

## Abstract

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Societies will have to go through an extremely challenging transformation towards sustainability in the near future. To do this by design, rather than by disaster, calls for a paradigm shift, and for science to support policymakers. Social practice theories help challenge the often hidden paradigms, worldviews, and values at the basis of many unsustainable practices. However, practice theoretical research can struggle to provide effective means for policymaking. Connected to social practices, discourses and their boundaries define what is seen as possible, what the range of issues and their solutions are. By exploring the connections between practices and discourses, this book develops, firstly, a conceptual approach to help enable purposive change in unsustainable social practices. This is done in an interdisciplinary manner integrating different literatures. Secondly, the book takes meat and the current meat system as a central theme. Radical transformation towards new meatways is arguably necessary, with the climate crisis and massive biodiversity and ecosystem loss being closely connected to the current meat system. Additionally, pandemics originating in wild or domesticated animals we eat is yet another example of how vastly unsustainable our food-related practices are. This book explores the necessity of transformation, as well as the complex psychological, ideological, and power-related mechanisms slowing down and inhibiting change.

Notable for the practice-discourse framework is that it allows a focus, on the one hand, on existing *strategic ignorance* of conflicting values, emotions and knowledge, and on the other hand, on the potential for *discursive consciousness* of practices, and their related (conflicting) values, emotions, and knowledge. The wider, the more varied and in-depth discourses there are, the more difficult strategic ignorance is to maintain. Discursive consciousness can create *discursively open practices* which may be well established and discursively dominant in a society, nonetheless, increasingly questioned, creating tensions and potential openings to different ways of going about the practices. Especially significant in such discursively open practices can be different and new meanings replacing, or co-occurring alongside old meanings. Discourses disseminate new meanings and potential new ways of doing things to a wider social group or society. Discursive consciousness can be seen as a key concept for purposive change. Further, it may better enable change in the

context of *distributed agentive power* residing within the practice-discourse arrangement. A positive feedback loop may emerge between collective individual action creating political change, political change changing both individual and societal values, and changing values increasing willingness for collective action.

Taking the widened, and interdisciplinary version of a social practice theory approach to meat-eating related practices, this book examines discourses related to the *new meatways*, firstly flexitarianism, and secondly, eating cultivated or plant-based meats, or insects. Cognitive frames can work as a focus of practice theoretical analysis especially due to their connections to values, emotions, and knowledge on the side of practices. Discourse data can be used to investigate some of the underlying issues to do with controversial practices, or practices that are established, but being questioned. Discourses can reveal much about the values, emotions, knowledge, paradigms, and worldviews linked to social practices, as well as potential coping mechanisms, such as strategic ignorance of related conflicts. The book also discusses potential ways in which the new meatways and discourses around them could enable a purposive transformation.

The analysed online discourse data suggests that meat-eating related practices can be seen as discursively open, especially due to the new meatways offering new solutions, as compared to vegetarianism and veganism. Discourses regarding cultivated or plant-based meat or insects push the boundaries of what meat is, and seeing strong flexitarianism as a realistic meatway helps imagine a solution to finding sufficient future protein for the world. Further, discourses around the new meatways can reveal somewhat hidden frames that have supported existing practices in the last decades. Two conceptual metaphors present in the data nail down well two issues regarding transforming the meat system towards radically less, or no intensive industrial production, with the goal of radically lower negative impacts. The first metaphor, the *hungry beast*, addresses the still very present meat demand paradigm or frame in need of critical reassessment. The new meats (cultivated meat, plant-based meat and insects) are partially functioning in this frame with the underlining assumption that they are necessary to satisfy the starkly increasing global demand for meat. The second metaphor of a *journey* illustrates how sustainable ways of eating protein, including some more conventional meat, can be realised. When framing meat eating and its transformation using this metaphor, different meatways are seen as points on a continuum, where many possible journeys along that continuum can be made. In this way, even more radical changes can be facilitated. Finally, compared to the old meatways, the new meatways can better align values related to sustainability with values often being prioritized in daily food-related practices, such as providing for family, convenience, tradition, freedom, politeness, and pleasure. The new meatways, therefore, offer a way to expand the discourse, away from the conventional animal-based meat vs. no meat dichotomy.