semi-structured interviews, based on a question catalogue (see appendix I) which was developed in accordance to the research questions. A semi-structured interview was suitable here, as I interviewed each person just once (Bernard, 2006). Choosing for a semi-structured interview also proved helpful in terms of combining a structured and freewheeling quality of the interview, with the interviewees being used to

efficiently and constructively use their time and giving enough space to follow new leads. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Anonymization was carried out according to the preferences of each interviewee, as discussed at the beginning of the interview or in later consultation. The interviews and the analysis are based on the Frankfurter ethics statement¹⁰, with emphasising the shortcoming of the voice of the animal in my thesis.

3.4 Operational framework

In this section a detailed overview of all research and empirical questions can be found. Moreover, the structure of the case study analysis is presented. This section serves as transition to the analysis in chapter 4. Below the list of all research and empirical questions can be found that will be answered in the analysis and compared in the following discussion.

Research questions:

1. How do different initiatives construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system (as compared to dominant narratives)?
2. How does that contribute to transforming the position of animals in the food system, and to agri-food transitions in general?

Empirical questions
Content-related questions (A)
1. What are the different (a) topics, (b) roles and (c) future visions the initiatives draw on in their discourses?
2. How are the initiatives' alternative discourses related to the dominant narratives about (animals in) the food system? How do they counter (or reproduce) existing social structures? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to the concept of animal welfare • With regard to conceptualisations of human-animal relationships
Process-related questions (B)
1. What discursive strategies are used in the construction of 'alternative' discourses? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerning (a) logical inversion, (b) parody, (c) complexification, (d) partial reframing, (d) radical reframing

¹⁰ http://www.agem-ethnomedizin.de/download/www_Ethikerklaerung_DGV_2009.pdf

2. What role do the different actors and orientations towards different institutional logics play?
3. What are the different audiences that are reached through the initiatives' online communication?

Table 1. List of research and empirical questions

After a first introduction into each specific case, in the sub-sections (4.1.1, 4.2.1 & 4.3.1) the different topics, roles and future visions (empirical question A.1) that are described on the websites and in other online materials and are relevant in answering the research questions are discussed. The following sub-sections (4.1.2, 4.2.2 & 4.3.2) entail the analysis of how the alternative discourses of each initiative are related to the dominant narratives (as discussed in section 2.3), with a focus on the concept of animal welfare in the food system and different conceptualisations of human-animal-nature relationships (empirical question A.2). The analysis will be based on the previously identified topics. The process-related findings are woven into content-related findings here (to avoid repetition), providing an analysis of the different discursive strategies¹¹ (as discussed in section 3.2.2) that are used (empirical question B.1). The third sub-section of each case (4.1.3, 4.2.3 & 4.3.3) aims at providing answers to the two research questions. This sub-section also integrates the role of the different actors and the orientations to different institutional logics (empirical question B.2) and the role of reaching different audiences (empirical question B.3) in the construction of alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system and the contribution to transforming the position of the animal in the food system. From there I move forward to comparing the different case studies (chapter 5), discussing to what extent they can be said to be complementary, conflicting or co-existing based on the findings to the content-related and process-related empirical questions in the analysis.

¹¹ The different discursive strategies of PDA are marked in bold throughout the analysis.

4. Analysis of case studies

This chapter entails the analysis of the three case studies of initiatives that seek to transform the position of the animal in the Dutch (and broader European) animal-based food sector. In the analysis I focus on the question of how these initiatives construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system and how this contributes to transforming the position of animals in the food system. I am looking into the language used by the initiatives throughout their online presence (websites, online interviews, newspaper articles) to examine what kind of alternative discourses are constructed regarding animals and human-animal-nature relationships. Some of the discourses, which counter dominant understandings about animals in the food system and are relevant for the research, are analysed. The discursive strategies, as outlined in the sub-section 3.2.2, will be of help to understand how ‘counter-discourses’ might be propelled and alternative voices highlighted. The analysis, however, only presents a snapshot of the means applied by the initiatives to achieve their goals. Besides looking into what the initiatives in their use of discourses and discursive strategies ‘do well’, I will also examine to what extent the initiatives might (unintentionally) reproduce dominant understandings, taking a more critical stance.

4.1 Party for the Animals (PvdD)

The Party for the Animals (PvdD) (Dutch: Partij voor de Dieren) is a political party that stands up for the legal representation of animals, striving towards a moral and legal status of animals in the Netherlands and throughout Europe. The party was founded by a group of animal protectors in 2002 as a protest to the still underrepresented status of animals in law and a seeming lack of interest in it in politics. Animal rights and animal welfare are presented as the core themes of the party, with additional involvement in environmental concerns and a critical stance towards the European Union (EU). The PvdD was the first political party worldwide to enter parliament with animal welfare as the party’s main focus. In 2006 they gained their first two seats in the House of Representatives of the Netherlands (Dutch: Tweede Kamer) and an additional three in 2017. The members of parliament (MPs) are Marianne Thieme (the leader of the party), Esther Ouwehand, Lammert van Raan, Frank Wassenberg and Femke Merel van Kooten (who is currently on maternity leave). Together with their representatives in the Upper House, the European Parliament, the provincial states, eighteen municipal councils and seven water boards, the PvdD counts 80 MPs in total. The representative for the European Parliament is Anja Hazekamp. The party also expanded with

its youth association PINK! and its scientific office of the Nicolaas G. Pierson Foundation (NGPF). Moreover, since 2012, the party is active worldwide through the Animal Politics Foundation (APF), strengthening its international network. The PvdD is a testimonial party, meaning that the party primarily wants to testify its beliefs and influence other parties, rather than to gain political power.

4.1.1 Legal representation for animals

Throughout their communication on their online website, the PvdD repeatedly stresses specific topics. First, the party promotes a discourse about challenging the European economic system, as well as the farming system. They heavily criticise the current economic system and its predominantly positive portrayal of economic growth (PvdD, 2019a). They call for radical change of the agricultural sector, which is entangled with the economic system we operate in. Second, they promote a strong critique of the structure, the mode of operation and the regulations of the EU. Third, they construct an alternative discourse on human-animal, human-animal-nature and human-human relationships.

Concerning the portrayal of their roles, the PvdD aims at putting animal welfare, nature and the environment on the political agenda feeding social and political debates. On the European level, the party takes a critical stance (soft Euroscepticism), urging the EU to take a greener and more progressive course with ideals of sustainability, compassion, freedom and responsibility. Moreover, the party wants to stimulate, inspire and challenge others and urge them to take action, particularly politicians. The PvdD is active in Parliament, as well as outside of it and works together with various groups of activists. “Many members are also activists, who work at NGOs” besides their activities as politicians (Interview with a member of the PvdD, The Hague, the Netherlands, 26.07.2019). In Parliament they request debates, ask parliamentary questions, submit motions and vote on laws. In their future vision, the PvdD strives towards the abolishment of the livestock industry (PvdD, 2019j) and aims at the acknowledgement of animal rights on the global level together with the APF (PvdD, 2019f). According to the PvdD, animals should be integrated into the democratic process. Moreover, they want to achieve that the needs and interests of humans, animals, nature and the environment are seen as interconnected.

4.1.2 Compassion, sustainability, transparency and respect

In their critique of the economic and agricultural system, the PvdD **radically reframes** the dominant assumption of the need for constant economic growth, denouncing it as the very problem. In the dominant narrative the intensification and increased productivity of the farming system is often promoted, as outlined in section 2.3. As alternative frame, the PvdD here calls for “values that really matter”, namely those of compassion, sustainability and a respectful relationship between humans and animals, instead of a continuous focus on economic growth (PvdD, 2019f). The party says that “[o]ur appeal to see economic growth as problem, rather than as solution, receives increasing response.” (PvdD, 2019f). Moreover, the party calls for a more transparent and democratic economic system, picking up the systemic critique of the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) about the problem of money creation and market forces in the banking system (PvdD, 2019d). When referring to the climate agreement, the PvdD uses a **metaphorical idiom** talking about “the shrinking of livestock farming” (PvdD, 2019c) to be treated like the elephant in the room.¹² Concerning animal welfare, among other things, the PvdD demands for the radical reduction of animals in the livestock industry (70%), grazing possibilities to become obligatory, the building of “mega stables” to become prohibited, stricter fire precautions, the right for animals to go outside and have sufficient shelter outside, and breeding for extreme growth and production to be banned (PvdD, 2019i).

The farming system is described as “perverse system” (PvdD, 2019b), using a **dysphemism**¹³ when talking about the circumstances under which animals are transported or have to stay in stables during hot days. Referring to this heat stress, they denounce the idea of a farming system in which it seems ‘more moral’ to send animals to the slaughter earlier so they do not have to suffer under the heat stress anymore. The PvdD here criticises the structure of the farming system in the first place, which does not allow animals to adapt to changing conditions anymore, as described in Saskia Arndt’s *dynamic* concept of animal welfare. The mainstream view of animals being seen as units of production in the farming system is attacked. Further, by using **parody**, the PvdD makes fun of the so-called Parliamentary Barbecue, an annual event where politicians and people from the farming industry meet and exchange during a barbecue. The PvdD here criticises the close connection between

¹² By using this metaphorical idiom, they refer to the issue being an obvious problem that gets ignored and that people do not want to talk about, emphasising the necessity to talk about it.

¹³ Describing the use of a derogatory or unpleasant term in place of a more neutral expression.

politicians and people from the meat industry. The barbecue got renamed to ‘Binnenhof Barbecue’ in the hope of triggering less of a conflict of interest between politics and the meat industry according to the PvdD (2019g), which increases intransparency of relations between these actors by veiling the political connection.

A frequent critique of the EU can be found throughout the party’s webpage. The PvdD describes the EU as “technocratic machine at the service of short-term economic interests. Europe is blindly aiming for economic growth and taking the debate hostage to human short-term interests. The EU reduces citizens to consumers and taxpayers, and animals to consumer items.” (PvdD, 2019a). Using **logical inversion**, the EU is further described as undemocratic, drawing on people’s allegedly uneasy feeling about the EU’s influence on its member states and about its financial power. In the same breath the PvdD is calling for more cooperation between democratic governments (PvdD, 2019a). They use **complexification**, when referring to the need to acknowledge of the achievements of European cooperation (e.g. protecting waters and wildlife and banning of battery cages for chicken). Hence, the PvdD wants to take an active role in framing decision-making processes on the European level, with citizens having more of a say. Using **exaggeration**, they accuse the EU to see economic growth as “Holy Grail” (PvdD, 2019a), criticising the one-sided focus of the EU on growth, industrialisation and scaling up. This critique is connected to the party’s discourse about criticising the broader economic system. It is mentioned that most regulations in favour of animal welfare, nature and the environment have been adopted during the 1990s, when the EU still consisted out of 15, mostly conservative, member states. The PvdD is here calling for more ambition in implementing new, strong regulations on these issues (PvdD, 2019a). Together with 20 other parties for the animals worldwide, the PvdD mentions the aim of changing Europe (PvdD, 2019a). The party emphasises the importance of freedom and privacy of citizens and the importance in fuelling democratisation on the European level.

Concerning human-animal relationships, the PvdD is convinced that animals should have rights and sees the current farming system as clear restriction to the fulfilment of animals’ legal representation. They are appealing to the moral duty of humans to protect animals. Descriptions of the animal are surprisingly absent throughout the website of the party. If present, animals are described as beings with consciousness and feelings with the right to be legally represented, contrary to them being described as ‘things’ in the dominant narrative surrounding the agri-food industry (PvdD, 2019e). Using **logical inversion** it is said that

animals are not represented as such in law, but only as things. The PvdD wants to change that and takes the intrinsic values of animals as starting point (PvdD, 2019e). When speaking about the need to protect our planet and nature, the PvdD always refers to humans *and* animals as equal in their rights, demanding a Europe in which both, humans and animals can live a fully-fledged life (PvdD, 2019a). However, they do not give examples of what exactly that would look like. As answer to the question about the role of the animal perspective in transforming the food system, one of the interviewees said:

So the most obvious answer is, of course the role of the animal can't be understated. I mean it plays such a central role and I think we conceptualise the human-animal boundary to be quite fundamental. And I think one of the things that the PvdD tries to do is to blur that boundary, to blur or even destroy that boundary. To deconstruct it. And when you do that, the way we use animals now is no longer justifiable. And when it happens, people are no longer comfortable with the role it [the animal] has in our food industry. And that's when a demand for alternatives increases. (Interview with a member of the PvdD, The Hague, the Netherlands, 26.07.2019)

The PvdD strives towards living “in harmony with the living environment” (PvdD, 2019a). They use **complexification** in their description of the human-animal-nature relationship, acknowledging the connections between climate, food, animal welfare, biodiversity and the economy. With this entanglement, the need to address them together, as connected with each other, not separated, becomes inevitable (PvdD, 2019f). Here the party distances itself from the ‘simple’ idea of solving issues in isolation, calling for a re-thinking in more interconnected, complex terms. Moreover, they counter the Anthropocene focus in finding solutions, say that they “[...] are the first political party that does not focus on the short-term interests of people, but the entire planet and all its inhabitants” (PvdD, 2019f). Further, they openly acknowledge the connection between animals’ well-being and the conservation of the natural environment. Humans and animals are frequently mentioned in the same breath when referring to equal rights in terms of environmental protection and preservation of natural environments.

4.1.3 Fusion of critique and alternative discourses

Hence, in their alternative discourse about challenging the focus on growth in the economic and farming system, and calling for alternative values as mentioned above, the perspective of the animal as product is being fundamentally questioned. In the view of the PvdD, a respectful relation between humans and animals is incompatible with the continuous use of animals for human interests. Moreover, they also call for more respectful human-human relationships,

requesting more democracy, transparency and empathy. Furthermore, in their understanding of animal welfare, animals are not able to achieve well-being in the existing farming system.

In the communication of the PvdD, the use of discursive strategies and the construction of discourses frequently functions as revealing the ‘wrongs’. Different discursive strategies (**logical inversion, parody, complexification and radical reframing**), as well as specific wording or metaphors are used in the construction of alternative discourses. The party’s alternative discourse on the economic and farming system (with its critique on economic growth) is closely tied to their alternative discourse on the animal as conscious, feeling being, which has the right to legal representation. These alternative discourses together function as strong message for the need to shrink and eventually abolish the livestock industry, due to moral and legal incompatibility of the continued existence of the livestock industry with the PvdD’s perspective on animals. The party wants radical change of the current system. It frequently demands change, thereby drawing on alternative frames, however, not offering very concrete alternative visions of what a system could look like in which humans and animals are treated as equals.

As discussed in section 3.3, the PvdD is mainly state-oriented, however, with a strong tendency to the non-profit sector through its engagement with activists. Important actors in the PvdD are government officials, (European and Dutch) MPs, citizens and activists. With their activist background and them being a testimonial party, the PvdD is very action-oriented, still keeping a connection to the community, wanting to be approachable for the public. The party tries to influence the market through legislation, also on the European level. Through the creation of awareness the party tries to reach citizens. Through its international network APF, the PvdD also aims at involving a broader audience, including people who were not politically active so far. As a political party, the PvdD tries to keep a neutral stance in cooperation, not working too close with other parties. The party has a strong focus also on its success story and promotes a certain discourse of exceptionality. Concerning the web design, the website seems very structured at first but becomes quite overwhelming due to the amount of information on each site and the links to all kinds of other webpages. Headlines are often formulated as catchy slogans, such as “Economy: your money or your life?” (PvdD, 2019k), trying to attract readers. With the PvdD’s audience rather being politically engaged, they increasingly try to reach out to people who are less politically interested through the APF.

4.2 Better Life label (beter leven keurmerk)

The Better Life label (BLK) (Dutch: Beter leven keurmerk) is an initiative from the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (SPA), which is the largest animal protection organisation in the Netherlands with over 160,000 members (Dierenbescherming, 2019d). The label was introduced in the year 2007 for the improvement of animal welfare in the current farming system by slowly ‘raising the bar’ (starting with a pilot project on meat originating from animals). It consists of a three star system¹⁴, with every star describing different aspects of animal welfare respective to certain animal species. For realising the BLK, the SPA closely cooperates with retailers, supermarkets (e.g. Albert Heijn, Jumbo, Coop and Jan Linders), 1800 livestock farms, farmers and more than 500 processing companies, as well as with consumers, who buy products holding the Better BLK (Dierenbescherming, 2019c).

According to the SPA the BLK is the best known label among Dutch consumers and the label with most influence on the food chain (Dierenbescherming, 2019h). Separate from the SPA, the Better Life label foundation was set up for the assessment of participants, the quality assurance and checking certification bodies. Further, to stay independent the SPA does not receive any compensation for the work connected to the label (Dierenbescherming, 2019d). Although mainly focusing on meat products (originating from pigs, chicken, cows, calves, turkey and rabbits), the label has also been introduced for dairy products (derived from cows) and for the production of eggs. The Dutch SPA also cooperates with other animal welfare organisation in the EU such as the Deutsche Tierschutzbund in Germany.

4.2.1 Transformation from within the system

Throughout the communication of the BLK, certain discourses are developed. First, in the communication about the BLK it is frequently emphasised that it presents a tool to improve the welfare of animals from *within* the system. This discourse has to be seen in the broader context of the BLK being an initiative from the SPA. The animal protection organisation got frequently asked why an organisation that protects the well-being of animals would put a label on meat (Dierenbescherming, 2019e). The BLK’s emphasis on the need to improve animal welfare aspects from *within* the system, with a market-oriented approach, was triggered by

¹⁴ One star means that the ‘most urgent’ animal welfare issues per animal species in ‘regular farming’ are improved, such as minimal space requirements, slower growing breeds and the most urgent requirements for feeding. Two stars describe additional access to outdoor areas and further improvements. Three stars are meant for organic (or comparable) farming systems based on EU legislation.

public, as well as internal discussions about the label. Moreover, the farmer's perspective is very present throughout the website. Personal stories about farmers' motivations for producing under the BLK are presented in text, image and video. Another discourse deals with the ambition of determining the market regarding animal-based food in order to raise the bar and act above legislation.

According to the SPA, 95% of the Dutch population eats meat on a regular basis. As the Dutch population will likely not turn vegetarian altogether in the next years, the SPA wants to improve the situation of the animals which are kept in the farming system for the production of food (Dierenbescherming, 2019e). This is done through consultation, lobbying and public actions towards citizens, businesses and the government, informing the public and creating more awareness about animal welfare in the agri-food sector. Moreover, the BLK stimulates cooperation with the industry and farmers. With the BLK, the Dutch SPA seeks to improve animal welfare in the livestock industry *from within* the system. They stimulate and promote organic farming and the consumption of eating less meat. According to the SPA, the label fills a gap, which current legislation does not meet in "taking steps towards more well-being for all those millions of 'consumer animals'" (Dierenbescherming, 2019e). They also want to improve the lives of animals that are kept in non-organic agricultural systems. The BLK is here seen as an instrument to make the farming system gradually animal friendlier.

In terms of their future vision, the Dutch SPA values organic and free range systems the most and wants to increase the market share of such systems. Moreover, they try to motivate people to eat less meat, and if they eat meat to eat 'better' meat (Dierenbescherming, 2019a). With the BLK, they aim at expanding organic livestock farming at the cost of the current livestock industry. The incentive is to expand the label to four and more stars. Moreover, the challenge and future focus is on animals that do not benefit from developments in the Netherlands towards more animal welfare, as for example animals that are intended for export (Dierenbescherming, 2019h). Moreover, the Dutch SPA wants to expand the sales of products under the BLK to improve the economic situations for farmers and processors. Moreover, they look into broadening the BLK scheme with environmental sustainability requirements together with the Dutch society for Nature and Environment and Dutch Bird Protection, (Dierenbescherming, 2019a).

4.2.2 “What you give you also get back”

According to Marijke de Jong, the programme manager of the BLK, a huge gap exists between cheap and common animal-based food that meets the minimal legal requirements in terms of animal welfare and the more expensive organic food (Dierenbescherming, 2019h). With the BLK, the SPA does not only want to reach a small and conscious group of consumers. They also want to take consumers along who were not concerned about aspects of animal welfare so far. They wanted to create a label, which makes it feasible for farmers to produce and for consumers to buy animal friendlier (ibid.). In talking about the expansion of the label to dairy products, **logical inversion** and **parody** are used to point out that the production of milk has a negative impact on animal welfare, nature and the environment. It is sarcastically mentioned that despite the craving and love for milk in the Netherlands and the largest production of milk per hectare in Europe, there are no concrete regulations on animal welfare. They say that the increasing intensification and scaling-up of the sector have led to undesirable situations concerning the welfare of animals (Dierenbescherming, 2019f).

The label tries to work towards the possibility of animals expressing their ‘natural behaviour’, with being aware of its boundaries within the system. In the explanation of the one star label for meat products originating from pigs for example, the natural behaviour of pigs dividing their space into different parts for varying purposes is described, acknowledging that the little space pigs often get in conventional farming makes this impossible (Dierenbescherming, 2019g). Hence, with the label the situation of the animals in the farming system is sought to be improved, however, recognising clear differences in the level of animal welfare and the system’s limits in translating it into action. In the logic of the BLK, the animal is still rather seen as a unit of production, with animal welfare being approached from a market-oriented perspective. The label mainly addresses aspects of animal welfare, such as granting more (outdoor) space to the animals, regulating breeding rules in terms of the health of the animal or developing specific feeding requirements. Although it is acknowledged that different groups of animals have different needs (Dierenbescherming, 2019e), the animal’s intrinsic value is not explicitly addressed. Hence, in its website communication the BLK cannot be said to develop strong alternative discourses on animal welfare. Effective strategies such as **complexification**, **partial reframing** and **radical reframing** are barely used in this context. However, one could say that their discourse on animals in the agri-food system is alternative in the way of making animals and their needs more visible in the market.

The farmer's perspective is very present on the website. Together with 'Better Life farmers' the livestock industry should be changed from within the agri-food industry, reducing animal suffering step by step. Through the perspective of the farmers, an alternative frame of human-animal relationships is created. Using **partial reframing**, the perspective, experiences and knowledge of the farmer get highlighted and assigned a different interpretation, however without an inversion of the mainstream view. The farmer Jacco, for example, sees his cows as individuals and knows every animal. "He makes sure that they are feeling well. 'What you give you also get back'", he says (Dierenbescherming, 2019). Such perspectives tend to be very absent or one-sided in mainstream discourses. This shows a reciprocal relationship between human and nonhuman animals, with farmers caring about the well-being of their animals. Through the label, the SPA is in close contact with the farmers, getting insights into what farmers need in order to improve animal welfare. This alternative discourse about the farmer's perspective on human-animal relationships is very valuable, as people do not only get more and more disconnected from the processes of food production and the soil itself, but also from the work of farmers, their needs, interests and visions. These interests and visions are very diverse, which is important to consider. Just as little as animals are a homogeneous group of beings farmers are. Farmers who sincerely care for their animals, do their best to improve the situation of their animals. Nevertheless, one should not forget that the animal still presents a means to generate profit here.

With the BLK, animal welfare shall be improved through the market, in a way of 'acting for the consumer' to not have a choice anymore but to buy animal-based food with a higher standard of animal welfare (Dierenbescherming, 2019f). With the BLK, the SPA wants to determine to a greater extent what people can buy on the market. Hence, through the BLK "a perspective to act" (Interview with the programme manager of the BLK, The Hague, the Netherlands, 29.05.2019) shall be given, with consumers being motivated to choose for better animal welfare and for farmers to be stimulated to produce under conditions for better animal welfare. In a way, the SPA here counters the idea of the rational consumer, stressing the need to create awareness about animal welfare among consumers who might usually not be concerned about it on the one hand. However, on the other hand to they emphasise the need to set the market in a way that consumers do not have a choice anymore but to buy animal-based products with higher animal welfare standards. Hence, the BLK presents a tool for determining the market with setting standards beyond EU legislation for conventional farming. During the interview this was described as follows:

So it's even the minister of agriculture [Carola Schouten] sometimes, when they have these questions from politics about all kinds of animal welfare issues, she says: 'No we are not going to take care of it, we only follow European legislation and we don't take steps above it.' But look at the Better Life label, there it is: it is the criterion. (Interview with the programme manager of the BLK, The Hague, the Netherlands, 29.05.2019)

4.2.3 A market-oriented approach

In conclusion, through the BLK it is tried to improve aspects of animal welfare in the current farming system with a market-oriented approach, operating within this logic's boundaries in terms of animal welfare. Concerning human-animal relationships, with respect to the farmer's perspective, the BLK creates an alternative discourse, restructuring conventional frames about the farmer-animal relation within a different set of knowledge. The BLK contributes to spreading awareness about the need for better animal welfare standards in the agri-food system and making the animal more visible, especially among people who did usually not think about the animal in our food system at all. For that the market-oriented approach might be useful. Moreover, the label involves a variety of actors, such as consumers, farmers, retailers, processors, supermarkets and livestock farms, on different scale levels (individual, organisational). Especially farmers play a crucial role in the transformation of the agri-food system. With the active communication with farmers and their alternative discourse on farmers' perspectives, the BLK can be a great tool to help and motivate farmers to produce animal friendlier products and re-think the position of the animal in the farming system.

However, further research has to be conducted about the question of how the communication about the label might contribute to further normalising the discourse about animals presenting units of production. As the BLK mainly operates in the market-logic, as pointed out in section 3.3, the interests of different actors (farmers, retailers, processors, consumers) have to be merged in it, which leads to compromises on aspects of animal welfare. Nevertheless, the label can help to better understand the perspective of farmers and improve their situation, which is an important aspect in transforming the agri-food system. The creation of incentives for producing, selling and buying animal friendlier and the spreading of awareness about animal welfare in the food system contributes to slowly shifting the position of the animal within the current farming system. However, with the BLK's firm position within the farming system, the existing structure of it does not get questioned.

The website about the BLK is very accessible to a broad audience, as it is structured in a simple and accessible way with short texts and many visual clarifications and underpinning, such as videos, images and use of colour (bright, simple colour schemes). With the three stars on the logo of the label consumers can easily spot the product's level of animal welfare standards. The layout of the website and the logo have to be seen in the context of marketing strategies, as it has the purpose of attracting consumers. Stars, for example, have a very positive connotation. Although a traffic light scheme (with a colour scheme of red, yellow, green) could be more effective in motivating people to buy products with higher levels of animal welfare, it would likely be rejected in terms of marketing strategies. However, the layout and website design also helps in attracting a broad audience, which does not have much time or interest to deal with aspects of animal welfare in the food system. This might help in raising public interest for the needs and interest of animals in the agri-food system. The farmer's perspective is frequently outlined, drawing on their personal stories and presenting them on the website in an accessible manner (short video, images).

4.3 Herenboeren (Farming Communities)

Herenboeren Nederland is a concept, practice and movement promoting and implementing a method for a more sustainable and community-oriented production of food. With its knowledge and experience, it supports the development of so-called 'Herenboerderijen' or Farming Communities. A Farming Community is a sustainably operating, small-scale mixed farming cooperative. It measures approximately 20 hectares in size and produces food for its members. The cooperative hires a professional farmer to work on the farm. Every Farming Community looks different, very much depending on its members, their wishes and visions (Herenboeren, 2017a). The farms are established on the principles of being nature-driven, economically supported and socially connected, including the regeneration of the environment, multiple value creation and community development (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). The first Farming Community was established in Boxtel in the Netherlands in 2015, with other regions wanting to follow, such as Rotterdam, Weert, Helmond, Breda, Tilburg, Soest, Ede, Rotterdam, Apeldoorn (Herenboeren, 2017b). The members of the cooperative, being citizens, professionals, farmers and many others, are not only owners (with an investment of 2000€), but also buyer, investor, producer and consumer of products coming out of the farm.

4.3.1 “Reconnect with nature, reconnect with food production”

Herenboeren Nederland sees its role in supporting citizens in setting up their own Farming Community and through that providing an alternative to today’s food system (Herenboeren, 2018), envisioning a food production system of the future. They imagine that

[...] when human beings are more in contact with the place, they find their roots, then they get a more natural behaviour towards their food and the purchase of it. And so animal welfare will gain. So that’s one approach, to get the information back [to the consumer], reconnect with nature, reconnect with food production. (Interview with Boudewijn Tooren, chairman of Herenboeren Wilhelminapark, Boxtel, the Netherlands, 27.06.2019)

Together with several partners, they initiate and conduct research, train farmers and make changes in legislation and regulation. With their Farming Communities they also offer space for experimentation for various actors, saying that “[...] you only know if something will work when you actually do it, so we place a strong emphasis on action and action research.” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). Hence, pioneering and experimenting are crucial. With that they also provide possible answers that are asked in agriculture and horticulture, gathering, sharing and unlocking knowledge and offering inspiration. The idea of the Herenboeren is based on a long-term perspective, countering the short-term incentives of today’s farming system. Through designing, learning and learning-by-doing, they want to look several generations ahead and try to imagine what an alternative vision could look like.

In the communication of the Herenboeren, their future vision presents an important discourse in itself. Throughout the website, time is something that is played with a lot. In their ‘Theory of Change’, they describe a vision of the year 2060 (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019), imagining what a society in which food production is based on the principles of being nature-driven, socially connected and economically supported could look like. Further, the Herenboeren draw on the topic of rethinking the economic system, framing it into an alternative discourse about ‘the economy’ with an ‘alternative’ sense of profit. This discourse is closely tied to the discourse about communal production, with community presenting the foundation of the movement. Moreover, an alternative discourse on human-animal-nature relationships is created, drawing on topics of ‘working with nature’ and developing nature-driven food production.

4.3.2 Nature-driven, socially connected and economically supported

The Herenboeren promote a strong narrative about doing it “different” (Herenboeren, 2017c). The emphasis on their integrated approach **partially reframes** current methods in the farming system. It is said that current legislation does not allow for hybrid, co-creative methods, saying that “[t]heir effectiveness stems precisely from the overlap between these different worlds and the plurality of situations.” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). They want to create an alternative future vision of how values, such as biodiversity, soil quality and animal welfare, could be implemented in a system, since in today’s agriculture such values seem to be in conflict with prevailing interests. They ask questions such as: “What if everyone in the Netherlands had their own farm? What would that mean and how could it be done? How many farms would be needed? What would be the right scale? And what would be a suitable economic model and a good way to grow and distribute food along nature-driven, socially connected and economically supported lines?” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019).

These questions are connected to the alternative discourse about the economic system. The Herenboeren challenge today’s economic system through their use of language. According to them there is a need for more cooperation between the government businesses and communities, a need to strengthen people and communities so that they can participate as equal partners, with that restoring a balance between governments, communities and the market. They see the market sector as too dominant, describing the restoration of a balance as prerequisite for getting out of “the destructive downward economic spiral” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). On their website, they **radically reframe** the very idea of an ‘economy’, thinking of it in terms of striving for “an economy that is connected with the earth and the different societies on this earth” (ibid.). Hence, they provide alternative frames about ‘the economy’ and challenge the mainstream understanding of it. They are not looking “[...] for big-bigger-biggest, but for the right size” (ibid.). Moreover, they counter the focus on monetary gain in the economy, using **radical reframing**, saying that fair wage payments for the farmer and a healthy living environment are more important in the Herenboeren concept than monetary profit.

Profit, in the logic of the Herenboeren concept, is rather defined in terms of nature-inclusive food production and creating a community. The community is a central aspect of the Herenboeren concept. Throughout their communication, a strong discourse is developed

around aspects of community and communal food production, which can be said to be an alternative discourse to the mainstream narrative in various ways. One interviewee describes it as follows:

We think mono, solistic but we are a member of a herd. So what can I do as a leader of this pack to create more connections within the community, so the connection with this place and the production will be more sustainable. Something like a table where food is presented and where a coffee waits for you, is helping! That's an easy way to create a conversation between two members who didn't know each other yet. (Interview with Boudewijn Tooren, chairman of Herenboeren Wilhelminapark, Boxtel, the Netherlands, 27.06.2019)

The concept of Farming Communities is based on the idea of members being socially connected. Food production is seen as a communal effort, with not only eating together 'making you happy', but also producing together. Herenboeren are convinced that being responsible for your own food does not need to be expensive or difficult if done in a communal manner (Herenboeren, 2019). With that, they are **radically reframing** the common thinking about food production, countering dominant developments such as the disconnection of consumers to processes of food production, by stressing the significance of close and sincere human-human relationships. They see food production as having a value in itself.

In the Herenboeren concept, the animal is not the focus of discussion. It could be said that they follow a 'de-focused' approach on that. The interviewee explained it as follows:

So if we would focus on animal welfare, that's the main issue of what we have to do, maybe we lose all the side effects or maybe the other goals that we have. So it's very complex. And yes we look at animal welfare, yes we look at the soil, yes we look at human behaviour in a group, yes we look at biodiversity, yes we look at health, yes [...], but we don't create a programme on animal welfare, we don't create a programme on biodiversity. That's maybe also flipping the system. (Interview with Boudewijn Tooren, chairman of Herenboeren Wilhelminapark, Boxtel, the Netherlands, 27.06.2019)

Hence, not to have the focus on animal welfare, but having it as a side-effect is considered as more effective in transforming the position of the animal and the thinking about nature in the agri-food system. Moreover, according to Boudewijn Tooren, in the Herenboeren concept of animal welfare is seen in a very different light to the perspective on it in mainstream approaches in agri-food systems. The Herenboeren try to learn from behavioural habits of animals before their domestication. Chicken for example are forest animals, therefore the farm should be structured so that the chicken can express their natural behaviour. Although animals

are still ‘produced’ for consumption, profit and production are not the primary focus. In the interview it is described as follows:

Because I understand when you are in the food system like they are or in the agri-food system like they are and you constantly see all kinds of laws and measurements and contracts, then you look for possibilities to create some welfare. So what’s the square meter space of animals, etc. Like I started: meat production is the angle from which they start to look. Then they try to create animal welfare. So as nice as possible within that system. I think in our concept it’s the other way around. So we create animal welfare and then we see what we can produce. Still we want to produce meat or eggs, but it’s the other way around. (Interview with Boudewijn Tooren, chairman of Herenboeren Wilhelminapark, Boxtel, the Netherlands, 27.06.2019)

Further, the idea of re-connecting with nature and restoring the relationship between nature, society and businesses also includes the notion of *giving to* nature through the concept, not just taking from it. **Complexification** is used by saying that “[b]iodiversity and cultural, economic and social diversity go hand in hand. [...] It is precisely that complexity that guarantees resilience and durability; from focusing on specialisation to developing in cohesion and synergy.” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). Hence, it is emphasised that various dimensions are interrelated, influencing each other, not allowing for easy, one-sided solutions. More attention should be paid to the natural behaviour and living environment of animals to learn from it, saying that “[j]ust as in nature, animals play a key role in an ecosystem. [...] Over time, nature-driven food production systems evolve into ecosystems that determine for themselves how many animals they can carry” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). This completely shifts the common idea of *controlling* nature. It is not a laissez-faire approach, but an approach through which nature and animals are part of the determination process. One should “[o]bserve and read nature, make her work for you, work with her rather than against her; that makes the whole stronger” (Herenboeren Nederland Foundation, 2019). Hence, using **radical reframing**, an alternative discourse about human-animal-nature relationships is constructed, countering the dominant thinking of humans controlling and determining nature.

4.3.3 Practice and action

Hence, with their concept of Farming Communities, the Herenboeren provide a completely different alternative to dominant approaches to food production. They do that particularly through practice and action, which follows the principles of being nature-driven, socially connected and economically supported. It is often referred to feelings, such as happiness, to explain why something is done. Food production becomes seen as a value in itself and the

community is described as focus point, with humans, animals and nature being entangled with each other. The Herenboeren have a clear strive for transformation with their 'Theory of Change'. The animal and its well-being is part of the concept, but through de-focusing, with the animal not being in the focus (animal welfare as a side effect). Alternative discourses about 'the economy', as well as about human-animal-nature relationships, get constructed by using strong discursive strategies, such as **complexification**, **partial reframing** and **radical reframing**. These two discourses are the foundation for an entirely different perspective of the concept of animal welfare as compared to dominant conceptualisations about it. Animal welfare presents the starting point, addressing it with less of a human perspective, drawing on past knowledge about animal behaviour before the domestication of animals by humans. The limit of animal welfare is reached, however, with the motivation to still produce food derived from animals (although production does not present the starting point).

The Herenboeren bring together people from the community sector, non-profit sector, universities, and partially also from the market-sector (e.g. farmers who are interested in the concept). With their orientation towards the community-sector they are very approachable. Herenboeren promote a very informal and private atmosphere on the farm. The webpage is very structured, with short texts and integrated pictures of the food, the farm, the farmer, the community and different activities. On the first page different activities are listed through which one can get into contact with them. During so-called 'rondwandelingen' (walks over the farm), people are invited to do a tour around the farm and ask questions about the concept. Such tours take place approximately once a month. With the language and the layout of the website, the Herenboeren rather attract people who already deal with aspects of animal welfare and environmental sustainability in the food system. Moreover, their concept demands an active engagement of the members with the community.

5. Comparative discussion

All three initiatives follow different pathways to shift the position of animals in the agri-food system. Some pathways seem compatible to a certain extent, others are rather conflicting. In this chapter, I compare the three initiatives based on the questions of how they construct alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system and how this contributes to transforming the position of animals in the food system. In the comparison the use of discourses, roles and the development of future visions of the three initiatives is assessed. Moreover, the construction of alternative discourses on animal welfare and human-animal-nature relationships are being compared, based on aspects of discursive strategies that were used, actors that are involved, orientations to different institutional logics, as well as the web design and the reach of different audiences. Finally, based on the findings, the potential of shifting the position of the animal in the agri-food system is discussed, looking into similarities and differences between the strategies of the initiatives.

5.1 Discourses, roles and future visions

The design and the use of specific discourses very much differs from initiative to initiative. This is connected to the different roles, which the initiatives promote. The PvdD, as testimonial party in the Dutch and European parliament, takes up the position of criticising existing structures of social domination, drawing attention to the ‘wrongs’, putting it on the political agenda and creating public awareness. Based on these roles, the PvdD constructs critical discourses about the structure of the economy, the farming system and the EU. This is underlined by their alternative discourse on human-animal relationships, opposing the idea of achieving animal welfare in the existing economic system. The Herenboeren also promote strong discourses about ‘the economy’. However, different to the PvdD, the Herenboeren take up the role of creating an alternative to existing structures. Hence, they do not focus on criticising and denouncing the structures they want to change, but rather create a future vision of how an alternative system could look like, focusing on implementing this vision in reality and making it possible for people to see and co-create it. These two approaches, that of the PvdD and the Herenboeren, seem to be rather complementary, with similar values being propelled through different approaches, expressed through their discourses.

The BLK with its role of determining the market seems to operate in a very different sphere. Compared to the roles of the Herenboeren, the roles of the BLK can be said to be mainly co-

existing, as the Herenboeren are not interested in determining the market in the conventional sense. The Herenboeren do not directly operate in the logic of the market. As one of the interviewees points out: “We are selling memberships” (Interview with Boudewijn Tooren, chairman of Herenboeren Wilhelminapark, Boxtel, the Netherlands, 27.06.2019), not selling any food. They promote a different sense of profit, one that is based on the community, which is incompatible with the market-oriented understanding of it by the BLK. Different to the PvdD, the SPA is not a very activist organisation. With the BLK, the SPA cooperates with the industry and supermarkets, transforming the farming system from within. The BLK’s aim of increasing the market share of organic and free range systems, with simultaneous decrease of the production of animal-based, is partly conflicting with the PvdD’s aim of abolishing the livestock industry altogether. However, the BLK’s discourse about determining the market by making it ‘better’ than current EU law stipulates, might help the PvdD in changing EU legislation. It also has to be emphasised that the BLK only presents a tool and not an end in itself.

5.2 Construction of alternative discourses

In this section the different construction and compatibility of the alternative discourses of the three initiatives is compared. The focus on the discourses about animal welfare and human-animal-nature relationships is based on the relevance of these discourses for answering the research questions. A third focus has been chosen (that of the economic system), as it appeared in the communication of all three initiatives and is closely tied to the other two foci.

5.2.1 Animal welfare

All three initiatives promote very different conceptualisations of animal welfare. The PvdD fights for the moral and legal representation of animals on the global level, which is incompatible with the ‘production’ of animals as food. Contrary to that, the BLK’s discourse on animal welfare promotes the improvement of a market-oriented animal welfare, acknowledging the farming system’s boundaries. The idea of animals expressing their ‘natural behaviour’ is seen from very different perspectives. Whereas the BLK mainly defines it according to space and health requirements, the Herenboeren mean with ‘natural behaviour’ the re-orientation to animals’ behaviour before their domestication. Although the BLK might not challenge the ‘property status’ of animals, it creates awareness about the need for more animal welfare in husbandry among people who are usually not concerned about it. Moreover,

animal welfare present the focus of the PvdD and the BLK. Contrary, animal welfare is created as a ‘side effect’ in the Herenboeren concept, following a ‘de-focused’ approach, not putting any specific emphasis on it in their communication. Further, in their consideration of animal welfare, they see it as starting point, not focusing on production in the first place, but still integrating the production of animal-based food with a ‘low’ and conscious consumption of food originating from animals. Hence, the initiatives have different approaches in achieving animal welfare, following different ideas of what animal welfare entails. In the communication of all three initiatives, specific discursive strategies are extremely absent in the construction of discourses about animal welfare, sometimes rather being described implicitly. Considering the different domains in which the initiatives operate, each approach might be effective in its own context. Further research would have to be conducted to answer this question.

5.2.2 Human-animal-nature relationships

Using **partial reframing**, the BLK constructs an alternative discourse on the relationship between farmers and ‘their’ animals, creating an alternative frame on human-animal relationships. The individual relationships to the animals, as well as the reciprocal relation between humans and animals (‘what you give you also get back’) draw a different picture than seeing the animal as mere unit of production. This, however, can also be used as a marketing strategy by retailers. The farmer’s perspective is rarely discussed by the PvdD. Human-animal relationships are rather described as oriented towards more equal rights, based on compassion and mutual respect. In the Herenboeren concept, the farmer is crucial, but not excessively discussed on the website. The development of human-animal relations are here described as a journey towards a self-regulatory system.

All three initiatives promote discourses concerning human-human relationships. Interpersonal relations and the development of a community are presented as crucial for the success of the Herenboeren concept. They use **radical reframing** to create an alternative discourse about the value of communal production, ‘selling memberships’, not products. This idea of respect and self-determination can also be found in discourses of the PvdD. In their critique about structures of the EU, they call for more democratic and transparent processes, for citizens to have more possibilities of co-determination in political decision-making. This idea of self-determination rather conflicts with the aim of the BLK to determine the market and in a way

‘act for the consumer’. Here the idea of a rational consumer is countered, which has to be seen in the context of being addressed to people who usually are not concerned about aspects of animal welfare.

In the construction of discourses about human-animal-nature relationships, the Herenboeren, as well as the PvdD, use the discursive strategy of **complexification** to construct the discourse of the interconnectedness between humans, animals and nature. The PvdD here demands for living in harmony with the living environment, acting with less anthropocentric attitude. The holistic approach of the Herenboeren animals are seen as only one aspect of the broader picture. The Herenboeren explicitly stress the need to learn from nature. Using **radical reframing**, the Herenboeren construct an alternative discourse about nature and animals presenting co-determinants in decision-making processes, countering dominant understandings of controlling nature. This completely transforms the idea of the human primacy over nature. Although not constructing an alternative discourse on human-animal-nature relationships, the BLK uses **logical inversion** and **parody** to criticise the environmental impacts of milk production. Moreover, the values that are promoted by the PvdD and the Herenboeren with respect to discourses about such relationships seem to be rather similar, being based on aspects of sustainability, compassion, freedom, responsibility and animal welfare. However, as discussed in section 2.2, such concepts can have different meanings.

5.2.3 The economic system

In the course of the analysis, discourses about the economic system crystallised as significant in comparing the three initiatives. Just as the PvdD, the Herenboeren counter dominant ideas about our existing economic system. However, instead of referring to the ‘wrongs’ of the system, the Herenboeren describe what is needed. Throughout their online communication, the PvdD uses various discursive strategies in framing a counter-discourse of ‘economic-growth-not-being-the-solution’ on the national and European level. This is done, for example, with the use of a **metaphorical idiom** when talking about the need to shrink the livestock industry and to consume less (or no) products originating from animals or by using **radical reframing** in shifting frames from the idea of the need for increased productivity to the importance of our economy being based on values such as compassion, sustainability and respect. In comparison, the Herenboeren do not see profit as primary objective and base their concept on similar values. The fact that they do not sell any products but create a community

in which people can pick up their food on a weekly basis already shows their different stance towards the broader economic system. Hence, they create an alternative frame about the economic system as such. The PvdD's claim for creating a system based on ideals of sustainability, compassion, freedom and responsibility can here be seen as complementary to the frame of the Herenboeren. The BLK on the other hand clearly operates within the logic of the existing economic system. The economic system does not get questioned as such by the BLK.

Concerning the role of the economic system in shifting the position of animals in the farming system, the discourses constructed by the PvdD are particularly significant in terms of regulating Dutch export of animal-based products. With the Netherlands exporting enormous amounts of animal-based products, the PvdD creates awareness not only on the national but also on the European level, calling for better regulations of import and export. However, although the PvdD promotes a critical stance towards the EU, the party also communicates the need and value of European cooperation, referring to past achievements of the EU in terms of animal welfare, which however are too outdated (regulations from 1990s). Also the BLK promotes discourses about improving animal welfare on an international level, considering the power of retail companies in changing animal welfare standards. Codes of practice of food companies can have a substantial impact internationally (Cao & White, 2016).

Hence, concerning aspects of animal welfare and human-animal-nature relations, each initiative has a different approach, with the BLK operating *within* the system, the PvdD trying to achieve change in the political and activist arena and the Herenboeren rather separating themselves from the system, creating an alternative vision outside of the farming system and partly also outside of the economic system in the conventional sense. All three initiatives create awareness about the position of animals in the farming system in their own ways. Whereas the PvdD and the Herenboeren can be said to shift the position of the animal in the food system towards a more egalitarian, co-determining, individual position, the BLK does not shift the position of the animal in the sense of changing power dynamics. The Herenboeren and the PvdD seem to discursively support each other from different institutional logics, including different actors. The BLK, on the other hand, rather discursively sustains the position of the animal in the food system, however, making the animal more visible. Concerning the discursive strategies, the PvdD frequently uses various discursive strategies, as well as linguistic devices. The Herenboeren often uses the strategy of **radical**

reframing, offering alternative frames, as well as the countering the mainstream. Both initiatives use the more effective discursive strategies (**complexification**, **partial** and **radical reframing**) more frequently than the less convincing ones (**logical inversion** and **parody**). The BLK uses discursive strategies less, especially that of **radical reframing**, more frequently using **logical inversion** and **parody**. Hence, the PvdD and the Herenboeren use more of the 'strong' discursive strategies in their construction of alternative discourses, which makes their discourses more persuasive, propelling the marginal perspective of animals into mainstream views on the agri-food system.

6. Conclusion

More and more initiatives emerge, which challenge the objectified image of animals as commodities. With my thesis, I tried to contribute to a better understanding of how 'alternative food initiatives' help in shifting the position of animals in the food system through their use of language. Concepts such as sustainability and animal welfare are fuzzy, complex and inevitably interconnected. We have to be aware of the broad use of the concept of animal welfare, not always being about the quality of life and well-being of animals. When thinking about and using such concepts, the perspective of nonhuman animals has to be taken into consideration. Enriching anthropological insights with the study on large-scale societal transformations is helpful here in understanding the shifting position of animals in agri-food transitions, as transition studies provides epistemological constructs and methodological tools for the analysis of such transitions. We need new, less anthropocentric methods to study animal welfare and better understand the perspectives of animals (as far as possible). Hence, not only aspects of sustainability and globalization should present key organising principles for future food systems, but also the strive for justice and respect for other living beings.

This thesis focused on the construction of alternative discourses on animals in the (Dutch) agri-food system and its contribution to shifting the position of animals in it. For that, I focused on three different initiatives that work towards a more sustainable and just food system, namely the Party for the Animals, the Better Life label and the Herenboeren. The combination of MaP and PDA proved here helpful in first selecting very different and for the study relevant cases, then analysing them according to the construction of alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system, and their use of discursive strategies, and eventually comparing the initiatives in terms of their compatibility to each other in shifting the position of animals in the food system.

In conclusion, the three initiatives have very different approaches to transforming the position of the animal in the agri-food system. Whereas some means are compatible, others seem rather conflicting. All three initiatives operate on very different levels, involving different actors and reaching different audiences. They all develop alternative discourses throughout their online communication, some explicitly on animals, others more implicitly. The ways in and topics on which the three initiatives build their alternative discourses on are varying. The BLK creates awareness among consumers who might be usually not concerned about animal

welfare and tries to make animal friendlier production more feasible for farmers, improving their economic situation from within the system. The position of farmers in the system is stressed, which is frequently ignored in dominant frames, but essential. The farmer's perspective is a vital aspect to consider in agri-food transitions. The PvdD, on the other hand, operates in the political arena, putting pressure on politicians and fuelling social debates. They influence the position of the animal from a completely different angle, heavily criticising existing structures of social domination. The Herenboeren rather reach people who are already concerned about issues such as animal welfare, environmental sustainability and alternative ways of food production. As they do not directly interact with the market, their audience is completely different. The Herenboeren construct alternative discourses on a future vision that largely operates outside of conventional understandings of the economic system. Hence, there is not one way to shifting the position of the animal in the farming system, but many ways.

As Hamilton and Taylor outline, traditionally ethnographic methods have focused on interview, conversation and discourse analysis (2017: 52), with my work not being an exception. However, for advancing research in which the voices of animals can be heard, methods have to be developed beyond this human-centric approach. Such methods should not focus on text and language, as animals do not write. Further, there is a great value in research on animal welfare becoming more interdisciplinary. The work of behavioural scientist Michael Mendl, for example, can contribute to the development of posthuman ethnographic methods. He works on methods to objectively measure the emotions of nonhuman animals. Although animals seem healthy, Mendl points out, they might still have poor welfare as they experience subjective suffering (Mendl, 2001). Hence, emotions, such as anxiety or joy, and subjective emotional experiences are important aspects to consider in future research on animal welfare and the perspective of animals. Moreover, in transition studies, analytical frameworks, such as the MaP could be expanded to the animal perspective, considering them as relevant actors in system transformations.

Besides the challenge of developing methods for the evaluation of the well-being of animals from a non-human centric perspective, the question about the 'effectiveness' of the alternative discourses remains. This thesis only focused on the *construction* of alternative discourses on animals in the agri-food system. However, to assess the effectiveness of the discourses, constructed by the initiatives, for shifting the position of animals in the food system, aspects of dissemination and reception have to be analysed, because only then an object (such as a

text or discourse) is brought into being (Souto-Manning, 2014: 159). As discourse deals with the interplay between power and language in society, it is vital to understand how discourses are constructed, disseminated and received, influencing social practice. Effectiveness can here be defined as the success in propelling marginal discourses into the mainstream, furthering democratisation through the promotion of egalitarian discourses. Only with the interaction between the 'textual' and 'social' world, discursive practices of resistance to and emancipation from prevailing forms of social domination become meaningful. Hence, not only the production, its scale and scope, but also the dissemination and reception of alternative discourses, have to be examined in more detail. How are the discourses of the different initiatives disseminated? How do receivers process them and how are they further communicated and changed? Further, more research is needed on the impact, effectiveness and influence of discursive strategies on dominant narratives and the impact of potential obstacles in the production, dissemination and reception of alternative discourses. Furthermore, as mentioned in the positionality of this paper, my linguistic expertise is fairly limited, wherefore future research has to study alternative discourses on a more in depth, micro-linguistic level. As Fourat and Lepiller (2017) point out, micro-scale changes might have a significant effect on a larger scale.

7. Bibliography

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8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix I: Interview question catalogue

Interview catalogue

Dominant food regime & challenges:

- What do you think is the main challenge of the current food system?
- What is your (alternative) vision for the (Dutch) food system compared to the dominant/mainstream system?
 - What aspects are most significant for you?
 - What do you want to change?
 - How do you see the food system in the future?

Animals in the food system:

- In what way(s) do you think the food sector mainly addresses the animal?
 - What is ‘the animal (perspective)’ in the current food system? How is the animal perceived/represented?
- How does your organisation look at the animal?
 - How does this differ from the mainstream?
- Do you encounter challenges in matching the improvement of animal welfare with sustainability concerns?
 - If so, how do you approach this challenge?

Perception of transformative potential:

- What is your role in the (Dutch) food system?
 - With what means/in what way do you try to transform the (animal-based) food system? (if at all)
 - Examples: Do you try to criticise/alter the existing/create alternatives?
 - What do you think is the place/ role of animals in changing something?
 - Why is the animal (perspective) important?

Concept of animal welfare:

- How would you describe ‘animal welfare’/What is ‘animal welfare’ for the PvdD/BLK/Hereboeren?
 - How would you describe ‘the animal perspective’ in your organisation? What does it imply?

Comparison/collaboration:

- Do you know the PvdD/Beter leven keurmerk/Hereboeren?

Yes:

- What do you know/think about the PvdD/BLK/Hereboeren?
- In your words, what do you think is the aim of the PvdD/BLK/Hereboeren?
- Do you think the PvdD/BLK/Hereboeren contributes to transforming the Dutch food system?
 - If so, how? If not, why not?
- Would you describe the means, the PvdD/BLK/Hereboeren are using for achieving their objectives, as complementary/conflicting/co-existing to your own?
- Could you imagine a cooperation with them?
- Do you think a cooperation would contribute to transforming the animal-based food sector?

Communication:

- Who is your audience? Who do you want to reach?
- What are your most important communication channels to the public?
- How would you estimate your impact?
 - How many people do you reach?
 - What kind of people do you want to reach?

