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Cultivating Conflict:

**A Critical Discourse Analysis of Cultural Values in
Norwegian Discourses on Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture**

Abstract

Introduction: While the Norwegian government, as a whole, seemingly recognizes the connection between nutrition, agriculture, and public health outcomes, there remains an ongoing reluctance for structural transformation among those working directly with agricultural policies. The Health Department provides evidence-based nutritional guidelines for improving health and wellness through nutrition, but the Agriculture Department continues to incentivize the production and consumption of products associated with increased risk of overweight, obesity and noncommunicable diseases. My aim with this thesis is to add to the growing conversation of food system transformation in Norway by asking how cultural conflicts are reflected in the discourses of nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Method: This thesis is a critical discourse analysis of a televised panel discussion produced and distributed by Norsk rikskringkasting. Tools adapted from Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model of Discourse Analysis were used to operationalize concepts of *grid* and *group* from Douglas' Cultural Theory.

Findings: Four main and interrelated discourses concerning nutritional-sensitive agriculture in Norway were identified: (1) Heritage agriculture narrative discourse; (2) Nutrition-forward public health discourse; (3) Shaping Norwegian identity; (4) Discourse of sustainable food system. The values and ideologies that shaped the discourses exposed conflict between two dominant cultures: *Conservative hierarchy* and *Dissident enclave*. These two cultures are protagonists in a debate about control for resources in the changing landscape of nutrition and agriculture.

Conclusion: This analysis underscores how different cultural values and social structures impact debates about nutrition and agriculture by highlighting how powerful discourses influence policy directions and social acceptability of the interventions. The conflict of discourses concerning nutrition-sensitive agriculture is a clash between the cultural identities attached to the representation of a traditional food system and the contemporary authority of nutritional science.

Keywords: Agriculture, Culture, Discourse, Food system, Health, Norway, Nutrition, Nutrition-sensitive agriculture, Sustainability

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List of abbreviations

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

FHI: Folkehelseinstituttet

HLPE: High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition

NIBIO: The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research

NNR: Nordic Nutrition Recommendations

NRK: Norsk rikskringkasting

NSA: Nutrition-sensitive agriculture

UN: United Nations

WCRF: World Cancer Research Fund

WHO: World Health Organization

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1 Introduction

1.1 Influencing nutrition

The Norwegian Health department is quite clear about how we can improve health and well-being with proper nutrition (Helsedirektoratet, 2011). Included in the advice to the public are recommendations to increase plant-based food consumption and limit consumption of red- and processed-meats as there are direct links between the underconsumption of plants, overconsumption of animal products and increased risk of overweight, obesity and noncommunicable diseases (Bhatia & Independent Expert Group, 2016; Blomhoff et al., 2023; Helsedirektoratet, 2011; Willett et al., 2019). Not following the nutritional recommendations creates a significant and preventable burden to individuals and the state in the forms of both poor health outcomes and environmental consequences (Ministerråd, 2023; Ruel & Alderman, 2013; Sælensminde et al., 2016). Despite the efforts of the Norwegian Health department to promote healthful food choices with behavior modification campaigns, the country's population continues to find it challenging to meet the dietary recommendations (Folkehelseinstituttet, 2019; Helsedirektoratet, 2023; Opplysningskontoret for frukt og grønt, 2023; Regjeringen, 2020).

In recent years, the importance of nutrition for improving health outcomes has also become visible in cross-departmental policies such as the Handlingsplan 2017 and Intensjonsavtalen 2017 and 2022 (Helse-og-omsorgsdepartementet, 2017; Helsedirektoratet, 2019). These policies address aspects of the food system such as production and distribution that influence nutrition. In spite of this, members of the same government, specifically from the Agricultural department, have spoken out against the Health Department's dietary advice (Foss, 2023). While the Norwegian government, as one body, seemingly recognizes the connection between nutrition and agriculture through its health policies and letters of intent, there remains an ongoing reluctance for transformation among those working directly with agricultural policies.

1.2 *Debatten*

In 2023, the ongoing discussion about who should hold influence over what people put on their plates, and to what degree those plates are connected to farming practices reignited when the proposal for the latest "Nordic Nutrition Recommendations" (NNR) was made public before being published (Blomhoff et al., 2023). The proposal included a reduction to the

recommended maximum weekly intake of red- and processed-meat along with an increase in the recommended minimum daily intake of vegetables, fruits and berries. The latest version of NNR is a report of food-based dietary recommendations created by a cooperation of over four hundred researchers, using a mandate set down by the Nordic Council of Ministers that focuses on the impact of food on public health and environmental sustainability. After publication, the NNR is meant to be adapted for local use by the five Nordic and three Baltic states. This includes Norway, whose Directorate of Health has historically used the NNR as part of the background in formulation of the national dietary guidelines (Helsedirektoratet, 2016).

In April 2023, the then Minister of Agriculture and Food, Sandra Borch, responded publicly to the proposed NNR updates via media outlets (Sørenes & Bjørge, 2023). Her statements included comments about research validity, nutrition, meal planning, and the degree to which the proposal from NNR would affect agricultural practices in Norway. Because of her then status as the Minister of Agriculture and Food, it was reasonably inferred that her statements extended beyond personal opinion, communicating the perspectives and intentions of an elected government official. Her statements received much attention from both those who agreed and those who disagreed.

Not long after Borch's statements were published, the television show *Debatten*, produced by Norsk rikskringkasting (NRK), hosted an array of individuals to discuss the implications of the NNR proposal and to respond to Borch's comments in an episode titled, "*Researchers: Eat as little meat as possible*" (NRK, 2023). *Debatten* is an award winning television show known for being actively engaged in current events in Norway and the world. On 27th April 2023, the roughly forty minute panel discussion featured a panel of eight, plus a brief interview with the project leader of the NNR 2023 report. The panel included representatives from the sitting government as well as the health, agriculture and sustainability sectors. I chose the transcript and production details of this one episode of *Debatten* as the text for this analysis based on personal interest and its relevance within the conflict. The various perspectives represented interact and influence the dominant discourses (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124).

1.3 Cultural conflict seen in discourse

Several discourses impact current agricultural and nutritional norms. Identifying conflicts and understanding changing ideas is important because these normative debates are where ideology is realized (Douglas, 1996, p. 174). According to Douglas, when there is division in adherence to evidence-based policy such as the dietary recommendations, we can infer that cultural bias is at play (1996, p. 24). Using critical discourse analysis to identify the discourses hidden within language choices and interpret those choices, we can look at the relationship of the represented cultures through the lens of Douglas' Cultural Theory (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). My hope is to add to the conversation of food system transformation in Norway by asking how cultural conflicts are reflected in the discourses of nutrition-sensitive agriculture. The problem will be approached as follows:

What linguistic choices are being employed to influence the discourses?

What discourses emerge from the panel discussion?

How is cultural conflict reflected in the discourses?

1.4 Structure of this thesis

In Chapter 2, I will explain the concept of nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and its relevance for Norway. I will provide information about how NSA is researched and how this project fits into the picture. Chapter 2 also includes into the theoretical framework of this project. In Chapter 3, the methodological application of Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model of Discourse Analysis is presented. Chapter 4 includes a presentation of identified discourses, followed by the discussion. Finally, the conclusion and implications for future research are within Chapter 5.

2 Previous Research and Theoretical Framework

2.1 What is nutrition-sensitive agriculture?

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) is part of a food system transformation that addresses the relationship between farming practices, human nutrition, and health outcomes (HLPE, 2017). The concept of NSA had been developed some years prior but was introduced formally at the Second International Conference on Nutrition, organized in 2014 by FAO and the World Health organization (WHO) (Eide, 2017; FAO, 2014). The implementation of NSA is focused in three areas: food availability, crop diversity and increased micronutrient levels (FAO, 2014). By increasing production of health-promoting foods, these foods become more available and accessible to the population. This can also improve the economic status of the rural communities responsible for crop production. While prioritizing diet related health outcomes, policies within this arena can also address food security, maintenance of countrywide agriculture, and increased value creation.

2.2 Nutrition-sensitive agriculture for Norway?

The four main objective of Norwegian agricultural policy are food security, maintaining agriculture throughout the country, increased value creation, and lowering emissions with sustainable agriculture (Regjeringen, 2011, 2016, 2023). These are typical objectives of a conventional system. Unlike the objectives of conventional agriculture, which primarily focuses on increasing yields and agricultural productivity, NSA considers the nutritional needs of people as a central objective. NSA recognizes the interconnectedness between agriculture and health outcomes in humans, aiming to promote healthy diets and improve the overall well-being of populations. In this way, NSA becomes an extension of the health policies.

Programs for the implementation of NSA were initially focused on low- and middle-income countries in an effort to combat malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies (Ruel & Alderman, 2013). More recently, malnutrition in the form of 'overnutrition', which is the excessive consumption of calorically dense, nutrient poor, often highly processed foods, has become a concern in low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Therefore, the integration of nutrition objectives in agricultural programs as a part of a multi-sectoral approach for improving health in high-income countries such as Norway can also be beneficial for addressing this newer form of malnutrition (Htenas et al., 2017, p. 21). As of 2023, sixty-eight

percent of Norwegians were classified as overweight (Meyer & Bergh, 2017). Included in that number are the twenty-four percent that fall into the category of obese. Unhealthy diets that lead to increased risk of chronic lifestyle disease weigh heavily on the individuals and the state. By evolving the concept of NSA to address overweight and obesity, the food system as a whole can play a more active role in delivering safe, diversified, and healthy diets for all (HLPE, 2017; Ruel & Alderman, 2013; Scott, 2017).

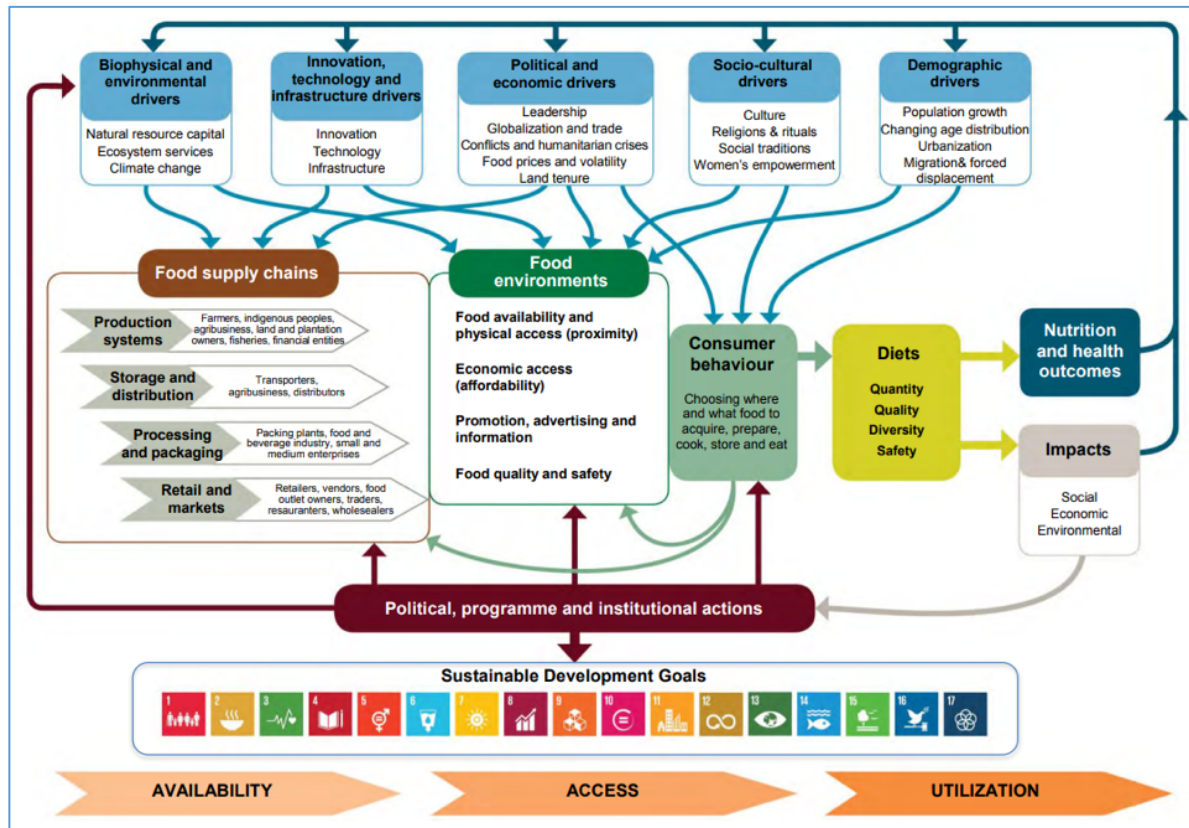
2.3 How is nutrition-sensitive agriculture researched?

Various research methods are used to assess the effectiveness of interventions in agriculture that aim to improve health outcomes through nutrition. Among them are policy analysis, economic analysis, and modeling. While policy and economic analysis examines health and agricultural policies, food system modeling uses models to simulate the potential impact altering the complex network of elements can have on nutrition outcomes. Combining research methods in order to gain a comprehensive view of impacts of interventions is common. This mixed-methods approach is useful because NSA is inherently interdisciplinary, incorporating diverse factors of the food system like production, health, economy, and sustainability.

The September 2017 report “Nutrition and food systems” by the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on Food Security and Nutrition is an analysis of how elements of the food system influence dietary patterns and nutritional outcomes, and how policies have the potential to shape food systems (HLPE, 2017). As outlined by FAO, a food system encompasses all the processes, activities, and resources involved in the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food (see figure 2) (HLPE, 2017, p. 26). This includes agricultural practices, such as farming, transportation, storage, marketing, and retail. Additionally, it encompasses the social, economic, and environmental aspects of food production and consumption, including issues such as nutritional guidelines, cultural drivers, sustainability, and equity.

Figure 2.

Conceptual framework of food systems for diets and nutrition (HLPE, 2017)



Analysis of the individual food system elements that ultimately affect nutrition and health outcomes, shows that action is required in political leadership, economic policy and the adjustment of social norms, in addition to in food and agriculture policy (HLPE, 2017, p. 81). Therefore, there is a need for better understanding of who is holding the ability to influence the elements of the food system and how much power consumers actually have over their own habits (HLPE, 2017, p. 109). The HLPE report concludes that in order to enact real transformation, a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach, requiring a useful dialogue between relevant actors, is needed (2017, p. 118). This includes policymakers, development actors, civil society, donors, the private sector, producers, and consumers.

In 2017 and 2023, the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) published reports that used modeling, policy analysis, and economic analysis to evaluate potential possibilities and outcomes of moving towards a more nutrition-centered agriculture in line with the Norwegian Health Department’s dietary recommendation (Bakken & Mittenzwei, 2023; Mittenzwei et al., 2017). Similar to the global reports, it was concluded that combining several

measures which address behavioral change and infrastructure are more likely to have a greater effect than addressing behavioral change alone.

The World Cancer Research Fund International (WCRF) has designed a theoretical analysis tool for retrospective policy analysis called “NOURISHING framework” (Vlad et al., 2023). It is used to identify policy areas in which governments can take action to promote nutrition within the domains of food environment, food system, and behavior change communication (Hawkes et al., 2013). When this tool was applied to Norwegian policy, it was found that Norway had enacted policy in all three domains (WCRF, 2023). However, in terms of agriculture, there was no evidence found of measures supporting food producers to increase healthy food and decrease unhealthy food in the supply chain, and also no evidence of targeted subsidies or initiatives to increase affordability and accessibility of healthy food.

Despite increased attention to NSA, the implementation of interventions is often slow and uneven. This could be a natural symptom of those with recognized power wanting to maintain their positions (Barlow & Thow, 2021). Among the key findings of a controversy study conducted by Loeng and Korsnes which combined discourse analysis, document and media analysis, and semi-structured interviews, was that transformation to the food system in Norway is affected by the polarization that emerges from the perspectives on meat reduction (Loeng & Korsnes, 2023). Similar to the findings of the NOURISHING analysis, they found that there is a lack of transformation in financial incentives that would align with dietary recommendations (WCRF, 2023). While health authorities have been advising to increase plant-based food consumption and lower meat consumption in order to improve health outcomes in the population for several years, Norway’s agriculture authorities have continued to incentivize increased meat production and consumption (Helsedirektoratet, 2011; Loeng & Korsnes, 2023). The volume-centric subsidies, of which animal farmers in Norway are heavily reliant, force them to produce more in order to remain financially viable (Gaasland, 2020). Reducing meat consumption is politically promoted by health authorities, without corresponding changes to agricultural policies.

By encouraging both increased and decreased meat production and consumption the policymakers reinforce the polarization (Brunstad et al., 2005; Cottis & Fadnes, 2022; Gaasland, 2023; Loeng & Korsnes, 2023). Rather than a cooperative dialogue working towards

a common goal of public health, there appears a division among stakeholders, especially among the loudest voices. Therefore, it is important to consider how the cultural values of actors with perceived power are influencing the discourses of NSA along the way from public debate to policy. My intention with this thesis is to explore the questions of culture and influence in the April 2023 episode of *Debatten* using tools of critical discourse analysis.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

To understand the cultural conflicts reflected in the discourses of NSA in Norway, it is helpful to understand the cultural perspectives of the components. I chose Mary Douglas' Cultural Theory as the theoretical foundation of my project because her concepts of *grid* and *group* and *culture* provide a stable foundation for understanding the values and social structures that underpin the various perspectives (Douglas, 1975). I used Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model of Discourse Analysis as a tool to operationalize the concepts from Douglas' theory (Fairclough, 2010). This gave me a framework to analyze how different cultures use discourse to maintain or challenge power structures and cultural norms, and the conflicts that arise as a result.

In this chapter, I will explore nutrition and agriculture through the Douglasian lens of cultural values and social structures. Then, I will talk about how language and representation shape, reinforce or challenge cultural patterns through Fairclough's concepts of "*meaning making*" and "*identity shaping*". Finally, because this project uses a televised panel discussion for the data synthesis, I will discuss why this is an important format in the genre of dialogue.

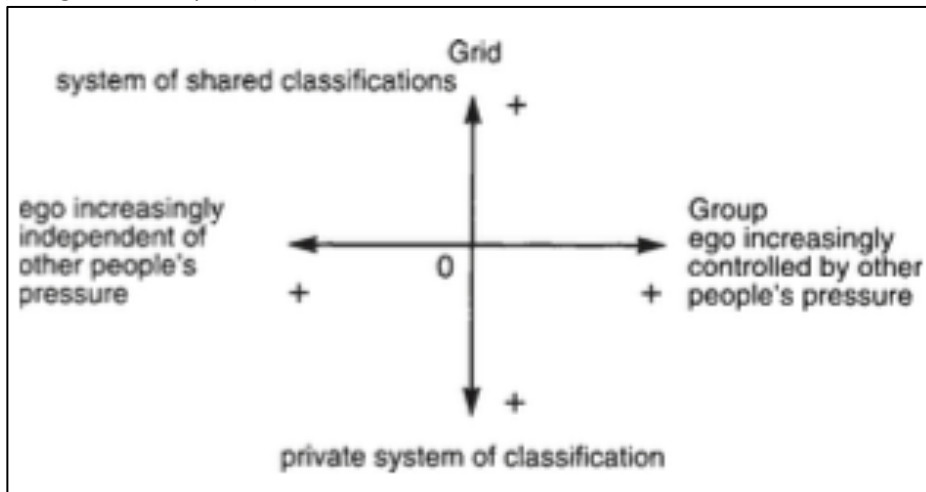
2.4.1 Nutrition and agriculture as culture

Douglas' Cultural Theory places social collectives and their behaviors into categories based on degrees of rule regulation and group solidarity (Douglas, 1996, pp. 42-49). As developed by anthropologist Mary Douglas in the 1970s, her Cultural Theory is a sociological framework that explains how social environments influence people's perceptions of risk, behavior, and social organization. It categorizes social environments based on two dimensions: "*grid*" and "*group*" (see figure 3). The *grid* dimension represents the degree to which individuals' roles and choices are constrained by formal rules, structures, and regulations. In the context of nutrition and agriculture, those who belong to high grid social collectives will have strict rules and hierarchies that govern agricultural practices, food choices, and dietary norms. Meanwhile,

those in low grid social collectives have less institutional regulation over what people eat or how food is produced.

Figure 3.

The Grid-Group diagram: the vertical axis reflects the grid dimension, and the horizontal axis reflects the group dimension. The zero point at the center reflects no demands being made on the individual (Douglas, 1975, p. 85)

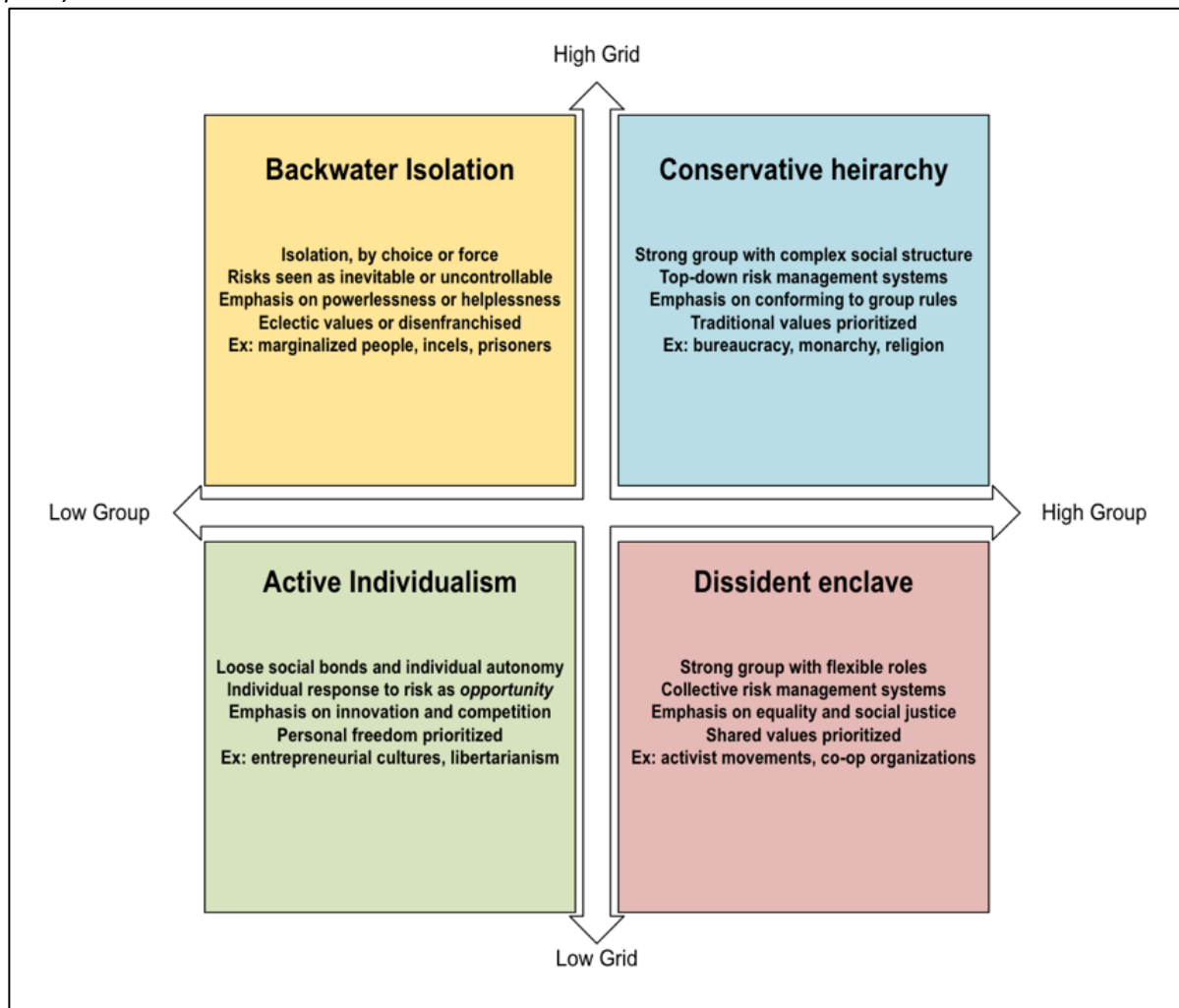


The *group* dimension refers to the extent of social cohesion or how strongly people are integrated into bounded, cohesive groups (Douglas, 1975, pp. 84-86). In a high group social collective where group solidarity is strong, nutritional and agricultural practices will often serve to reinforce group identity. Meanwhile, in a low group social collective with low group integration, food and agriculture are viewed more as individual concerns or drivers for economic activity rather than as expressions of collective identity.

The four resulting cultural types provide a framework for understanding how different groups experience and express meaning and identity (Douglas, 1996, pp. 42-49). Using this image of quadrants, Douglas describes four distinct types of social environments, each type having its own way of organizing social life, understanding risks, and responding to societal issues. There are many interpretations that can be found throughout social studies. I have created an adaptation for this project (see figure 4). Included in each quadrant are brief explanations of the social environment type, social structure, risk response, social priorities, and examples of the type.

Figure 4

The four distinct types of social environments, with identifying characteristics of group structure, risk management approaches, social priorities, and examples, adapted from Douglas' Cultural Map (1996, p. 43).



Beginning with the top right quadrant of the figure, is the *Conservative Hierarchy* (see figure 4). Here we find a social collective that is both high grid and high group (Douglas, 1996, p. 43). These people will have strongly formed groups with a complex social structure. Tradition and leadership will hold great importance for them. These societies may hold deeply rooted traditional or religious dietary laws that restrict or promote certain foods. Farming practices may be dictated by longstanding customs, preserving techniques that are passed down through generations. Especially in rural areas, farming is a communal activity, and food practices support shared values, reinforcing social cohesion. The emphasis on top-down risk management and compartmentalization will likely make it challenging for collaboration if it does not adhere to established norms.

The bottom right quadrant is titled *Dissident Enclave*, which is a low grid, high group social collective (see figure 4). Like the hierarchists, these people place importance in group bonds, but with more flexibility in their individual roles (Douglas, 1996, p. 43). The shared values of equality and social justice will have priority here, allowing for more experimentation with new diets and agricultural technologies that favor sustainable and ethical approaches. Food choices and nutrition are often central to identity within this social collective, symbolizing resistance to dominant cultural or economic forces. The emphasis on collective risk management provides an opportunity to make systemic adjustments as stakeholders blend traditional knowledge with new, community-driven methods.

The lower left quadrant is called *Active Individualism* and is both low grid and low group (see figure 4). Here, we find loose social bonds and a priority placed on individual freedoms and entrepreneurialism (Douglas, 1996, p. 43). Personal choice, innovation, and market-driven forces will play a greater role in nutrition and agriculture. Individual autonomy will guide diets towards individual preferences and customization for self-optimization rather than traditional norms. Agricultural practices are thus more responsive to individual consumer trends rather than guided by collective decision-making.

Finally, the top left quadrant is titled *Backwater Isolation*, marked by high grid and low group integration (see figure 4). These are individuals who experience isolation from society, whether by choice or by force (Douglas, 1996, p. 43). They may have eclectic values and tend to focus on self-sufficiency when it comes to food and agriculture. Traditional farming knowledge and practices are maintained with focus on a narrow selection of staple foods to ensure self-reliance. Here, mainstream influences are minimal, as is interest in collective risk management.

This theory is a useful tool for understanding that actors respond differently to challenges, based on their underlying social and cultural values. Each culture exists in a state of mutual antagonism as they battle for resources and it is this mutual hostility that creates stability (Douglas, 1996, p. 43). The distinctive morality that develops around dietary preferences and agricultural systems becomes a symbol of allegiance for the individuals (Douglas, 1996, p. 174). The success of a society depends on communication, which the members use to

influence and negotiate control. A normative debate about how a community should conduct its affairs is therefore necessary for peaceful survival.

2.4.2 Critical discourse analysis as theory

Exploring the language used in discussions of NSA can expose how discourse is shaped by, and also shapes, social structures and cultural patterns (Fairclough, 2010, p. 74). As Fairclough states, "Ideology is, first, a relation between meaning (and therefore texts) and social relations of power and domination" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 79). The accepted ideologies of each culture will impact their language choices as the actors work to influence the discourse.

For instance, when faced with pressure to alter agricultural practices, conservative hierarchists may lean backwards into entrenched traditional values. Favoring the status quo, their language will reflect reluctance to change with phrases that promote "heritage," "ancestry," "legacy." Dissident enclavists hold great value in collective responsibility and group identity, so phrases like "we must work together" and "our community's future," would reflect their group-centered approach. There will be emphasis placed on "shared responsibility" for nutrition-sensitive practices, as well as how agriculture ties into a vision of healthcare.

In order to identify the discourses and place the cultural perspectives within the conversation of NSA that happens in the panel discussion, I used critical discourse analysis to operationalize the concepts as they appeared in the event's text and the context. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is an approach that provides both theory and method, which focuses on how power, ideology, and social practices are intricately embedded in discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 9). This section concentrates on the theory, and the methodological application is presented in the next chapter.

By looking at both language and setting, this approach provides an instrument for describing how language and representation shape, reinforce or challenge cultural patterns through meaning making and identity shaping (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 34). Stakeholders within the discourses of NSA have gained perceived power through the effective use of discourse. In the case of this project, they are politicians, researchers, and media personalities. This perceived power puts them in a position to influence the pool of knowledge more easily than others, and they can thereby use discourse as a form of social control. Discourses are not necessarily natural, but instead are part of the resources which stakeholders deploy in order to compete,

dominate, or cooperate (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). Therefore, not only have the stakeholders effectively used discourse to be granted the perceived power, but they must also continue to do so, or other stakeholders with different values can use discourse to gain influence of the discourse. During the course of the chosen text, we see vastly different “truths” put forward as the actors try to influence the discussion with their cultural perspectives. Communicative practices are analyzed in this thesis to examine how different cultures construct meaning and shape identity as a reflection of their ideological positions (Fairclough, 2010, p. 47). Here, we understand the concept of ideology as essential for understanding discourse. The language used by the actors in the text is not representative of them as an individual, but of the cultural values that they have adopted.

Meaning making is important for many reasons, not least of all being the complexity of the concepts being discussed in the chosen text. For example, the concept of “*sustainability*” is designated by the moderator to be “*stretchy*” as each actor applies a different meaning. When analyzing meaning making in a text, we look at it on three different stages in the production of meaning: the production of the text, the text itself, and the reception of the text (Fairclough, 2003, p. 10). At the text level, analysis involves examining linguistic features such as vocabulary and grammar to see how specific meanings and positions are conveyed. The production level of the analysis involves examining how certain discourses are repeated, reinforced, or resisted within specific contextual elements. Finally, how the text is received by an audience will affect the application. Meaning is found in the interaction between these factors. Meaning making is a process connected to power, ideology, and social change.

Identity shaping is interesting because each actor is using language to form their own position, that of the opposition, and also position the potential audience (source Fairclough). As with meaning, identity is not fixed or inherent but is actively shaped and reshaped through language and discourse within specific social and cultural contexts. Identity shaping is also analyzed at the text itself, the production, and the reception. At the text level, identity shaping occurs through vocabulary, grammar, tone, and narrative structures that position people in specific roles or social categories. The actors will subtly or explicitly construct identities with attributes of values and characteristics. At the production level, we can analyze identity through how certain identities are normalized or contested. How the discourse reflects

dominant social structures, specifically who is marginalized or valued will affect the reception based on the audience's cultural allegiance.

2.4.3 Panel discussion

To understand the cultural power dynamics shaping discourse within NSA, it is necessary to assess how interventions are described and contested in different forums (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 23-26). A panel discussion is a formal conversation featuring a moderator and a select group of individuals with a variety of viewpoints on a specific topic. It differs from a formalized debate in that there typically is no clear winner or loser. As an element of social events, a panel discussion can bring about change through influencing our knowledge, attitudes and identities. It can play a crucial role in the agenda setting process by providing a platform for diverse perspectives, helping to shape public discourse and potentially influencing decision-makers. As a form of public dialogue, it brings key issues to the forefront, informing the public about emerging risks, presenting them as threats or opportunities (Béland & Mahon, 2016, p. 48; Fairclough, 2003, p. 79).

In the formal setting of televised panel discussion, the lack of neutrality is a key feature (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 156-159). It is characterized by features like disagreement, reasoning, and the goal of persuading an audience. In this critical discourse analysis, the panel discussion is examined within the genre of dialogue. In this context, genre is understood to be a socially recognized form of language use that is shaped by a specific purpose, setting, and audience (Fairclough, 2003, p. 79). As a genre of discourse, dialogues are shaped by social norms, power dynamics, and institutional frameworks. Both textual and discursive strategies are involved in an effort to advance arguments, making the panel discussion a rich source for critical discourse analysis.

As the political process has become increasingly open to the public through media, we are witness to a hybridization of politics, conversation, and entertainment (source Fairclough 2010, p. 156-157). Fairclough deems this "*mediatised*." Panel discussions, especially those in televised settings as the chosen text is, are designed for an audience, so the discourse is shaped not just by the participants but also by the expectations and potential reactions of the audience. In my chosen example, there is a significant political element to the discussion, and the language of the actors is likely adjusted to what Fairclough calls "*conversationalisation*"

(Fairclough, 2010, p. 98). The panelists who are politicians will have been motivated to speak to the audience in terms of potential voters. There will be motivation to place themselves as attractive options for future elections, while shaping the opposition's identity as less favorable. The other panelist will similarly be motivated by their industries. Meanwhile, the network considers the event in terms of entertainment. For the network and the moderator, the intended audience consists of consumers. Therefore, the influence of the moderator's role, production and distribution details are also included in this analysis.

3 Method

As previously mentioned, critical discourse analysis as an approach is both theory and method. In this chapter, I will present how I applied the tools of Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model of Discourse Analysis to operationalize concepts of *grid* and *group* from Douglas' Cultural Theory to the text analysis.

I will first explain the sampling strategy and text preparation. Then I will describe the data synthesis and the codebook. Finally, I will explain the limitations of the chosen method.

3.1 Sampling strategy and text preparation

3.1.1 Sample

With permission from NRK, I have analyzed one episode of the television show, *Debatten* (see appendix 1). It originally aired on 27th April 2023 and is available on the network's website archive (NRK, 2023). *Debatten* is well-known for hosting debates and holding interviews relevant to current events in Norway and the world. The episode is titled, "*Researchers: Eat as little meat as possible.*" This was an event that I watched for personal interest, and then decided to use for this project because of the complex discourse practice featured in the televised panel discussion format (Fairclough, 2010, p. 156). Based on the project timeframe and variety of actors within the text, I decided to limit this project to one text, hoping for quality of data over quantity in this case (Poland, 1995). This created the opportunity to more thoroughly explore the diverse elements.

For the analysis, I have considered the spoken communication that occurred during the panel discussion, the description from the page of the website where the episode can be found, and physical elements of the television studio. The multimodal aspects are included as elements of production, distribution, and potential reception (Machin & Mayr, 2023, pp. 44-45).

3.1.2 Transcription and translation

Both the NRK website and *Debatten* episode are in Norwegian. The text on the website is written in Bokmål and the spoken communication during the debate is in several dialects. I used the free program Whisper Transcription version 9.7 to transcribe the dialogue into text (Snooze, 2024). The program was useful in terms of timesaving, but as can be expected of a program, chunks of dialogue were transcribed incorrectly, incomplete, or missing completely,

probably due to dialect and the participants speaking over one another. Because I am fluent in Norwegian, I was able to edit the text while reviewing the episode. The actors often spoke in run-on sentences, so I had to use my judgement for sentence structure. It was important for me to remember this, as it could alter the interpretation of the text (Poland, 1995, p. 297). I chose to leave out filler words where they were insignificant to the dialogue and kept them where I deemed them relevant to the tone.

Once I considered the text to be complete, I translated it into English. To save time, I used Google Translate. Then I read the Norwegian and English texts side by side to look for errors that may have occurred during language translation and corrected those as I deemed necessary to context. Spoken language and written text are very different mediums, so it cannot be expected that the transcription is a perfect representation (Poland, 1995, p. 299). I added information about text and imagery from the page of the website where the episode can be found, example:

“Image: Picture of the host/moderator, Fredrik Solvang, and the title of the show, Debatten, superimposed over an image of domesticated pigs looking towards the camera from some type of agricultural confinement.” (lines 1089-1091).

Within the English transcription, I added line numbers, and the speakers name before their line/paragraph, example “Fredrik Solvang:”. For the host/moderator, I added to whom they spoke to at the end of each line/paragraph, example “(to Audun Korsæth)”. For the panelists, it can be assumed that they are replying to the host unless otherwise indicated in the transcript, example “(to Rune Blomhoff)”. Delays in speaking and dialogue lost as participants spoke over one another is indicated with ellipsis, example “...no...”. When completed, the final transcript was 35 pages.

The interpretative nature of transcription creates the possibility that other researchers will experience the text differently, and my interpretation will be affected by my own enculturation (Poland, 1995, p. 305). Therefore, I took notes of my initial impressions of language choices, speech patterns and behaviors as I watched the episode multiple times. I wrote notes while reading and editing the Norwegian transcription. I wrote notes while reading and editing the English translation/transcription. I printed out the English transcription and wrote handwritten notes directly onto the printout.

Finally, I used a stopwatch to time how long each participant spoke, and noted how many times each participant was allowed the opportunity for rebuttal. This can expose potential bias of the moderator or the network, or it can simply be coincidence. Regardless, it can impact how the messages are received. For example, during the course of this text, a panelist expressing more conservative ideas of Norwegian farming was allowed more opportunities to respond to what other panelists had said. This does not necessarily indicate favoritism from the moderator, but it can create an illusion of increased importance among the audience.

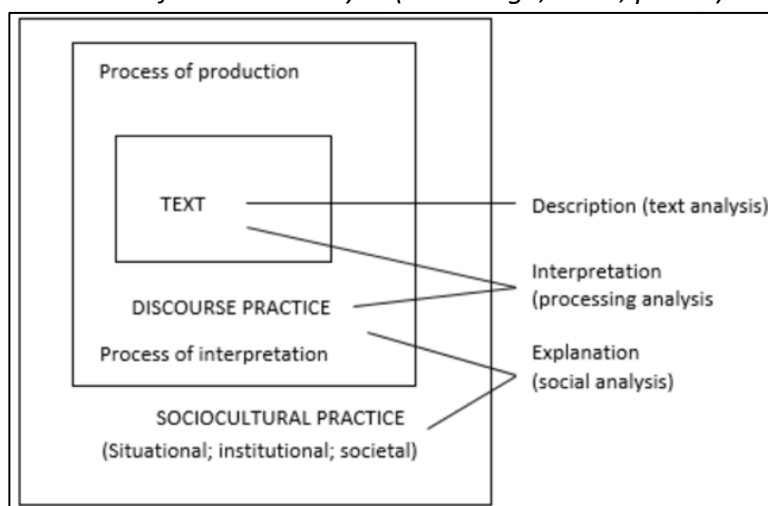
3.2 Data synthesis

3.2.1 Critical discourse analysis as method

For better or for worse, discourse analysis is a huge, flexible qualitative approach which focuses on the reflexive nature of language and power (Fairclough, 2010, p. 6). Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model of Discourse Analysis, first presented in 1989, incorporates the flexibility of discourse analysis with methodical technique to create a systematic method to explore power dynamics and ideologies within texts and social practices (see figure 5) (Fairclough, 2010, p. 133). This structure is very useful for an inexperienced researcher such as myself, helping me to move beyond the surface descriptive and into the effects of discourse (Fairclough, 2010, p. 45). I have chosen to take advantage of this flexibility by limiting myself to only the tools which prove most useful in analyzing language that will expose the cultural values represented in the text.

Figure 5.

Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model illustrating dimensions of discourse as they relate to dimensions of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010, p. 133)



The method Fairclough provides consists of multiple steps, including detailed text description (Fairclough, 2010, p. 188). We begin at the center of the model by creating a description of the text, identifying literary devices and how information is being presented. The text description, or text analysis, is a necessary first step in critical discourse analysis, as we need a text description before we can interpret. We then move outwards into the interpretive stage, looking for message and motivation that may help uncover ideological representation. For this purpose, we understand interpretation to be connections between textual properties and contextual elements as seen by someone intentionally conducting an analysis. Continuing to the outer area of the model, we conduct a social analysis, exploring current cultural norms and values. Here, we examine the relationship between the language and the social practice.

To create the text description, we look at vocabulary and grammatical choices made by the participating actors. Lexical selection and grammatical aspects are particularly useful to uncover elements of meaning making and identity shaping (Fairclough, 2003, p. 10). We also consider the production elements of the text. The location, method of production, and distribution of the text affects how the actors communicate and how the audience receives the messaging. Once we have assembled a text description, it will provide evidence for making interpretations of the text. The text description is essentially our data synthesis.

A text description can be done based on a large number of textual focus points. Textual focus points refer to specific elements of language and discourse that can be examined thoroughly or more superficially (Fairclough, 2001, p. 92). Deciding which elements to include in an analysis requires an assessment of what is more relevant and less relevant in relation to the purpose of the analysis. According to Fairclough, the model is a guideline rather than a blueprint, hence flexible. The textual focus points I have chosen are less grammatically focused, for two reasons. Firstly, I do not have a background in linguistics. Secondly, the text has been transcribed and roughly translated. In my opinion, this makes it more difficult for me to address elements such as transitivity, nominalization, and sentence structure. If I were to have more linguistic expertise or have conducted the analysis in the original language, I would likely have included more of those elements.

I have included several textual focus points in order to have a well-developed text description, but there will be emphasis on a few and others will be more superficial, dependent on the

prevalence within the text. I will give reasons for the selection and emphasis of certain textual focus points within this chapter. The textual focus points I have chosen are split into two categories, those related to meaning making and those related to shaping of identity. As explained in the previous chapter, I believe these two categories to be specifically relevant within the structured setting of the panel discussion.

Studying the text properties provides a basis for uncovering connections between the language and social processes. I started by developing thematic codes to build a framework of topics being discussed. This is important because in this text, several contested concepts are in play. Themes are further explained in section 3.3. Second, I developed descriptive codes created from Fairclough's textual focus points. The descriptive coding is discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.4. I used these two sets of codes to create a map of the analysis elements.

3.3 Meaning making

In the text analysis stage, I looked at how issues, events, and people are framed within the language of the text. This involves examining linguistic and structural choices that can expose the actors' ideological stances. I began with how the actors make meaning. According to Fairclough, "it is meanings that have social effects rather than texts as such" (2003, p. 11). The first step is identifying thematic concepts in the text.

3.3.1 Themes and semantic relations

I began by identifying the themes of the panel discussion and keywords within those themes. Fairclough emphasizes the usefulness of identifying themes in the text and then looking at semantic relations with other words in order to identify the perspective of the actors (2003, p. 129). Actors with different cultural values will often use the same concepts in a conversation, but with different meaning or connotation.

The exact term *nutrition-sensitive agriculture* is not specifically used during the course of the text. However, the reflective relationship between food choices, health and agriculture is a consistent aspect throughout, first introduced thematically by the moderator and then reiterated by panelists. At the beginning of the text, the moderator presents five topics to be discussed by the panelists which I identified as themes: *health*, *diet/nutrition*, *climate*, *research*, and *food production*. I identified three additional recurring themes: *Norwegian*, *sustainability*, and *government* in the course of the text. Within each theme, I organized

keywords (see table keywords list in appendix). Once the themes and keywords were identified, I looked for patterns of co-occurrence to find relational differences and expose the intended meanings (Fairclough, 2003, p. 131). These instances of collocation can precede or follow the word in focus.

In table 1 you can see some examples of co-occurrence for the keyword *dietary advice*. The collocation of "*dietary advice*" with "*strict*" emphasizes a sense of rigidity and lack of flexibility in the recommendations being proposed. In this context, the audience could interpret the advice to be authoritative and necessary, but potentially also unappealing due to its inflexibility. People who prioritize personal choice over conforming, or those who are disenfranchised may be resistant to follow advice seen as strict.

Table 1.

Incidence of collocation with the keyword *dietary advice*.

Keyword	Co-occurrence	Line location
Dietary advice	Strict	616
Dietary advice	Science-based	642
Dietary advice	Knowledge-based	700
Dietary advice	Public health	768
Dietary advice	Stricter*	792
Dietary advice	Govern	1088

*Here the actor used their hands to mime quotations in the air for the word "*stricter*" (line 792).

In one instance of collocation of "*dietary advice*" and "*stricter*", the actor used their hands to mime quotations in the air for the word "*stricter*". Air-quotations, as they are called, are often used to denote satire, sarcasm, or irony. The actor would have used this gesture to distance themselves from a word they believe to be inaccurate, indicating that they do not agree with the collocation.

Meanwhile, the collocation "*dietary advice*" with "*science-based*" conveys a sense of credibility, and objectivity, in the proposed recommendations. This would appeal to an audience that values scientific evidence and tested methodologies, as opposed to subjective opinions or trends. The collocation of "*dietary advice*" with "*public health*" suggests that the recommendations are framed within the context of promoting health on a societal level rather than focusing solely on individual preferences or needs. This could be interpreted as an appeal to an audience concerned with collective responsibility and equality.

It is important to note that this project is not a thematic analysis. Identifying the themes is undertaken in order to support the interpretation stage of the discourse analysis by exploring how the themes are framed by each actor.

3.3.2 Presuppositions

Meaning making is often dependent on what is explicit and implicit in a text. Those who hold normalized power through discourse can force the value systems of their own culture onto others. When working to persuade an audience, actors may rely on unstated assumptions that are taken for granted in their discourse (Fairclough, 2003, p. 132). For example, during this text, when describing aspects of healthcare, the actor presupposes that the intended audience knows what 'health' is and agrees that 'health' is a human right, even if this is not explicitly stated. Without presuppositions creating some 'common ground', basic communication would become quite complicated (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55). However, within a debate or panel discussion, if a statement goes unchallenged, it can influence audience perception of 'truth'.

By analyzing presuppositions, it is possible to find the underlying assumptions that expose an actor's value system. These presuppositions will be more or less shared throughout a cultural group. When a panelist commenting on the current state of Norwegian agricultural practices says that *"...only 2% of all the animals we eat are outside and see the sun at all,"* there are several identifiable presuppositions. For example, the actor assumes that the potential audience is unaware of this statistic. Also, the word *"only"* indicates the actor believes that two percent is not good. The actor also assumes that the potential audience believes that farmed animals not having access to the outdoors and sunshine is bad. From this, it is then possible to infer one aspect of the panelists value system.

3.3.3 Rhetorical devices

Rhetorical devices are linguistic tools actors use to persuade or influence by shaping meaning. They can reflect power relations, ideologies, or biases in a discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2023, pp. 226-234). Identifying rhetorical devices during the text analysis can reveal how language is strategically used to achieve certain social, political, or ideological goals. By examining these devices, we can gain insight into how discourses influence public perception and maintain or resist hegemonic ideas. Hegemonic discourses are dominant ideologies while counter-hegemonic discourses are those that challenge the status quo (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 45-46).

This contrast is relevant to this project as a significant amount of the text is dedicated to persuading the audience to agree that current farming practices and food choices are ideal, or that new policy will introduce useful changes.

Examples of rhetorical devices include metaphor, analogy, hyperbole, strategic repetition, and loaded language (source Fairclough). Metaphors and analogies help convey complex ideas by framing complex ideas with more relatable or concrete language (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 319). Hyperbole is an exaggerated statement used to amplify an aspect of an issue that the actor wants the audience to focus on. Actors also employ strategic repetition of key phrases or narratives in order to reinforce a desired interpretation. Even if a statement is false, people tend to believe false information to be true if it is repeated often enough. This is called the illusory truth effect and is especially effective if the statement fits logically into cultural values. Using language with emotional weight can be used to evoke strong reactions from the opposition and the audience. Loaded language can be particularly persuasive because it creates an immediate emotional response which is in direct opposition to logical thinking. For example, framing an issue as a "crisis," "impending," or "catastrophic," will have a different impact than "challenge" or "urgent." There are examples of each of these devices within the panel discussion text. However, I have primarily focused on strategic repetition and loaded language to analyze hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses (Fairclough, 2010, p. 127).

3.3.4 Recontextualization

While Fairclough primarily discusses recontextualization during the interpretation step of the analysis, I have chosen to use it as a term for coding during the description step. I have done this because I felt it to be an especially important element for this analysis.

When a discourse is recontextualized, there will be intentional choices made in the language to move the meaning from one context to another (Fairclough, 2010, p. 139). During the text analysis, we can identify changes in the terminology, essentially how keywords are rephrased or reformulated. We can look at how concepts are reframed to suit a specific audience. Elements may be deleted, replaced, added, or re-sequenced. For example, a political actor may change precise, data-driven language from research by selectively presenting some evidence while leaving other evidence vague in order to support an agenda or policy.

For example, within this text, a panelist puts forth that *“there is great professional disagreement”* about potential health effects of eating red meat. Despite there being some medical professionals and researchers who disagree, there exists an international consensus on the potential negative health effects of eating red meat, which is accepted by the Norwegian Health Department (Helsedirektoratet, 2011; Ministerråd, 2023; Willett et al., 2019). By using a technically true statement and intentionally being vague, the actor is able to sow doubt in the opposition’s argument without providing clear evidence.

3.4 Identity shaping

Examining identity shaping is an important aspect of critical discourse analysis because language plays such a powerful role in the construction and negotiation of identity (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 145-150). Through discourse, certain identities become “normalized” or “idealized” while others are positioned as “deviant” or “inferior.” Groups that are empowered, develop normalized power, which can shape our beliefs and ideas without us realizing, serving to further legitimize those groups. By analyzing how identities are formed, contested, or transformed with discourse, the analysis can uncover the ways in which language contributes to social inclusion or exclusion, and the maintenance of, or challenge to, hegemonic power structures. In the panel discussion, this includes the identities of the panelists, the moderator, and the audience.

3.4.1 Pronoun usage

Pronouns such as *“we”*, *“they”*, and *“you”* are used by actors to construct group identities and power relations (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145). By using the inclusive ‘we’, the actor can align themselves with a group or audience, creating a sense of unity. The use of the exclusive ‘they’ can be employed to create distance to the opposition, establishing an ‘us vs. them’ dichotomy. Identity is a fluid and multi-faceted concept, so uncovering how an actor positions themselves and the audience can give clues to their cultural values and ideological positioning. Within the panel discussion, some actors use a strategically repetitive ‘we’ to reinforce their position as standing with the audience. If the audience accepts that position, it can make them more open to the actor’s argument.

3.4.2 Modality

Looking at modality helps to uncover how speakers try to establish authority or expertise over certain issues. By expressing varying degrees of certainty, obligation, or ability, their language choices attempt to influence or control the listener's interpretation (Fairclough, 2003, p. 164). Specifically, I focused on epistemic and deontic modality. Epistemic modality expresses an actor's level of certainty or knowledge about a statement (Fairclough, 2003, p. 167). Examining epistemic modality reveals how discourse constructs reality as either certain or uncertain, shaping how events are presented as factual, hypothetical, or doubtful. Deontic modality is used to express power relations, indicating what actions are mandatory and the actor's level of commitment (Fairclough, 2003, p. 168). Fairclough stresses that there is a range of modal markers, including verbs, adverbs, participial adjectives, and mental process clauses (Fairclough, 2003, p. 170). In this analysis, I have made note of indications of high modality in words such as 'must,' 'should' and 'definitely' and of indications of low modality in words such as 'might,' 'could' and 'possibly'.

3.5 Mediated discourse

As previously mentioned, panel discussions can be placed within the genre of institutional or mediated discourse (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 156-159). Panel discussions take place in an organized setting, with a structured exchange similar to, but different from a debate. The setting will affect how the actors formulate and deliver their messages. In the case of the text used for this project, it is a televised panel discussion, making it a one-way, mediated communication (Fairclough, 2003, p. 77). It is designed for an audience, so the discourse is shaped not just by the participants but also by the expectations and potential reactions of the audience; an audience which will likely extend beyond those originally intended, because of online accessibility. The mixture of politics, conversation, and entertainment requires us to evaluate the communicative purpose against the strategic (Fairclough, 2010, p. 156). Therefore, I have included in the text analysis the institutional context of production and distribution, as well as elements of the moderator's role.

3.5.1 Production and Distribution

Within the mediated setting of televised panel discussion, we can explore formal protocols of the media network, regulatory oversight, and sponsoring organizations (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 146-159). Because the text is available on the network's website, we can examine how it is

presented for distribution on that platform. The norms governing production and distribution will affect how speaking actors present themselves and how audiences receive the messages. NRK is a publicly owned, state radio, television and audio broadcasting company that is financed with taxpayer money (ninety-eight percent) and licensing fees (Fordal, 2009). Based on an audience member's cultural position, this can serve to legitimize the importance of content, or the opposite. For example, a *Conservative hierarchist* may be more open to receive information from NRK than an independent broadcasting network. Meanwhile, an *Active individualist* with libertarian values may be less open to receive and accept information from a state-run organization such as NRK.

Also important is physical placement of the participants and host in the studio. By arranging participants beside each other or facing each other, we are given clues to grouping and conflict even before they begin to speak. With this episode including eight panelists, they are arranged literally into 'sides' with the moderator in the middle.

We can also consider if the panelists' proximity to the host gives indication of authority or impacts how the moderator responds to each individually.

3.5.2 Role of the moderator

Examining the role of the moderator is crucial for critical discourse analysis of a panel discussion (Fairclough, 2010, p. 158). Simply being invited to participate in a panel discussion on NRK may create an image of authority around a participant, regardless of their actual qualifications. The moderator's use of, or lack of, honorifics and framing can be important to reinforce this authority, or delegitimize it (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 118). For example, the moderator in this case introduces one panelist as "*Norwegian red meat defender...from the Center Party*" and another panelist as "*vegan and Liberal politician.*" The moderator has chosen descriptions that are likely to produce a reaction in the audience, and also prioritize indicators of cultural values over job title.

The moderator controls the flow of the communication, which affects how each voice is increased or restrained (Fairclough, 2010, p. 158). How often and how long each panelist is permitted to speak can affect the strength of their position. In theory, a moderator will have a certain level of neutrality regarding the themes of the discussion, but in practice, their language choices and actions can impact audience positioning by affecting power relations,

despite their neutrality. During one segment of this text, the moderator aggressively questions a panelist and includes sarcasm in his reactions to the panelist’s answers. This could influence how the audience views the panelist, the moderator, and their statements.

3.6 Coding

I chose to do manual coding rather than using software. The text is relatively small, and I hoped that by spending more time working with the text, it would allow me to find nuances that might have been missed with coding software (Saldaña, 2009, p. 22). Once I was finished working with the printouts, I transferred the coding into Microsoft Word using the comments function.

I created two types of coding to organize the data: thematic and descriptive. (see table 2). The thematic coding would prove important for me because the concept of nutrition-sensitive agriculture is quite complex, as are many of the other concepts included in the text. Starting with thematic coding helped me to organize the text and explore how the themes were understood by the actors. The descriptive codes are based on the textual focus points that were previously described. I chose to combine them in order to give a richer presentation of the data, illuminate patterns, and increase traceability from text analysis to interpretation. The coding evolved as I worked with the text. As recommended by Saldana, I maintained lists and adapted the codes as I progressed (Saldaña, 2009, p. 21).

Table 2.
Code list constructed from textual focus points described in

Thematic codes	Descriptive codes
Health	Emotive
Diet/nutrition	Framing
Climate/Sustainability	High modality
Research	Low modality
Food Production	Inclusive
Norwegian	Exclusive
Government	Repetition
	Analogy
	Metaphor
	Hegemonic
	Counter heg
	Presupposition
	Recontextualisation
	Intertext
	Contextual

3.7 Methodological limitations

Critical Discourse Analysis provides powerful tools for exploring the relationship between language, power, and ideology, but as with any method, it also comes with methodological limitations (Machin & Mayr, 2023, pp. 301-310). Due to its flexible approach, it can be difficult to replicate. If the procedure is not clear, different researchers who analyze the same text may reach different conclusions, which raises questions about the reliability of the findings. Even if the procedure is clear, the analysis relies on the researcher's interpretation of texts, which increases the risk that personal biases, ideologies, or political positions may affect the findings. Working with a team of people with different perspectives could have decreased the influence of my own biases (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 304).

As previously mentioned, lacking a background in linguistics has informed my decision to focus less on technical grammar. Instead, I have focused on looking at tendencies within the text. A more technical approach could provide more nuance (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 306).

In the case of this analysis, I have chosen a small dataset in order to have time to do a more detailed analysis. While this hopefully allows for a deeper understanding of the language and ideologies of this specific text, it limits the ability to apply the results to a larger context. Including additional mediated or unmediated events could have increased the relevance of the social analysis.

Because critical discourse analysis is often focused on critiquing dominant ideologies, there can be an emphasis on the negative aspects of power, such as inequality and exclusion (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 302). While this project is not focused on sensitive issues such as gender or race, it does look at power dynamics. This can lead to ethical concerns about interpretations that reinforce stereotypes.

I have not imagined the individual panelists in terms of their personal worldviews, but rather as representatives of cultures described by Douglas. I have not considered their job titles or political affiliation when analysing the text. Exploring the historical aspects of the formation and platforms of their political parties could have provided useful insight to the rise of the discourses. I have also made assumptions about the audience from the perspective of the stakeholders participating in the text, and not considered the audience as a separate entity (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 307).

4 Findings and discussion

The analysis revealed four interrelated discourses informing current understandings concerning nutrition-sensitive agriculture in Norway: (1) Heritage agriculture narrative discourse; (2) Nutrition-forward public health discourse; (3) Shaping Norwegian identity; (4) Discourse of sustainable food system. Each of these discourses represents a different way of framing the relationship of agriculture and nutrition, highlighting how diverse values and priorities shape the debate. In practice, these discourses can intersect, overlap, or conflict, depending on how stakeholders prioritize different goals in nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Also identified, are two dominant cultures represented in the discourses: *Conservative hierarchy* and *Dissident enclave*. Conflict arises within the discourse because of competition between incompatible organizational forms (Douglas, 1996, p. 85).

In this chapter, I will first present evidence of textual focus points that capture perspectives working to perpetuate or delegitimize the discourses, accompanied by cultural values that were exposed within the discourses. After that, I will discuss the cultures represented in the discourses and the potential influence the mediative aspect may have had on the discourses.

4.1 Heritage agriculture narrative discourse

Within this text, Norwegian heritage is employed as a narrative tool by certain actors to legitimize modern industrial agricultural practices as being aligned with cultural traditions. This is done by selectively using ideas of history, community resilience, sustainability, and the preservation of traditional methods of growing, producing, and consuming food to create an image that does not reflect reality.

In this collection of excerpts, one of the panelists makes use of strategic repetition, loaded language, and hyperbole to reinforce a very specific message about meat production and meat consumption in Norway:

"...which will be prerequisites for Norwegians to survive for generations to come" (lines 71-72)

"it will be absolutely necessary for the future as well, that we have livestock in this country" (line 92-93)

"big and strong and long-lived on the basis of this diet" (lines 100-101)

"livestock farming, which we have survived on for generations" (lines 170-171)

"And not least, we are completely dependent on these animals here to survive" (lines 618-619)

"and which we will survive in the future" (line 1001)

This emotive, exaggerated language is being used to create a sense of urgency in the discourse. The term *"prerequisites"* suggests something crucial, invoking a sense of dependence for the survival of future generations. The phrase *"absolutely necessary"* is strong and definitive, stressing that livestock is vital for the continuity of Norway's agricultural practices. The actor's use of *"big," "strong," and "long-lived"* evokes positive imagery of vitality and health, suggesting that the current dietary habits lead to desirable outcomes. This could make the audience less likely to support the proposed dietary changes which may result in changes to agricultural practices. The phrase *"survived on for generations"* and the word *"completely"* suggest that animal farming is essential for survival, reinforcing the idea that it has been crucial historically and will continue to be so.

The repetition of this language creates what is called the illusory truth effect. Even if the statements are false, the audience will be influenced to believe the information to be true if it is repeated often enough. This is especially effective in this instance, as the statements fit logically into existing dominant cultural values. These phrases emphasize tradition and continuity, appealing to the value of cultural and historical practices. This hegemonic discourse is perpetuated by the dominant ideologies present in Norway that romanticize agricultural practices and food choices.

Near the beginning of the text the moderator asks a panelist to respond to a two-part question about the proposed reduction of meat consumption as recommended in the new dietary advice from NNR, and the Minister of Agriculture and Food's statement to media about how the proposal could affect agriculture in Norway. The panelist begins their response with:

"I am keen on a varied diet. There is meat and fish and eggs and milk, all together are an important part of Norwegian food production, and they're also Norwegian self-preservation" (lines 56-57).

By explicitly stating *"meat and fish and eggs and milk, all together are an important part of Norwegian food production,"* the actor implicitly tells the audience what is not important, or at least not as important as the items included in the statement. It assumes that animal products hold an indispensable role in Norwegian agriculture, thereby potentially marginalizing discussions about alternative forms of food production, primarily plant-based agriculture. The phrase, *"Norwegian self-preservation,"* presupposes that the continuation of what this actor refers to as traditional Norwegian agriculture, is necessary for the survival of the nation, both economically and culturally. This presupposition embeds the belief that the survival of Norway depends on the continued production and consumption of animal products, linking food choices to national security and identity. In this context, the discussion around food system transformation to incorporate NSA is framed as a threat to Norway's self-sufficiency and identity. These presuppositions about diet and agriculture from this excerpt reflect underlying ideological positions about the importance of traditional practices. The language has a heavy emphasis on conforming to established group rules and an appeal to nationalistic ideologies.

Recontextualization is a useful tool within the discourse of heritage agriculture narrative, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

"I am certainly concerned about climate and sustainability and our nature, but it is important that we do not do to the production, i.e. livestock farming, which we have survived on for generations, but which is a natural part of our nature." (lines 169-171).

The speaker begins by acknowledging concern for climate, sustainability, and nature. This aligns with the perspective of reducing environmental harm in agriculture and food production to combat climate change. However, the speaker then recontextualizes this environmental concern by framing livestock farming, often criticized for its environmental impact, as a natural part of the ecosystem. The use of *"but"* introduces this key moment of recontextualization. The *"but"* signals a shift, where these concerns are reframed to justify continuing livestock farming, portraying it as compatible with or even essential to those

environmental concerns. In this new framing, livestock farming is not presented as harmful but as something historically essential to both survival of people and the natural world in Norway. When livestock farming is naturalized in this way, the speaker effectively merges the concepts of nature and livestock farming, suggesting that farming is not an imposition on nature but an integral part of it.

One interesting pattern of collocation that emerged was the co-occurrence of *Norwegian* and *cow* (lines 87-88, 498, 618). This occurred during text focused on discussing whether or not animal agriculture in Norway, specifically within the production of red meat, is aligned with ideas of sustainability. In this context, the collocation is intended to create a distinction between the cows farmed in Norway and those farmed in other countries. This could be a useful tool for those whose agenda involves legitimizing current farming practices within the reality of conforming to international sustainability agreements. It will also appeal to an audience who values the ideology of nationalism.

A panelist points out the selective use of imagery within the television studio of farmed animals grazing outdoors in idyllic conditions that perpetuates the heritage agriculture narrative discourse, thus working to delegitimize the discourse:

“And it also helps to give a slightly wrong impression of Norwegian agriculture, because only 2% of all the animals we eat are outside and see the sun at all. So what looks is quite an important perspective, when we now talk about grazing animals and so on. That’s not how it works in Norway. We have an industrial animal production.” (lines 821-827)

The excerpt contains several presuppositions, particularly concerning public awareness and animal welfare. For example, it presupposes that imagery plays a role in shaping public opinion. The actor assumes that the producers have either accepted the imagery as realistic of current conditions on Norwegian farms and are therefore unaware of the reality of industrial farming in Norway, or they have chosen to reinforce unrealistic ideas of current farming practices, and bringing it up will alert the audience. The word *“only”* indicates the actor believes that two percent is a low percentage and assumes that the audience will agree. The statement presupposes that the potential audience believes that farmed animals not having access to the outdoors and sunshine is bad. From *“important perspective”*, it is possible to infer the panelist prioritizes awareness of animal welfare. This indicates allegiance to a culture with an emphasis on transparency and activism.

4.2 Nutrition-forward public health discourse

This discourse constitutes a structured way of understanding, communicating, and regulating knowledge about food and health. It shapes what is deemed valid and valuable within the field of nutrition. The implication is that nutrition is not just a component but a central element within public health, and thus prioritizing evidence-based nutritional interventions is key to addressing public health challenges. Within this discourse, collaborative promotion of nutrition across sectors, including public health, medicine, and agriculture is a proactive means to foster health and prevent health issues, rather than treating nutrition as an afterthought.

In this excerpt, I found several instances of meaning making and identity shaping that reinforce this discourse:

"...we have the Minister of Agriculture who is out, all these statements, while both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Climate are sitting completely silent. And yes, maybe these dietary guidelines end at 350 grams, but if we don't do something about it, if we don't get a policy, an agricultural policy, that means we produce more fruit and vegetables in Norway and less meat, then they won't have something to say about these dietary guidelines, there must be political guidance..." (lines 1014-1019).

The phrase, *"if we don't do something about it,"* presupposes that the current agricultural policy in Norway is insufficient to support a nutrition-forward approach, specifically in the context of increasing fruit and vegetable production. This presupposition reinforces the idea that systemic change is necessary for aligning agricultural practices with public health goals. The high modality of *"must"* creates an imperative tone, implying that alignment with nutrition-forward public health is not optional but necessary for effective dietary policy.

The phrase *"there must be political guidance"* implies that without political intervention, the proposed dietary guidelines will be ineffective. This presupposition positions governmental action as crucial, reinforcing the discourse that public health goals require formal support and policy alignment. The portrayal of the Health and Climate ministers as *"sitting completely silent"* recontextualizes their roles, implying that they could be more actively involved in agricultural policy due to its public health implications. This reframing emphasizes an expectation that health and climate authorities should be vocal about how food production affects nutrition.

The pronoun "we" appears throughout, which is meant to foster a sense of shared responsibility, suggesting that this is a common issue requiring collaborative action from both policymakers and, by extension, society. It implies that the outcome of agricultural and health policy decisions will impact everyone, reinforcing the urgency of nutrition-forward public health goals. These linguistic choices promote a cultural value that places public health at the center of political engagement, marking it as both necessary and a collective responsibility.

An actor who was allowed to present information parallel to the panel discussion without participating in the panel, employed strategic repetition in the form of exposition. This actor provided background information about evidence-based nutritional advice and context about the mandate of the NNR project:

"that our mission is to treat the health effect of the food we eat, and the environmental effect of the food we eat." (line 341-342)

"What we have taken into account is the food production, or food consumption, that we actually have today." (lines 395-396)

"What we actually eat, that is the basis of our report." (line 402)

"We look at total production, total consumption of food in Norway..." (lines 417-418)

"We have included the production that is as of today. What we eat today, what is imported, what is Norwegian produced, what is an official Norwegian number..." (lines 501-502)

In these excerpts, the actor uses strategic repetition for two main purposes: emphasizing key points and establishing scope and focus. Each quote underscores what the audience is meant to see as critical aspects of the report. By repeating phrases related to *"what we eat today"* and *"total production and consumption,"* the actor makes it clear that the foundation for the proposed report is real, current data. It is therefore deemed valid and valuable within the field of nutrition. By outlining the proposed report's scope as being grounded in present-day data, the actor worked to distinguish it from hypothetical or future models. The repetition of *"Norway"* and *"Norwegian"* could also be an effort to convince the intended audience that the report is based on a comprehensive consideration of information relevant to their concerns. The relatively neutral language used in this strategic repetition is an expository technique to ensure clarity and reinforce the proposed report's evidence based focus on

current food practices and their health and environmental impacts. This could appeal to an audience that values evidence-based policy.

The actor continues with this excerpt in which I found with several examples of modality, primarily reflecting degrees of certainty, possibility, and intention within the discourse of nutrition-forward public health:

"What I think is important, we have delivered, or we will deliver, a scientific report. We strive, I think it makes it as high quality as possible, it is our biggest, best, biggest ambition to deliver it to the authorities so that they have the best possible basis for their national council." (lines 471-474).

"I think" is a marker of epistemic modality that expresses opinion or personal belief. It signals a level of subjectivity, showing that the actor is not stating an absolute fact but offering what they perceive as important. This phrase leaves open the possibility that others might have different views. The phrase "we will deliver" uses a modal verb, which indicates certainty and future intention. It shows that the speaker is committed to delivering the report, suggesting a high degree of certainty about future action. "We strive" expresses a sense of obligation with the verb "strive" indicating that it is expected of the speaker, (and their group), to work toward delivering the report. While the actor does not use a modal verb like "must," it conveys an internal sense of responsibility or commitment, aligning with deontic modality. I also identified deontic modality in the phrase "best possible". It introduces a modal adjective that expresses the highest potential for quality. It suggests that the speaker aims to provide the most optimal basis, but also acknowledges that the result is subject to limits. Hence, they signal possibility rather than absolute certainty. By expressing confidence in their commitment while leaving space for conversation, the actor indicates an emphasis on cooperative organizational values.

Within the following excerpt, an actor from the health sector provides a perspective that reinforces the proposal from NNR as valid and valuable within the field of nutrition:

"There is a health perspective, and then I know little about agriculture, so I will keep that away. But I do think that it is sad that a minister of agriculture casts doubt on an actual knowledge base. Because there are 400 researchers here, they have gone through all the international literature on the connection between red meat and our health. And of course, all the others like obesity and sugar and whatever it may be all together. And they are completely unambiguous: it is completely in accordance with all international

recommendations. So that one thing is that the Center Party and the Minister of Agriculture must of course be allowed to design the policy they want, but to cast doubt on the factual basis of the report that comes when it comes to health, I find that disturbing because of what happens then..." (lines 583-592).

"*I know little*", an expression of epistemic modality, indicates the speaker's limited knowledge about agriculture. The speaker then expresses a resolution to avoid discussing agriculture, which reflects dynamic modality related to the speaker's personal choice or commitment. "*I do think*" signals that this is the speaker's personal belief or opinion with the use of "*do*" adding emphasis to the certainty of the opinion, making it clear that the speaker strongly believes it is unfortunate that doubt is cast on the knowledge base. Meanwhile, the phrase "*casts doubt on an actual knowledge base*" introduces an implicit epistemic contrast between the uncertainty from the Minister of agriculture and the speaker's view of the reliability of the knowledge base.

This sentence about "*400 researchers*" introduces high certainty through a factual claim. There is no direct modal verb, but the modality is strong here, as the speaker is presenting this as an established fact. "*Completely unambiguous*" also conveys a high degree of certainty. The speaker is stating that the conclusions leave no room for doubt, which strengthens the speaker's confidence in their stance. "*It is completely in accordance with all international recommendations*" once again emphasizes certainty, indicating that the speaker believes there is no discrepancy between the proposed report's findings and international recommendations. This reflects strong epistemic modality, where the speaker is asserting that the findings align perfectly with global standards, validated by external authority. We can infer from this evidence that this actor has strong group identity and understands the importance of roles, but also believes in collective risk management systems in the context of science and health.

Collaboration and cross-departmental support are key elements within the discourse of nutrition-forward public health. From the phrase, "*be allowed to design the policy they want,*" is the presupposition that the Center Party and the Minister of Agriculture design policy based on political preference, rather than external influence. This implies a degree of acceptance of their role in shaping policy, but it also suggests that while they are allowed to do so, the actor questions their motivations or limitations.

The use of *"factual basis"* assumes that the information provided in the proposed report is reliable and grounded in truth. The speaker presupposes that casting doubt on the proposed report is problematic, which implies that the report should be accepted as is. This suggests that questioning or doubting the report will have negative consequences, possibly for public discourse or policymaking. When the speaker says, *"I find that disturbing because of what happens then,"* this could influence the audience by framing responsibility of what happens next on those who *"cast doubt."* This actor presupposes that skepticism from a political figure toward scientific reports is seen as harmful or destabilizing. From this combination of presuppositions, we understand that this actor holds scientific evidence as valuable and believes in collective responsibility. This reveals an ideological stance that aligns with trust in scientific findings and skepticism toward political interference in evidence-based health-related matters.

With the following excerpts, an actor presents a perspective that challenges the nutrition-forward public health discourse by challenging the validity of the research:

"I am keen on a varied diet. There is meat and fish and eggs and milk, all together are an important part of Norwegian food production, and they're also Norwegian self-preservation" (lines 56-57).

"We cannot turn that diet into an enemy of the people, an enemy of the climate" (lines 101-102).

"There are health researchers who themselves cast doubt on the claim that comes here now" (lines 604-605).

"we see doubts around whether the health facts are as they are claimed" (lines 612-613).

In the first, the statement presupposes that a *"varied diet"* inherently includes animal products such as meat, fish, eggs, and milk. This assumption excludes plant-based or vegetarian diets from the concept of *variety*, positioning animal-based foods as central to a balanced or varied diet. This is in direct contrast to the widely accepted understanding of the importance of vegetables and fruits for a healthful diet.

In this second excerpt, the speaker is using *"enemy"* metaphorically to represent something harmful or opposed to the well-being of people and the climate. The *"diet"* is not literally an enemy, but the use of the word "enemy" implies that certain eating habits or dietary choices

are being framed as adversarial or detrimental forces, which people must resist or battle against. Metaphors like this often reveal deeper ideological stances. Here, the metaphor suggests that the current Norwegian diet, including red and processed meat, is being villainized, and the speaker is opposing that negative framing.

In the third and fourth excerpts, by highlighting that even *“health researchers”* question the data presented in the proposal, the speaker implies that the research might not be as robust or universally accepted as it seems. This creates an impression that the claim is contentious or weak, even if the speaker does not directly critique its validity. Making a vague reference of *“health researchers”* instead of citing specific studies or experts works to downplay the authority of the nutritional science field, making it sound more like a general group with varying opinions rather than a unified voice grounded in evidence. This actor uses hedging through indirectness. They do not have to prove that the nutrition recommendations are invalid, they only have to introduce uncertainty, which works to delegitimize the dominant discourse of nutrition-forward public health.

One interesting perspective within the discourse seems to both perpetuate and undermine the role that politicians have in the discourse. Here the actor states:

“The Diet Council shall not form itself with politicians” (line 692).

The statement presupposes that the Diet Council is focused on providing scientific nutritional advice and should not align itself with politicians or political influences. This suggests that the Diet Council’s role is meant to be free from political interference. Typically, national guidelines and councils, especially those related to food and health, can be influenced by political agendas or economic interests such as agricultural lobbies. In this statement, however, the role of the Diet Council is recontextualized as completely separate from policy formation.

This statement also ignores the role that political discourse has on the public. Political discourse influences the reception and adherence to national guidelines put forth by councils. This actor’s recontextualization shifts the discourse away from viewing the Diet Council as potentially affected by political agendas and reframes it as an objective, science-based authority that is able to operate completely isolated from the pressures of external discourse.

I found this same actor, when asked to respond to a statement implying that without political guidance for increasing plant-based agriculture, the proposed dietary advice would have limited effect, responded with this:

“Now we are sitting and talking only about agricultural policy and climate policy. The most important thing about Norwegian dietary advice is that there is an 11-year difference in life expectancy between the poorest 1% and the richest 1% in Norway, and we have always based health reasons on the dietary advice we make, and there, the foundations of science are extremely strong.” (lines 1028-1032).

Here, the speaker begins by acknowledging that the current conversation is centered on agricultural and climate policy. This makes sense as the panel discussion was focused on the potential impact that the proposed dietary recommendations could have on agriculture policy. However, the speaker shifts focus by asserting that the *“most important thing”* is not agriculture or climate, but rather socio-economic health inequalities. This actor repositions the debate away from how dietary guidelines affect agriculture and the environment, towards how they can help address social disparities in health outcomes. By doing this, the speaker downplays the relevance of agriculture and climate policy in this context and foregrounds public health and social justice as the key priorities in the discussion.

By bringing in the issue of *“life expectancy disparities,”* the speaker reframes dietary guidelines not just as tools for promoting individual health but as instruments for addressing systemic inequality in society. In this context, the speaker shifts the discussion from being primarily about policy to being about ethical responsibility and the role of dietary advice in reducing inequality. These recontextualizations indicate progressive cultural values.

4.3 Shaping Norwegian identity

The actors within this text worked to shape collective ideas about what it means to be Norwegian, which includes a combination of cultural practices, values, and historical narratives that are in turn reinforced by institutions, policies, and traditions that support a shared sense of identity while adapting to modern social and global dynamics. Identity is key to culture. Within cultural conflict, an actor will clearly indicate who is ally and whom is foe. I looked for pronoun usage in the text that could be significant in uncovering how an actor positioned themselves, the opposition, and the audience. Within this excerpt, I found several significant instances of pronoun usage that give clear indications of this actor’s cultural values:

"It's about that if we don't produce food with the Norwegian resources, and in the Norwegian climate we have, and make the best of it, on the day the crisis occurs, and if we can't import food, then we put our beards in the mailbox, and don't get any food to eat (eat), and then we starve. So therefore, I agree with the Minister of Agriculture, that we must maintain meat production, and the rest of the production of Norwegian food." (lines 58-62)

The speaker repeatedly uses "we" and "our" to emphasize a shared identity and collective responsibility, positioning themselves and the audience as part of a unified group with common interests. These inclusive pronouns serve to create a national identity around these interests. The use of "we" implies that everyone in Norway, including the speaker and the audience, shares the same goals and concerns about food production and self-sufficiency. It reinforces the idea that the group is responsible for their own food security, positioning the issue as a national concern rather than an individual or political matter. The pronouns "our" in "our beards in the mailbox" and "our Norwegian resources" further emphasize collective ownership of the country's natural resources and the climate. This signals that resources are not just the responsibility of the government or farmers, but of all Norwegians. The shared use of the pronouns helps construct a national identity tied to the land and its resources.

The hypothetical doomsday scenario introduced with "on the day the crisis occurs, and if we can't import food" creates a shared vulnerability, where the inclusive "we" will face hardship together if current food production levels are not maintained. This serves to heighten the sense of solidarity among the audience by implying that everyone will suffer the consequences equally if they don't act now to support Norwegian food production.

The use of "we" here is not only about unity. It is also a subtle way for the actor to create a sense of urgency within the context of food production. By presenting the threat of starvation as a collective problem, the speaker aligns individual interests with national interests. This could motivate the potential audience to agree with the speaker's position on the importance of sustaining food production methods in Norway.

Then the actor shifts to "I" in the second part of the statement with "I agree with the Minister of Agriculture". Here, the use of "I" signals a personal alignment with an authority figure and emphasizes the speaker's personal commitment to the cause.

This use of "I" also serves to personalize their stance, which contrasts against the collective "we" used earlier in the excerpt. While the "we" constructs a shared national identity, the "I" positions the speaker as a normal individual who supports the policy. This invites the audience to see this personal agreement as something they, too, should adopt. The actor works to shape an identity in which food production is not just a matter of policy, but a crucial part of what it means to be Norwegian. Altogether, the language in the excerpt indicates an actor that holds traditional values and encourages conforming to current cultural norms.

In the following excerpt, pronouns like "I," "we," "you," and "they" are used by a panelist to shape multiple layers of identity:

"No, in addition to being a vegan, I am a liberal, so I have no ambition that everyone in Norway should live the way I do. We should still have meat production in Norway, and people should be able to eat what they want, but it is important that they have a good professional basis to base those choices on. I am also very critical of both the criticism that has come from the Center Party, when that report came out, and where they questioned the professionalism of it. But also, that you dismantle it by saying that, the Minister of Agriculture says that she will not lift a finger to cut meat consumption, even if the dietary advice will end up saying that we have to do that. And then I believe that you are helping to undermine trust in professionals, and I think it is very unfortunate that both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Climate Change just stand and watch this here." (lines 124-134).

The speaker frequently uses "I" to construct their personal identity in relation to both dietary choices and political ideology, and to establish their individuated stance. This actor is not just a person with specific dietary habits, but also someone who holds a liberal political identity. This actor identifies as someone with personal beliefs and values that they do not impose on others, aligning with liberal ideals of personal freedom and choice. By stating, "I have no ambition that everyone in Norway should live the way I do," the speaker emphasizes their belief in pluralism and individual choice, reinforcing their liberal identity. This personal stance distances the speaker from any suggestion of imposing their own lifestyle on others, suggesting an identity of tolerance and open-mindedness.

The actor creates inclusivity with the pronoun "we" within the context of shared national identity and collective responsibility. Here, "we" is used to include both the speaker and the Norwegian public in a collective decision-making process. The speaker implies to the audience that "we" as a nation must balance individual freedoms with the need for informed decision-making based on expert advice. The speaker constructs a national identity that values

professional expertise and informed choices, positioning themselves as part of this collective that fights for both personal freedom and rational, science-based choices.

Then the actor uses the pronoun “you” to mark a distinction between themselves and those they are criticizing, constructing an oppositional identity. The “you” is directed at the politicians and policymakers who, in the speaker’s view, are undermining professional, scientific expertise by dismissing the proposed recommendations. This use of “you” creates a dichotomy, where the “you” represents those who question or disregard expertise, while the speaker has already aligned themselves with those who respect professional knowledge.

The speaker uses “they” to refer to the Center Party and other authority figures who either actively question the professional basis of the proposed recommendations, or at least, do not defend it. The use of “they” further reinforces a clear division between the speaker and those who are framed as ignoring professional expertise. This pronoun shapes the identity of the Center Party as one that is antagonistic to scientific or professional recommendations, positioning them as part of the problem in the debate over dietary advice and meat consumption. This actor’s strategic use of these pronouns shapes their identity as one who values individual freedom, professionalism, science-based decision-making, and collective responsibility, while framing others as either antagonistic to these values or complicit in undermining them.

4.4 Discourse of sustainable food system

Within the food system, the concept of sustainability is defined, promoted, and contested, dependent on how stakeholders prioritize different aspects of sustainability. This discourse encompasses a variety of issues within sustainability. It is well encapsulated in this excerpt:

"Sustainability, it's about, we have to talk about what we want the result to be. In other words, if we want to have better environmental sustainability, and we want better socio-economic sustainability, and we want to maintain food security...." (lines 859-861).

The phrase “we have to talk about what we want the result to be” presupposes that achieving sustainability is a purposeful process that requires clearly defined goals. This presupposition sets up sustainability as a multi-dimensional goal that involves active, intentional decision-making. This implies that sustainability doesn’t happen naturally or passively within existing

systems. The speaker recontextualizes sustainability as a shared societal goal by discussing it in terms of what *“we want.”* This shifts it from an abstract concept or an external policy mandate to a collective aspiration. Framing it as a *“result”* further recontextualizes sustainability as an attainable endpoint rather than an idealistic or theoretical goal. Here, it is grounded in practical, goal-oriented thinking.

This actor continues later in the text:

“I think it is important that we both focus on health, which is an important part of sustainability in our society. At the same time, we must take into account other aspects of sustainability, for example environmental. But it is clear that only focusing on environmental sustainability narrows the picture, and then it will also trigger some drivers or instruments, politicians here, so there are instruments, in relation to the development of the direction of agriculture. And I think that if we are unable to think of several things at once, then we will drive our food production in a direction that may not be possible in the future. I also think that in the future we have to think about resource availability, i.e. what natural resources do we have, and we undertake to produce what we can of food, and then we cannot, for example...I mean that we cannot defend that we should use topsoil to grow food for livestock, for example. We must find other ways to solve our challenges in the future.” (lines 909-920).

The statement, *“health...is an important part of sustainability in our society,”* presupposes that sustainability will not be fully achieved without addressing public health. This positions health as a necessary aspect and not merely an optional component of sustainability. It reinforces the discourse that a sustainable food system must inherently consider human health outcomes. By suggesting that *“drivers or instruments”* influence agriculture’s *“direction,”* the speaker frames agriculture as a system shaped by various forces, including health policy and sustainability goals. This shift in perspective positions agriculture as a responsive domain that must be thoughtfully managed through collaboration to achieve sustainability. The strong modality within the language underscores a sense of urgency and responsibility, reinforcing the idea that failure to adopt a balanced approach may have negative long-term impacts. Finally, by stating *“we must find other ways to solve our challenges,”* the actor frames sustainable practices as adaptable and forward-thinking. This language is advocating for innovation in agricultural practices rather than adherence to outdated methods.

Together, these elements serve to normalize a discourse of sustainable food systems, framing them as complex, necessary, and collectively beneficial goals. The use of modality and collective language emphasizes that sustainability requires active engagement and

collaborative decision-making, promoting the idea that sustainable food practices are within reach if society commits to setting clear goals and working towards them.

I find the discourse to be further perpetuated in this excerpt during which the speaker uses language strategically to emphasize the need for changes in dietary habits toward sustainability, particularly by advocating for a more plant-based diet while allowing space for moderate animal product consumption:

"I think it is incredibly important that we keep the big picture with us here, because there is simply no way to stay below the critical through half degree limit, without our diet moving in a sustainable direction, a more plant-rich direction, where there is still room for meat and fish and dairy products, but we must cut down on the overconsumption of meat." (lines 939-943).

Phrases like *"keep the big picture with us"* and *"our diet"* create an image of inclusivity, implying that these dietary shifts are relevant to all members of society. This pronoun usage helps to establish the perspective that sustainability impacts everyone.

The statement *"there is simply no way to stay below the critical through half degree limit, without our diet moving in a sustainable direction"* presupposes that dietary changes are essential for mitigating climate change. The phrase *"we must cut down on the overconsumption of meat"* presupposes that evidence confirming the current level of meat consumption is excessive is valid. This assumption reinforces the perspective that a sustainable diet involves reducing the intake of animal products to align with both environmental and health goals.

The phrase *"a more plant-rich direction, where there is still room for meat and fish and dairy products"* recontextualizes a sustainable diet as balanced rather than restrictive as described by the stakeholders working to delegitimize this discourse. This positions plant-based eating as flexible, which may make the concept more accessible to those who consider meat eating to be culturally valuable. The speaker combines strong and weak modality. The softer tone balances the urgency of reducing overconsumption with the reassurance that sustainability within the food system does not require total exclusion, thereby making the approach seem more achievable. Together, these elements of presupposition, recontextualization, modality, and pronoun usage reinforce a strong discourse of sustainable food system.

4.5 Patterns of cultural conflict

4.5.1 The two dominant cultural representations

If we accept the text as representative of the Norwegian political landscape, and by extension, the population, we can begin to consider how current cultural norms and counter arguments are reflected in the identified discourses. These two excerpts fall within the discourse of nutrition-forward public health, and include a number of textual focus points for meaning making and identity shaping that give clues to cultural allegiance:

“I have no ambition that everyone in Norway should live the way I do. We should still have meat production in Norway, and people should be able to eat what they want, but it is important that they have a good professional basis to base those choices on.” (lines 122-127)

“It is up to the consumer of what they eat (what is eaten), but what I am afraid of with this Norwegian Diet Council, or the upcoming Nordic Diet Council, is that they will scare people from eating that diet, which means that we have survived for generations, and which will be prerequisites for Norwegians to survive for generations to come.” (line 68-71)

Mary Douglas suggests that individual food choices are shaped not only by personal preferences but by social identity, cultural norms, and risk perception within a community (Douglas, 1996, p. 174). The first excerpt promotes the idea of dietary autonomy grounded in informed choices made by people who have access to evidence-based research. Here, the speaker suggests that while people should be free to make their own food choices, rather than relying solely on recontextualized historical habits, individuals should also have a foundation of nutritional knowledge created by professionals. This speaker taps into the importance of collaborative promotion of nutrition across sectors as a proactive means to foster health and prevent health issues. The speaker assigns value in both individual agency of food choices and respect for traditional practices, while also recognizing a role for scientific authority to provide guidance. This balancing act between personal and cultural beliefs and the scientific standards proposed by authorities indicates an association to strong group with flexible roles.

In the second excerpt, the speaker emphasizes a fear that institutional guidelines, such as the proposal from NNR, may undermine what this actor identifies as traditional eating patterns. This reframing ignores that the proposed recommendations are an update that is in line with existing policy. From this actor’s perspective, as a stakeholder with ties to those in the agricultural sector, it can be seen as a potential risk because the proposed dietary advice could disrupt a cultural framework that has normalized animal-based food products as traditional

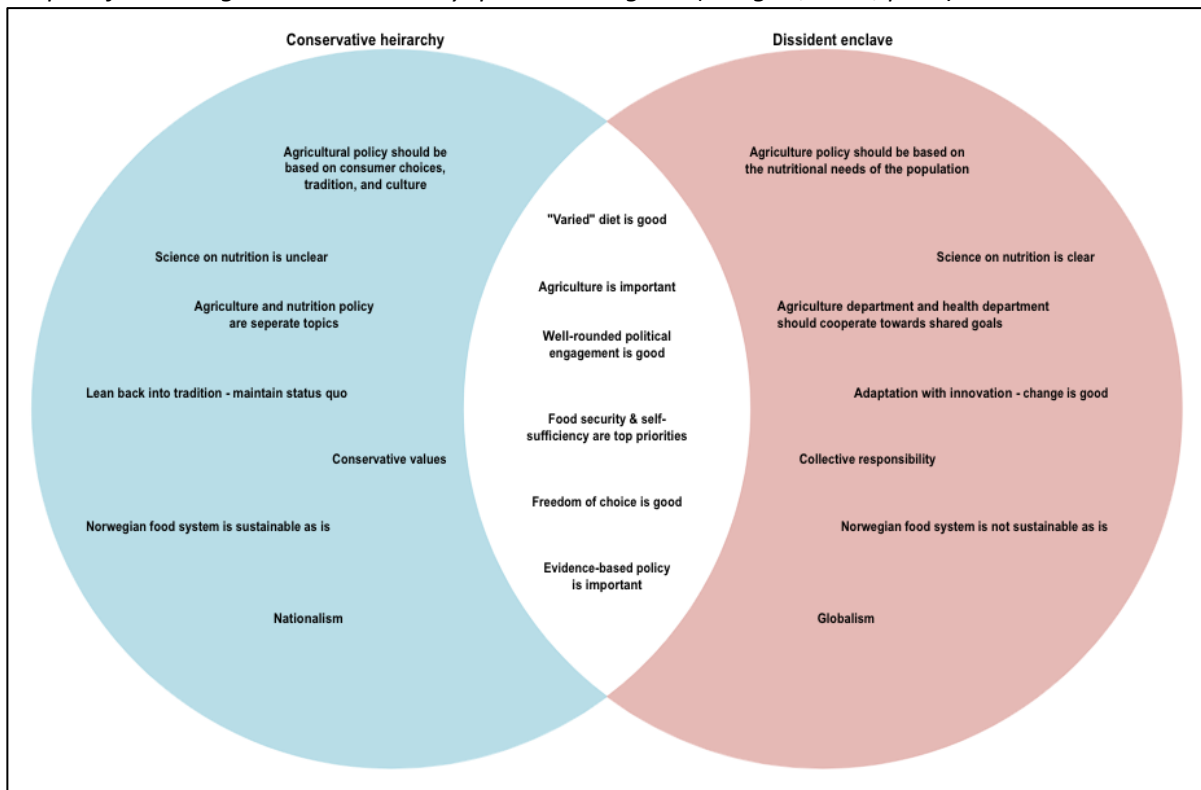
foods. The promotion of individual freedom, normally attributed to *Active Individualism*, is instead used by this actor to reinforce a hierarchal system which separates nutrition policy and agricultural policy. The proposed nutritional guidelines are perceived as a risk to cultural continuity rather than purely an intervention to address public health challenges.

The contrast in these two excerpts speaks to Douglas' idea of how risk perception is culturally constructed through group and grid. As we move through the elements of meaning making and identity shaping, what emerges from the whole of the text is evidence of the cultural conflict between *Conservative hierarchy* and *Dissident enclave* (see figure 4). These two cultures are protagonists in a debate about control (Douglas, 1996, p. 177). While they both have strong group bonds, the issue of structure separates them. The *Conservative hierarchy* culture features strict roles within a top-down risk-management system that ensures success through strongly defined responsibilities. Meanwhile, the *Dissident enclave* culture features flexible roles within a collective risk management system that ensures success through an emphasis on moral implications of equality and social justice. Each culture has benefits and drawbacks, depending on the situation.

Each member of a society must either accept the normative standards as imposed by normalized power or negotiate acceptability of new standards. In the figure 6 are the key perspectives from the identified discourses, interpreted as cultural and ideological value statements, distributed into a visual representation of the two dominant cultures. (see figure 6).

Figure 6.

This Venn diagram shows key perspectives of the identified discourses placed within cultural groups, as adapted from Douglas' Cultural Theory quadrant diagram (Douglas, 1996, p. 43).



Despite the representation of two dominant cultures in the panel discussion that have incompatible organizational structures, there was some common ground, which can be seen in the intersection of figure 6. It is important to remember that both of the cultures may agree on the importance of certain conceptual goals, while disagreeing on political strategy because of their cultural allegiance. When we see instances of overlap, we can consider the role of the moderator and the impact of mediated discourse.

4.5.2 Mediated discourse

The text used for this project was produced and distributed by the state-run radio and television broadcasting company, NRK. The show, *Debatten*, is a mixture of politics, conversation, and entertainment. Despite the title translating directly into "The Debate", this episode took the form of a panel discussion. So, while diverse viewpoints were presented, the participants did not speak directly to one another, and there was no declared winner, as there typically would be in a debate format. During analysis, I had to consider how communication is shaped by the context of both media and power structures to influence meaning making and identity shaping (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 156-157).

Beginning with the episode title, *“Researchers: Eat as little meat as possible”*, we can already start the analysis. This title is a somewhat inaccurate representation of the contents of the proposed report, which specifically addresses the consumption levels of red and processed meats, rather than all meat. This alteration of information could simply be an editing effort to keep the title short, or it could be an intentional tactic to increase audience views with what the producers considered to be an attention grabbing title. An audience who does not want to eat less animal products would consider this to be controversial information, while an audience who agrees with the statement would find validation in the title. The vagueness of the title is likely to attract people with strong cultural values around food choices, regardless of which way their values fall.

On the NRK website, the description of the episode continues as: *“Eat much less meat, says new report. But is it health, the environment or agriculture that will govern our new dietary advice?”*. Here is both meaning making and identity shaping with the continuation of a twist on the content of the proposed report. Similarly to the title, the phrase *“Eat much less meat, says new report”* asserts a recommendation, but the source is vague. The phrase conveys authority while also posing questions about the credibility or motivation of the source. The inclusion of three possible domains, *“health, environment or agriculture”*, creates a sense of ideological competition. Rather than presenting the topic as a multifaceted challenge in which many elements need considering, it creates a sense of unresolvable conflict between personal choices and collective issues. This sets the stage for ideological tensions in discourse around dietary advice. Is this tension promoted for entertainment value or to influence how the audience receives the information? This description indicates that dietary advice is only affected and does not effect. This could reflect the discourse in Norway that ignores nutrition-sensitive agriculture as a priority by disregarding it completely. The description is also formulated as a question rather than a statement. Does the producer want the audience to reflect, or does it intend to subtly guide the audience toward accepting the narrative that one of these three forces will inevitably dictate future dietary habits?

I also had to consider if this text served as a communicative or strategic event from the perspectives of the production, panelists, and audience members. If this text was purely a communicative event, it would have aimed only to foster dialogue, understanding, and knowledge-sharing from diverse perspectives on the complex issue of nutrition-sensitive

agriculture. The panel did indeed include diverse representation. However, I observed discourse that served to influence public opinion and advance political agendas, indicating that it could be considered at least partially strategic. The producer made choices about who was invited to participate and therefore influenced the discourse. Since this panel discussion was produced by a state-run broadcaster, it is essential to consider that the content could be mediated to reflect or align with government priorities, policies, or narratives around the food system, health and nutrition. In this case, it's likely to have strategic elements designed to influence public understanding, potentially presenting government programs and initiatives in a positive light.

As previously mentioned, the producers allowed one actor to present information about the proposed recommendations without participating in the panel discussion. This format could have been chosen by the actor in order to control how information is presented or as a signal that their expertise is distinct from the others, and not up for debate. Alternatively, if this individual's perspective aligns with the show's agenda, isolating them in an interview can ensure their views are presented without the contestation or conflict that a debate would create. By allowing the interview to take place separately but within the panel discussion and then asking for a panelist to respond, the interviewee's perspective is framed as distinct from the others. It establishes a subtle hierarchy where the other actors react rather than participate as equals. This dynamic can frame the interviewee as the authority and the others as interpreting, agreeing with, or challenging this "established" view.

A televised panel discussion shapes how participants form their arguments in several distinct ways, largely due to the medium's public nature, time constraints, and its framing by producers. These factors can lead to a polished but also more strategic, simplified, or sharply ideologically influenced presentation of the information. Especially on a state-run channel, actors may gently align their arguments with stances considered to be politically or ideologically acceptable in an effort to avoid controversy and backlash. This can lead to language that reinforces the normalized narrative or position, potentially affecting the authenticity of their viewpoints. The panelists might have exercised self-censorship to stay within boundaries considered acceptable to the general audience. This could have softened or limited their arguments, leading to more measured or less critical positions on controversial aspects of the topic.

NRK is well known in Norway and available through multiple platforms, making it available to a wide range of people (Fordal, 2009). It is reasonable to assume that the company hopes for the broadest exposure possible. In terms of a communicative event, more reach could translate into a more informed population. In terms of a strategic event, more reach could translate into more influence. However, different segments of the audience are likely to react differently to the production and distribution based on their own cultural values. On one hand, a dissident enclavist and a conservative heirarchist may be equally likely to trust and be influenced by information from a government affiliated organization. On the other hand, how the discourses are presented will affect the reception. Will an enclavist expect each panelist to receive equal speaking time, and be less likely to trust the production if it does not happen? Even if the discussion presents a balanced set of perspectives, will hierarchists be as open to the counter-hegemonic discourse as the hegemonic?

The actors would have been keenly aware that they were speaking to a broad audience, which would have led them to carefully shape their language and demeanor in order to maintain credibility, authority, and appeal. They may have avoided overly controversial statements or tempered their views to appear more relatable or credible. Knowing they were addressing a general audience, the panelists may have presented simplified arguments that were accessible to a wide spectrum of people. This would mean avoiding overly technical language, especially as the topic of nutrition-sensitive agriculture could otherwise come across as specialized or complex. Due to time constraints, panelists may have been forced to leave out nuanced arguments or supporting data that they would normally use to substantiate their points.

Being a visual medium, non-verbal cues, such as positioning in the studio, body language, gestures, and tone of voice, become part of the discourse. Actors may have worked to enhance their positions through expressive gestures or tones that conveyed conviction or authority, knowing these cues are visible to the audience. The televised format also encourages emotional appeals as a way to reach viewers, who may connect more easily with narrative-driven arguments than purely logical ones. Could the panelists' proximity to one another and the moderator have influenced the perception of authority to the audience? By arranging participants into two groups who faced one another in the studio, the audience

received clues to potential conflict before the discussion began. They were literally organized into “sides” with the moderator in the middle.

A moderator wields significant influence in a panel discussion. Intentionally or otherwise, they can shape perceptions around the topic and themes in ways that align with broader ideological, political, or social narratives. Their influence can, for example, take the form of language choices, controlling conversational flow, intonation, and body language.

In the moderator’s introduction, he used the word “disagree” eight times. This kind of introduction sets up an expectation of strong debate and could increase the audience’s interest by highlighting the extent of disagreement between the panelists. By highlighting potential conflict in a repetitive way, the moderator underscores the extent and depth of the cultural divide, which can make the debate feel more engaging and dynamic. The audience was primed for an exchange of contrasting viewpoints, potentially making the event feel more entertaining or compelling.

The use of honorifics, job titles, and personal descriptions can subtly shape the audience’s perception of authority, credibility, and respect among panelists. They can also reveal potential biases held by the actors, which can have a lasting impact on the perceived credibility of their arguments and the overall tone of the discussion. For instance, as the moderator introduced the first two panelists, they were identified as “*Norwegian red meat defender...from the Center Party*” and “*vegan and Liberal politician.*” The moderator’s language choices carried ideological implications, immediately placing these politicians in opposition. The use of “*Norwegian*” for the first panelist ties the actor to national identity, potentially invoking a sense of national pride. The term “*defender*” frames the panelist as protective of “*red meat*”, which evokes specific values tied to what is referred to as traditional agriculture, suggesting an alignment with heritage over emerging dietary trends. Introducing the panelist in this manner can imply a nationalistic angle, framing red meat as a part of Norwegian culture that needs protection from international criticism.

Meanwhile, the combined label of “*vegan and Liberal politician*” connotes an identity focused on progressive values, likely in line with environmentalism and ethical consumerism. The moderator frames this panelist as an advocate for societal change in the context of health, sustainability, or animal rights. An audience in an area with a strong agricultural base or where

traditional diets are prevalent might view veganism and liberalism with some skepticism, compared to an urban, progressive audience, who might see it as admirable or forward-thinking. Notably the moderator places “*vegan*” before the panelist’s work title. Is the moderator indicating that for this actor, food choices are more important than job? While they later introduce a direct question to the panelist about how being a vegan influences their interpretation of the proposed dietary guidelines, the moderator failed to mention dietary habits for any other panelist during the course of the text.

A moderator sometimes works to guide panelists to focus on specific aspects with pointed questions. This tactic can shape the arguments participants make, as they may respond in line with the framing of the questions. However, they may also employ linguistic devices to shift topics in order to advance an agenda on unrelated points. How the moderator continues to interact with an actor who answers around the question, can subtly steer audience perception. For instance, during one section of the text, the moderator asks a panelist about political influence and interference on dietary recommendations. The panelist avoids answering the questions directly and clings to neutral answers. The moderator rephrases and repeats the question several times, even at one point turning away from the panelist, towards the others, and saying, “*Then we can end here. I think? Almost.*” Near the end of the interaction, the moderator asks with a smile, “*Do you think you have a small task now?*” Is this an acknowledgement of the somewhat aggressive nature of the questioning to put the panelist at ease, or is it meant for the audience, or potentially both?

5 Summary and implications

In this project, I looked for discourses impacting current agricultural and nutritional norms in Norway, and the cultural conflicts reflected in the identified discourses. The point of departure I chose for the project was the contentious public response made by the then Minister of Agriculture and Food to the proposed update of the “Nordic Nutrition Recommendations” in April 2023 which resulted in a panel discussion on the televised show *Debatten*, produced and distributed by the state owned Norsk rikskringkasting. Four main and interrelated discourses concerning nutritional-sensitive agriculture in Norway were identified: (1) Heritage agriculture narrative discourse; (2) Nutrition-forward public health discourse; (3) Shaping Norwegian identity; (4) Discourse of sustainable food system.

The values and ideologies that shaped the discourses exposed conflict between two dominant cultures, as defined by Douglas: *Conservative hierarchy* and *Dissident enclave* (Douglas, 1996, p. 43). These two cultures are protagonists in a debate about control for resources in the changing landscape of nutrition and agriculture. Using Douglas' concepts, we can see a grid-group dynamic at play, where *Conservative hierarchy* (high grid, high group) values social order, respect for tradition, and clear rules, while *Dissident enclave* (high group, lower grid) emphasizes informed autonomy, challenge to the status quo, and egalitarian structures. This tension influences how agriculture and nutrition are framed by the actors.

The analysis presented here has several implications into how power, culture, and ideology shape the issue of nutrition-sensitive agriculture. The *heritage agriculture narrative discourse* emphasizes cultural continuity, which resonates with a *Conservative hierarchy* that values tradition and preservation of existing cultural norms. However, the narrative is a tool to legitimize modern industrial agricultural practices as being aligned with cultural traditions. In contrast, a *Dissident enclave* perspective challenges the dominant discourse by categorizing the current farming practices as ineffective for addressing contemporary issues like food insecurity or climate change, emphasizing a need for systemic reform.

The *nutrition-forward public health discourse* advocates for agricultural practices and policies that prioritize nutrition and health outcomes, focusing on how food systems can reduce malnutrition and chronic lifestyle diseases. Here, we find the stakeholders fighting for power

to shape ideas of the trustworthiness of evidence-based research and the importance of departmental collaboration.

The discourse of *shaping Norwegian identity* reflects how national identity is embedded in ideas of food practices, rural landscapes, traditional agriculture, and nature. Here, *Conservative hierarchy* argues that heritage agriculture is central to preserving Norwegian identity, using nationalistic symbols to create a static portrayal of who and what is Norwegian. Meanwhile, the *Dissident enclave* seeks to redefine Norwegian identity to incorporate globalized concerns, aligning with discourses of collective responsibility and progressive health reforms. The negotiation of identity can be framed as either a threat to cultural cohesion or a necessary adaptation to modern realities, based on cultural allegiance.

The *discourse of a sustainable food system* aligns with contemporary global values of environmental responsibility and equity which are embraced by the dissident enclave. However, because of the flexibility of the concept of sustainability, it is possible for the conservative hierarchy to incorporate traditional values into the discourse with concerns of long-term food-security and survival.

This analysis exposes ideological conflicts regarding what should be prioritized in agricultural policy: should policies support current practices to preserve culture, or should they be innovation-focused to address health and sustainability challenges? These ideological conflicts influence whose interests are represented in the policy outcomes and who is marginalized. The findings of this project support those of previous research, namely that conflicts among interested stakeholders reinforce polarization and decrease the likelihood of adherence to nutritional interventions. As imagined as a “conventional” type of governing dietary change, meat reduction is politically promoted (nutrition-forward public health discourse), without corresponding changes in food and agricultural policies (heritage agriculture narrative discourse) (source Loeng and Korsnes). In this analysis, we see that the promotion of individual freedom for consumers is used to reinforce a hierarchical system which holds nutrition policy and agricultural policy separate.

By including the cultural conflict between a *Conservative hierarchy* and a *Dissident enclave*, this analysis underscores how different cultural values and social structures impact debates about nutrition and agriculture by highlighting how powerful discourses influence policy

directions and social acceptability of the interventions. The conflict of discourses concerning nutrition-sensitive agriculture is a clash between the cultural identities attached to the representation of a traditional food system and the contemporary authority of nutritional science.

Because this project included only one text, it is difficult to know if the results can be applied to a larger context within or outside of Norway. Further study using critical discourse analysis to uncover the cultural bias hidden within discourses of nutrition-sensitive agriculture could help us better understand how stakeholders can more effectively communicate with those who feel marginalized in the discourses and collaborate to address collective challenges we face such as improving health and well-being with proper nutrition. It would be interesting to combine discourse analysis with policy analysis to see how the dominant discourses are expressed through active policy. Looking into the historical relationship between mediated discourse and the political parties of Norway could also add relevant context to the discourses.

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Appendix 1

Permission from NRK to use transcript of Debatten episode, email received 26 July 2024

From: Siv Irene Kind <Siv.Irene.Kind@nrk.no>
Sent: 26 July 2024 09:03
To: Sandra Allen <s371788@oslomet.no>
Subject: SV: **Debatten** 27.april 2023

Hei!

Takk for henvendelsen.

Det er ok for oss at du selv transkriberer denne dialogen.
Og at du krediterer hvor teksten er hentet.

Lykke til med masteroppgaven.

Vennlig hilsen

Siv Irene Kind

Rådgiver, Innholdssalg

NRK

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Avdeling: +47 23042030

Post: NRK, Pb. 8500 Majorstua, 0340 Oslo

nrk.no

Fra: Sandra Allen <s371788@oslomet.no>
Sendt: torsdag 25. juli 2024 13:48
Til: innholdssalg@nrk.no
Emne: Debatten 27.april 2023

Hei.

Jeg heter Sandra Allen og jobber for tiden med en mastersoppgave. Jeg lurer på om det er mulig å få tillatelse til å bruke dialog fra en episode av Debatten.
Debatten, episode fra 27. april 2023 · Forskere: Spis så lite kjøtt som mulig (<https://tv.nrk.no/se?v=NNEA51042723>)

- **Det skal inkluderes i en masteroppgave på OsloMet som skal leveres i november 2024.**
- **Dersom oppgaven gis karakteren A eller B, blir den gjort tilgjengelig i universitetets arkiv.**

Hvis en offisiell transpsjon er tilgjengelig fra NRK, ville det vært best. Hvis ikke, vil jeg transkribere det privat ved å bruke MacWhisper.

--

Mvh

Sandra Lynn Allen