



universität
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MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Veganism and Social Movements: How the Vegan
Phenomenon Has Evolved from the 1960s to the
Present“

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien, 2019 / Vienna, 2019

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. Martina Kaller

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UA 067 805

Studienrichtung / degree programme:

Individuelles Masterstudium
Global Studies – a European Perspective

Betreuer/Supervisor:

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Abstract (German)

Diese Master These analysiert das Phänomen des Veganismus aus sozialer Sicht. Die Zeitspanne umfasst dessen Entwicklung in den USA seit den 1960er Jahren bis in die Gegenwart. Aus persönlichen Gründen versuche ich, die politischen, historischen und sozialen Faktoren zu ergründen, die hinter den Ursprüngen und der Entwicklung des Veganismus‘ stehen. Ich argumentiere, dass Veganismus und Vegetarismus Querschnittsthemen in verschiedenen sozialen Bewegungen sind. Für jedes Jahrzehnt seit 1960 stelle ich Beispiele dafür vor, wie und warum verschiedene soziale Gruppen diesen Lebensstil wählten. Ich beziehe mich zum Beispiel auf die Bürgerrechtsbewegung, den Feminismus, die Umweltschutzbewegung und vor allem das Eintreten für Tierrechte.

Dem Veganismus liegt eine ethische Frage zu Grunde, da Tierschutzorganisationen und AktivistInnen für den Schutz der Tiere eintreten. Weil die Zahl der Veganer auf der ganzen Welt stetig anwächst, nehme ich an, dass dieses Wachstum durch ein zunehmendes Bewusstsein über den Zustand der Tiere erklärt werden kann. Dabei spielen die Nutzung und Berichterstattung der Medien, besonders auch der sozialen Medien, eine zentrale Rolle. Nachdem ich propagandistische und akademische Quellen gesichtet habe, entwickle ich diese These hauptsächlich auf der Grundlage der symbolischen Interaktionstheorie. Sie spricht der Ernährung eine politische Bedeutung und soziale Funktion zu.

Schlüsselbegriffe: *Veganismus, Vegetarismus, soziale Bewegungen, Vereinigte Staaten, Tierrechte, Ernährung;*

Abstract (English)

This thesis analyses the vegan phenomenon from a social point of view, following its development in the United States from the 1960s to the present. Motivated by personal reasons, I try here to identify the political, historical and social factors behind the origins and the evolution of the subject. Arguing that veganism is a transversal topic inherent to a number of social movements, including vegetarianism, I provide for each decade examples of how various groups have been adopting this lifestyle moved by different causes. I refer for example to the Civil Rights Movement, feminism, environmentalism and, most importantly, animal rights. The ethical side is indeed at the base of veganism, with animal rights organizations and activists from a number of other movements fighting against anti-speciesism through a variety of actions and demonstrations. Considering the impressive growth over the years of the number of vegans around the world, my hypothesis is that such growth can be explained by an increase of awareness over animals' condition, given by a wider usage and coverage of the media. By adopting the literature review of both propagandist and academic sources, I develop this thesis mainly based on the symbolic interactionist theory, providing additional meaning and function to food within the sociological aspect of the vegan diet.

Keywords: *veganism, vegetarianism, social movements, United States, animal rights, diet*

“All the best reformers - those who first opposed the slave trade, nationalistic wars, and the exploitation of children working a fourteen-hour day in the factories of the Industrial Revolution - were at first derided as cranks by those who had an interest in the abuses they were opposing.”

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*

*In memory of
the billions of animals exploited and killed around the
world every year.*

*“We see you.
We hear you.
We are sorry.
We are trying...”*

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the world has been witnessing a rise of veganism - especially in the global North, which for many people is still a very controversial lifestyle, considered both as a personal choice and as a global trend. The vegan movement has increasingly gained new supporters, with The Economist declaring 2019 “the year veganism goes mainstream.”¹ On the heel of it, Forbes talks about the top health food trends of 2019 suggesting to “embrace a plant-based lifestyle”.² Terms like *trend* and *mainstream* are widely used when talking about veganism, when in fact they have very little to do with it. At least, not with its genuine origins and development.

After being vegetarian for 17 years since birth, 7 years ago I turned vegan. During my first years of life, my body seemed to be intolerant to meat and fish. Although my parents tried several times to feed me with these animal products, I would always reject them. Looking back, I assume my body already had a natural predisposition for what eventually became my lifestyle. While growing up, I started to understand that meat and fish were actually parts of dead animals, and that body rejection began to be reinforced by the sensitivity at the root of my love for each kind of animal. As a teenager, I started to be very active on social networks, following many pages of animal welfare organizations. Being increasingly exposed to articles, pictures, and especially videos of animals’ abuse on farms and slaughterhouses made me aware of the violence behind the whole production process of animal products: not only meat and fish, but also dairy, eggs, and honey caused animal sufferance. And I just could not keep contributing to support such a violent industry. Furthermore, reports relating animal farming to climate change started to spread. I had always considered myself an environmentalist, trying to live my life as green as possible. And that is how the environmental component became the second main reason, after the ethical one, to motivate me to transition towards a vegan lifestyle. The icing on the cake of my transitioning process from a vegetarian to a vegan diet came when, after being diagnosed with kidney cancer, the doctors strongly recommended me to adopt a plant-based diet. Ethics, environment, and health: this was my perfect recipe for going vegan. And I am sure this is still the best choice of my life, which has been allowing me to live in peace not only with myself but also with all the living sentient beings populating our planet.

¹ Parker, John. 2018. *The year of the Vegan*. The Economist. The World in 2019. Retrieved 4 September 2019, from <https://worldin2019.economist.com/theyearofthevegan>.

² Huen, Eustacia. 25 December 2018. *Top Health Food Trends to go Mainstream in 2019*. Forbes. Retrieved 4 September 2019, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/eustaciahuen/2018/12/25/healthtrends/#1b5316ab1b82>.

Throughout this Master's program in Global Studies, I have taken the opportunity over the past two years to analyze the vegan topic mainly from the historical and social point of view. It goes without saying that without any academic and technical knowledge of environmental and health aspects, I had to define my area of focus. Therefore, in light of my personal transition from a vegetarian to a vegan lifestyle, and considering veganism as a transversal topic inherent to a number of social movements, I decided to analyze the evolution of the vegetarian movement into the vegan one from a social point of view. Thus, the topic of this thesis is historical and social. Although veganism began to resemble more to a social movement only starting from the 2000s, when the society started witnessing an increasing number of protests and manifestations, it cannot be considered an independent movement. Indeed, the vegan cause is claimed and supported by activists from a variety of movements, amongst which civil rights, environmentalism, feminism and animal rights. That is why defining veganism as a transversal topic inherent to other social movements is probably the best way to describe it. However, with this definition in mind and in order to avoid repetitions, I use the terms *veganism* and *vegan movement* interchangeably. Given the broad extent of the topic, the coverage of the study has to clearly be bounded also in terms of time and place. Therefore, following the path of this development in a certain area allows me to create connections with other social movements, and to develop my research question: how has the US vegan movement, and the lifestyle and food consumption choices related to it, evolved from the 1960s to the present, alongside its inherent social movements?

To analyze this social phenomenon from a more comprehensive point of view, in this master thesis I draw the attention on veganism in the United States, one of the main developed countries that witnessed the rise of several related social movements, from the 1960s to the present. Analyzing this particular country is relevant not only for the role model played by it for the West during the Cold War but also for the great influence it keeps having in particular on western societies. However, a step back is necessary. An introduction to the vegetarian movement helps to understand the profile and legacy of veganism. Indeed I mainly refer to vegetarianism, in terms of a social movement, when talking about the related social movements going on between the 1960s and the 1980s. While, starting from the 1990s, when an increase in veganism was more tangible, I refer to the phenomenon as a topic inherent to other social movements, amongst which the animal rights as the main one.

I adopt the literature review and analysis method, which allows me to define the awareness behind veganism, and how it has developed from vegetarianism along with food consumption choices and other social movements.

Beginning from the US vegetarian movement during the 1960s and 1970s, I start analyzing how food symbolism and the civil rights movement influenced and laid the groundwork for vegetarianism - and eventually veganism - to gain an increasing number of supporters during the following decades. I take into consideration in particular two books of that period, considered to be amongst the main pillars of the vegetarian movement: *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé, and *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer. While the first one allows me to make the connection with the environmental impact of meat production, the second one helps me to justify the vegetarian – and subsequently the vegan – movement as a cultural practice based on the ethical dimension of *anti-speciesism*³. In particular, such an ethical system “rejects speciesism on the basis that beings with the capacity to suffer have interests that cannot be overridden simply because they are not in a position to articulate those interests in the ways that humans can.”⁴ In addition, I refer to Warren Belasco’s *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* to consider the rise of the countercuisine during these two decades.

Moving to the 1980s, I shift the attention on the link between the vegetarian and the feminism movements, drawing in particular on the book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* by Carol J. Adams. Although the book was firstly published in 1990, it is clearly a work that collects material about the vegetarian feminist movement that characterized the previous decade. Indeed, within the feminist-movement, vegetarianism was used both as a mean for expression and as a tool to actively protest against the patriarchal order, with a common goal to live in a “world without oppression”.⁵ Therefore, the logic behind it was that if American women did not want to be objectified and mistreated by men, they could not allow doing the same to animals. I also bring up the organization Feminist for Animal Rights, founded during the early 1980s in California,

³ Speciesism: the practice of treating members of one species as morally more important than members of other species; also, the belief that this practice is justified. Term introduced by the English philosopher Richard Ryder in 1970 to protest against animal experimentation. Duignan, Brian. Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Speciesism*. Retrieved 23 April 2019, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/speciesism>.

⁴ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, p. 10.

⁵ Morgan, Robin. 2003. *Sisterhood is Forever: the Women’s Anthology for a New Millennium*. New York: Washington Square Press, p. 499.

as an example of the type of agenda supported by vegetarian (and in some cases vegan) feminists.

Regarding the 1990s, I focus on how animal rights movements adopted and combined a different set of strategies and actions in order to promote animal rights, underlying the differentiation between animal welfare and animal rights activists. Although in my personal opinion the ultimate goal should be the complete abolition of animal exploitation, therefore through animal rightists' strategies, I acknowledge the benefits deriving from animal welfare frames, too, and I do appreciate the efforts that any kind of organization has been putting into reducing animals' sufferance. Therefore I took into consideration how PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), the largest organization in the world in this field, increased awareness over animal exploitation and, by extension, supported veganism. Indeed, this decade experienced a significant evolution of vegetarianism. Although many of these organizations had already been founded during the 1980s, starting from the 1990s their actions began to spread and increase their strength as well as their number of supporters, also thanks to the role of the media. I show how protests, manifestations, undercover investigations, campaigns and ads promoted by these organizations increasingly influenced the US society in terms of sensitivity towards animals, as well as legislation for animal welfare.

Moving to the past two decades, my analysis is mainly based on articles and reports regarding some factors that have given the most important contribution to the veganism to go even more mainstream: animal rights activism, social networks, documentaries, climate change, and healthy diets. The rise of social networks, as well as the release of certain documentaries, have in fact enabled vegan activists to share worldwide their beliefs and their reasons, reaching millions of people. At the same time, the increasing concerns about environmental issues raised questions regarding the potential negative impact of livestock production on climate change. And, lastly, the vegan movement has been more and more associated with a healthy diet, often seen also as a global trend, that has actually very little to do with the ethical reason that initially laid the foundations of the movement as described by The Vegan Society.

The theories I am using are mainly based on countercultural movements, demonstrating the ways in which food promoted social changes; in fact, as stated by Belasco, "the counterculturalists saw diet as a way to transform consciousness, to integrate mind and body,

to overcome personal alienation, and to take social responsibility.”⁶ In addition, examining social behaviors through a culturalist approach helps me to expose how the phenomenon of veganism can be considered in the realm of constructivist and symbolic interactionist theories, underlying that even in this case the human agency is at the core of human affairs. In order to understand most of the aspects of veganism, it seems indeed necessary to conduct a cultural analysis that allows understanding the reasons behind it, especially when it comes to industrial societies that still heavily rely on animal agriculture. As explained by the sociologist Hank Johnson, carrying out such analysis means investigating the “collective process of meaning-making, culture, and discursive production”.⁷ To do so, I refer to veganism as a phenomenon that breaks from an old frame and defines “a new injustice frame”⁸, through a process of cognitive liberation; as a result, it introduces a new collective interpretation of justice and liberation, including non-human animals.

Furthermore, I consider vegetarianism as a new social movement, underlying how its politics not only “emphasizes the role of culture and identity”⁹ as indicated by David West, but includes also “the politics of exploitation and survival.”¹⁰ Taking into consideration how vegetarianism clarifies its actions throughout contingencies derived from non-state institutions, relevant narratives, and other social movements, it emerges that the movement is “based on everyday practices in one’s lifestyle.”¹¹ While I categorize veganism as a movement inherent to other movements (e.g. vegetarianism, environmentalism, animal rights), given the transversality of the topic. Therefore, considering that veganism “measures its success in terms of cultural and lifestyle changes”¹², it appears clear that it cannot be categorized merely as a traditional social movement that usually defines its success “in terms of legislative changes”.¹³

As explained in more detail in the section that introduces the origins of veganism through an analysis of the vegetarian one, the health topic is only marginally mentioned. Although when it comes to the reasons behind a vegetarian or vegan choice it is not too uncommon to come across

⁶ Belasco, Warren. 1989. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry, 1966-88*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 60.

⁷ Johnston, Hank. 2011. *States & Social Movements*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. 47.

⁸ Ibid, p. 80.

⁹ West, David. 2013. *Social Movements in Global Politics*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. 77.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cherry, Elizabeth. 2006. *Veganism as a Cultural Movement: A Relational Approach*. *Social Movement Studies*, 5:2, p. 156.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Martin, Greg. 2002. *Conceptualizing Cultural Politics in Subcultural and Social Movement Studies*. *Social Movement Studies*, 1(1), p. 73.

the health cause, it is fair to say that such a decision occurs on a very personal level. And, given that the scope of this thesis focuses on the research and analysis of veganism related to social movements, a personal choice like the health-related one has very little to do with it. Furthermore, I have no expertise related to the medical field, therefore I limit myself to briefly mention the health aspect only in chapter 6 when talking about veganism as a trendy diet.

Although vegan studies in the academic field are a result “of the discourse of vegan representation as situated within and outside of extant conceptions of animal studies and animal welfare/rights/liberation”¹⁴, it is necessary to acknowledge and assess “the ethical involvement to a given topic/area as something beneficial or detrimental.”¹⁵ Indeed, in almost every academic work related to ethical issues, the author’s participation and implication within that ideology are undeniable. Therefore, just like in this thesis, the presence of some of the mentioned biases is unavoidable. Nevertheless, throughout the chapters I will provide some examples of critical arguments often used against veganism, coming up with counterarguments whenever possible. For instance, one of the main critics against veganism is that vegan people only care about animals without worrying about other problems like poverty and world hunger that modern society considers much more relevant and important. Such criticism is easily countered by the fact that most vegans support other social causes too. Given that veganism is inherent to a number of different but aligned movements, is it common to find vegans that alongside following a plant-based diet, advocate also for instance for civil rights, environmentalism, or feminism. That is to say, supporting the vegan philosophy and other social causes are not mutually exclusive.

The increasing awareness of veganism comes along with related academic literature, with several qualitative studies carried out in various disciplines. Among the most recent ones, there is *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* by Joy Melanie (2010) for the psychological field; Peter Singer’s updated version of *Animal Liberation* (2009) for the philosophical area; from the law field, *Animals Like Us* by Mark Rowlands (2002); and Elizabeth Cherry’s *Veganism as a Cultural Movement: a Relational Approach* (2006) for the sociological area. However, as underlined by Lyle Munro, the study of social movements has

¹⁴ Wright, Laura. 2015. *Vegan studies. Food, animals and gender in the age of terror*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, p. 2.

¹⁵ Martinelli, Dario and Ausra Berkmanienė. 12 February 2018. *The Politics and the Demographics of Veganism: Notes for a Critical Analysis*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018, International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, p. 504.

received still very little attention from ‘Human-Animal Studies’, and a larger contribution – especially through new theoretical developments – is needed¹⁶. Indeed, the vegan diet has so far mainly been considered as a strategy to promote animal rights, as well as an ethical lifestyle taken by activists on an individual level.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is hard to produce qualitative academic contributions about veganism, because of its several facets given by the different reasons behind such a choice, and by the flexible/rigid sense in which it is perceived and applied.

Assessing veganism in a quantitative way is even more difficult if we consider that data is usually gathered by organizations operating in and for the vegan community, with consequent financial issues when it comes to funding. In addition, as already mentioned and explained in detail further on, veganism is a phenomenon that encompasses several variables, such as the rigidity/flexibility of the diet and the reason behind the lifestyle. These two factors make it difficult to delimit and examine the analytical sphere, resulting in a problem of credibility. However, occasionally these studies are carried out by institutes and organizations related to the health and food field (e.g. WHO and FAO), providing more accurate and reliable data on veganism. Furthermore, the quantitative assessment of the movement is made difficult by its geographical distribution, with some countries (amongst which the United States, as reported in the upcoming chapters) being monitored more precisely and with a higher frequency.

For all these above reasons, the bibliography used is split into two categories: one based on propagandist material, the other based on academic literature. Classifying the first one mainly as primary sources and the second one as secondary allows me to better distinguish the information and data analyzed, taking into consideration factors as biases and credibility.

2. Origins of the Movement: From Vegetarianism to Veganism

Although according to some anthropologists vegetarianism dates back to pre-history¹⁸, the very first literature referring to these phenomena is the Bible, when talking about the Garden of Paradise.

¹⁶ Munro, Lyle. 2012. *The Animal Rights Movement in Theory and Practice: a Review of the Sociological Literature*. *Sociology Compass* 6 (2): 166-81.

¹⁷ Bertuzzi, Niccolò. 2017. *Veganism: Lifestyle or Political Movement? Looking for Relations beyond Antispeciesism*. *Beyond Anthropocentrism*, volume 5, number 2, Milan: University of Milano-Bicocca, p. 129.

¹⁸ Dunn, Rob. *Scientific American*. 23 July 2012. *Human Ancestors Were Nearly All Vegetarians*. Retrieved 5 May 2019, from <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/human-ancestors-were-nearly-all-vegetarians/>.

Vegetarianism made its way in the Indian subcontinent starting from the 6th century BCE through the three *ahimsa*-based religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The Sanskrit word *ahimsa*, literally “non-harming”, has been recently explained by the cofounder of the American Vegan Society, H. Jay Dinshah, as a way “to go through life doing the least amount of harm, hurting, killing, as possible; and [...] to do the most amount of helping, assisting, and benefiting of others as possible.”¹⁹ *Ahimsa* was also the catalyst used by Indian philosophy in the mid-1600s to counter the British invasion, reaching everyone who could read English and allowing the vegetarian and vegan movements to gain some powerful representatives over the two following centuries: Benjamin Franklin, Percy and Mary Shelley, Voltaire, Johnny Appleseed, Sylvester Graham, Leo Tolstoy, George Bernard Shaw, John Harvey Kellogg, Franz Kafka and Mahatma Gandhi.²⁰ However, for the purposes of this thesis, it is important to underline that in most of the just-mentioned cases – with the exception of Tolstoy and Gandhi – vegetarianism and veganism were rather adopted as an individual choice. While being moved by political reasons, both Tolstoy’s and Gandhi’s vegetarian stances perfectly fit with the “increasingly organized”²¹ international vegetarian movement that characterized the nineteenth century. With the foundation of the first Vegetarian Society in the United Kingdom in 1847²² (see Figure 1) and the American one in 1850, the vegetarian movement started receiving its legitimization. The vegetarian ideology kept being adopted also a few decades later, as the impetus for nonviolent revolutions, in particular by Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

After the industrial revolution, between 1880 and 1930, American’s food habits underwent an important transformation based on the ideas of the so-called *New Nutrition*. One of the main supporters of this modern nutrition was Wilbur O. Atwater, a government-funded chemist. According to Atwater, introducing the concepts of proteins, calories, and fats would have helped to reshape and to improve the quality of the diets as well as the standard of living of Americans. For instance, he suggested that consuming beans and cheap cuts of meat could have

¹⁹ Dinshah, H. Jay. Vegan Publishers. 3 October 2014. *Let’s talk about Ahimsa*. Retrieved 12 December 2018, from <https://veganpublishers.com/lets-talk-about-ahimsa-h-jay-dinshah/>.

²⁰ Moran, Victoria. NY Vegetarian Food Festival. 11 April 2017. *A Brief History of Vegetarianism*. Retrieved 12 December 2018, from <https://www.nycvegfoodfest.com/index.php/blog/item/73-a-brief-history-of-vegetarianism>.

²¹ Alston, Charlotte. The I.B. Tauris Blog. 9 June 2014. *Tolstoy and Vegetarianism*. Retrieved 3 September, from <https://theibtaurisblog.com/2014/06/09/tolstoy-and-vegetarianism/>

²² The Vegetarian Society. *World History of Vegetarianism*. Retrieved 11 August 2019, from <https://www.vegsoc.org/about-us/world-history-of-vegetarianism/>.

guaranteed the same intake of proteins as consuming expensive beefsteak while allowing to save on money.²³ However, although the middle class seemed to take much of those principles

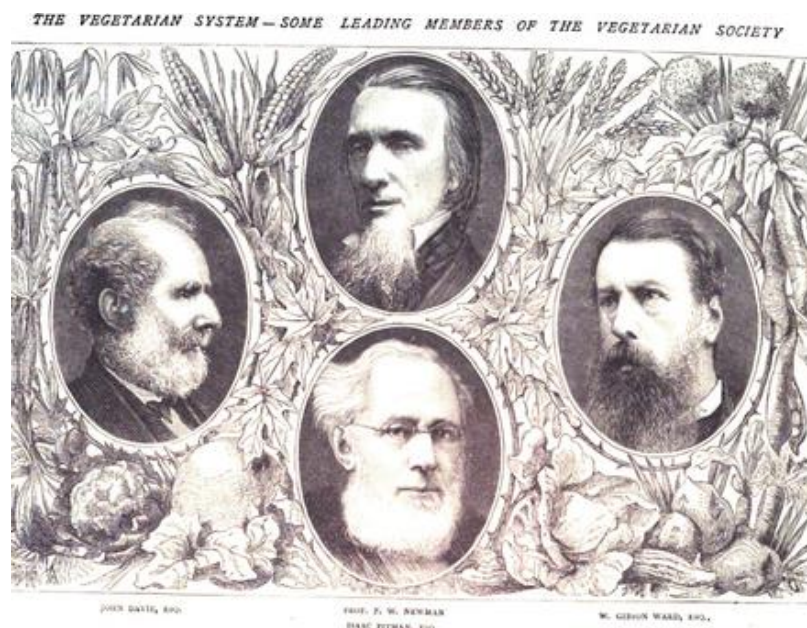


Figure 1. Francis William Newman (1805-1897), Isaac Pitman (1813-1897), William Gibson Ward (1819-1882) and John Davie (1800-1891): leading members of the Vegetarian Society.

Source: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Vegetarian_Society

to heart, the working class ignored the advice, “reveling in the opportunities for steak-eating which high wartime wages brought”²⁴ them. Furthermore, the industrial revolution had allowed animal products to become storable and easier to distribute, with a consequent increase in their consumption in the first decades of the 1900s.²⁵ The intensive farming derived from the industrial revolution led to new processing behind the production of livestock products. That meant that animal suffering was not anymore caused only by the production of meat, but also eggs, dairy, and honey were responsible for an intensive and distressful process of production, as explained below.

The principle behind avoiding the consumption of eggs does not lie on the eggs themselves, as they are not sentient beings. However, the production of eggs causes sufferance and distress to both hens and male chicks. First of all, hens in a natural state are not forced into egg-laying, as it normally happens in the contemporary industrialized farming process where their natural cycle gets altered. They not only are often forced into spending their whole existence into small

²³ Levenstein, Harvey A. 1996. *The Politics of Nutrition in North America*. Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews, Vol. 20, No. 1. Ontario, McMaster University, p. 75.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ornish, Dean. 1993. *Eat More, Weigh Less*. Scranton: Harpercollins, p. 22.

battery cages or in overcrowded conditions, under artificial light, but once their productivity declines – depending on the farming conditions, after 1 to 2 years – they are slaughtered.²⁶ When their average life span in nature would be of 6 to 8 years. Secondly, most of the male chicks that are not grown for chicken meat, are brutally killed (either gassed, suffocated or homogenized) within 72 hours of birth because of being worthless to the productive process of the egg industry, since they cannot lay eggs.²⁷

With regard to dairy products, the main reason for vegans to avoid their consumption is based on the exploitative usage of cattle. Firstly, cows produce milk just as women do when being pregnant, that is to say, to nourish their young. Therefore, in order for them to keep producing milk, in most animal farms cows are artificially impregnated every year. Secondly, calves are separated from their mothers only after a few hours from birth, causing intensive emotion trauma and distress to both, so the cows can be hooked to milking machines. Thirdly, just as for hens, their natural lifespan would be much longer: they could live up to 20 years, while inside the dairy industry they are normally killed after about 5 because of a decrease in productivity.²⁸ In other words, “excessive milking reduces cattle to little more than commodities”.²⁹

Finally, what is wrong with the usage of honey, from an ethical point of view: in order for honeybees to be profitable enough, they also became “victims of unnatural living conditions, genetic manipulation, and stressful transportation.”³⁰ Beekeepers often try to prevent a decline in honey production caused by the division of the hive (the so-called *swarming*) after a new queen is born.³¹ To do so, they either clip the wings of the new queen, kill and replace an older one after only one or two years, or confine the queen that is starting a swarm.³² Queens not only are artificially inseminated through drones (at least in recent years) that are killed in the process,

²⁶ Meunier, Ryan A. 4 April 2003. *Commercial Egg Production and Processing*. Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Purdue University.

²⁷ Davis, Karen. 2013. “Birds Used in Food Production” in Linzey, *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, pp. 164–5.

²⁸ PETA. The Dairy Industry. Retrieved 25 September 2019, from <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/dairy-industry/>.

²⁹ D’Silva, Joyce. 2013. “The Welfare of Cows” in Linzey, *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, pp. 173–5.

³⁰ PETA. The Honey Industry. Retrieved 25 September 2019, from <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/animals-used-food-factsheets/honey-factory-farmed-bees/>.

³¹ Raver, Anne. 31 May 2001. *Bees Buzz a Path to His Hive*. The New York Times.

³² British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. November 2005. Apiculture Factsheet, Factsheet #404.

but they are also tricked into laying more eggs because of extra wax cells added to the hive by beekeepers.³³

Clearly, vegetarianism was not enough anymore. In 1944 The Vegan Society was founded in the United Kingdom by Donald Watson and five more vegetarian pioneers that had also renounced on eggs, dairy and honey, coining the word *vegan* as “the beginning and end of *vegetarian*”.³⁴ In addition, they also launched a quarterly newsletter called The Vegan News (eventually called just The Vegan). The first designation of the term only referred to the diet being separated from vegetarianism, without any clear definition given. In 1951 the vice president of The Vegan Society, Leslie J. Cross, suggested as a basic definition “the doctrine that man should live without exploiting animals”³⁵, along with a new constitution for the organization (see Figure 2). This definition is crucial for the understanding of the origins of the movement, “unmistakably ethical”, and that “the dietary aspect is simply one of the implications of a life “without exploiting animals””.³⁶ Following the registration of the society as a charity in August 1964, with its transformation into a limited company in December 1979 the Vegan Society finally recorded and incorporated its official definition of veganism that has remained the same until today:

“[...] a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.”³⁷

It is interesting to see how the establishment of the first Vegan Society in Europe took place during World War II, reflecting the collective rejection of exploitation and violence even towards non-human animals. Britain’s government, in particular, had

³³ Schley, Peter. 2014. *Instrumental Insemination of Bee Queens*. Retrieved 25 September 2019, from http://www.besamungsgeraet.de/_en/.

³⁴ The Vegan Society. History. Retrieved 3 September 2019, from <https://www.vegansociety.com/about-us/history>.

³⁵ Cross, Leslie J. 1951. *The New Constitution*. The Vegan, Volume 7, Number 1, pp. 2-3.

³⁶ Martinelli, Dario and Ausra Berkmaniene. 12 February 2018. *The Politics and the Demographics of Veganism: Notes for a Critical Analysis*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018, International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, p. 513.

³⁷ The Vegan Society. History. Retrieved 12 December 2018, from <https://www.vegansociety.com/about-us/history>.

“embarked on a multitude of ways to find security again”³⁸ through peace campaigners. Peace movements were indeed spreading during the decade following 1945, with “hopes for a better future, that were borne out of the experiences of violence and death in the Second World War.”³⁹

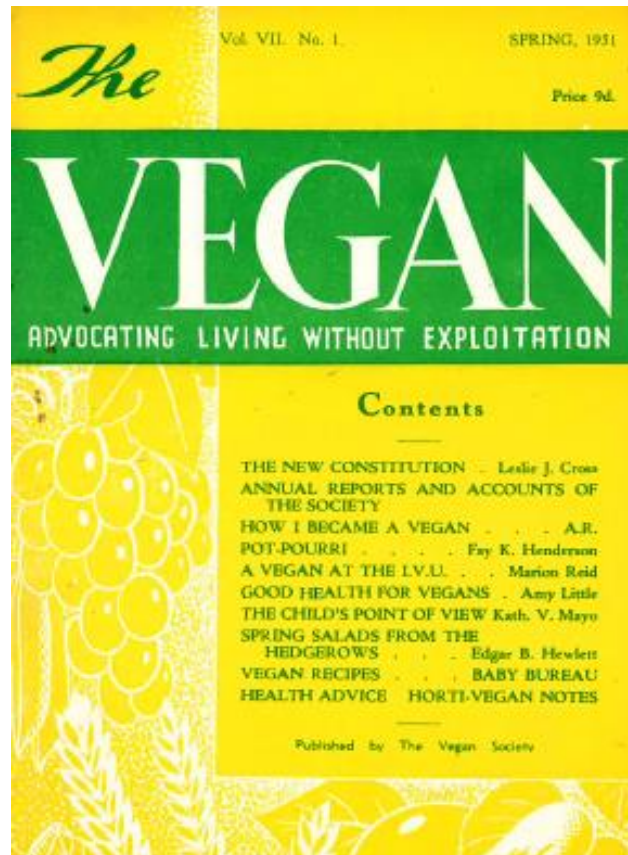


Figure 2. Magazine The Vegan. Volume VII, Number 1, Spring 1951.
This volume came with the new constitution of the organization.
Source: https://issuu.com/vegan_society/docs/the-vegan-spring-1951

Shifting the attention on the United States, the American Vegan Society was instituted in 1960 by Jay Dinshah, referring to the movement by using the term *Ahisma*, emphasizing once again the ethical principle of non-violence of the movement.⁴⁰ The establishment of both societies suggests that the vegetarian movement was increasing, both in terms of adherents and stringency, considering that the Vegetarian Society had already been founded almost a century earlier.

³⁸ Nehring, Holger. 2013. *Politics of Security : British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970*. New York : Oxford University Press, p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ American Vegan Society. Retrieved 12 December 2018, from <http://americanvegan.org/>.

As stated by Rod Preece, “veganism starts with vegetarianism and carries it through to its logical conclusion.”⁴¹ According to several studies on both movements, vegetarians are more inclined to go vegan if their choice was originally based on ethical reasons.⁴² Indeed, veganism can be considered as “the most mature and post-conventional ethical stage”⁴³ behind the philosophy of social justice. It extends its morality through compassion to all animal beings, including the non-human ones. Based on the notion of *anti-speciesism*, it rejects every discrimination perpetrated towards all sentient lives, applying the equality concept to the right to live. Vegans “engage in identity politics in pursuit of transforming marketplace structures to ultimately extend the notion of social justice, cultivate compassion and peace for all sentient beings, and live in healthy condition and in harmony with nature.”⁴⁴

The emergence of veganism happened alongside many other social movements, including the vegetarian one. Indeed, the US historical, social and political landscape has been shaped over the years by several social movements. Taken into consideration West’s explanation, “social movements can be defined as enduring patterns of collective activity that take place outside and often in opposition to official political institutions.”⁴⁵ However, the focus on official political institutions is still perceived quite heavily. Vegetarianism is often overlooked merely as a diet when, in reality, it is a much more compound phenomenon. It developed alongside several new social movements, like the civil rights and the feminism one. As described by Hank Johnston, newness was given by not being about ““old” issues such as economic claims, political subordination, and especially the divide between the working class and the conservative middle and business classes.”⁴⁶ What characterized these new social movements was indeed having as common denominators consumerism and liberation. In particular, considering consumerism as a common base implies that as long as everyone is a consumer, no further distinction needs to be pinpointed.

Indeed, these movements were able to create their own identity with the conviction that there was something wrong, and they had the potential to improve or fix it. In particular, in the case

⁴¹ Preece, Rod. 2008. *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, p. 298.

⁴² Stilles, Beverly. 1998. *Vegetarianism: Identity and Experience as Factors in Food Selection*. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 26(2), p. 213.

⁴³ Singer, Peter. 2009. *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*. New York: Harper Perennial.

⁴⁴ Ulusoy, Emre. 2015. *I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice*. Ethics and Social Justice. Youngstown: Youngstown State University, p. 422.

⁴⁵ West, David. 2013. *Social Movements in Global Politics*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. xv.

⁴⁶ Johnston, Hank. 2011. *States & Social Movements*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. 89.

of vegetarianism, the newness consisted of the rejection of the subordination of non-human animals, which did not reflect the conventional relationship of power existing between traditional groups like the feminist one. Considering then veganism as an underlying logic that creates connections among ethics-, environmental- and health-related issues, it may be useful to analyze it throughout the lens of identity politics. As stated by West, the objective behind identity politics is “to transform the consciousness of both oppressed and oppressor and so to empower the movement’s constituency”.⁴⁷ Veganism applies this concept by including both humans and non-humans in the notion of “oppressed”, and only humans as “oppressor”. And that is easily understandable if we consider living in an anthropocentric society in which “humans place themselves – including their desires, needs, rights, and even lives – in a hierarchy above non-humans.”⁴⁸

In any case, “the rise of veganism coincided with an increased centrality of food in the social, political and cultural discourses”.⁴⁹ In 1962 the Oxford Illustrated Dictionary introduced for the first time the term *vegan*, defining it as “a vegetarian who eats no butter, eggs, cheese or milk.”⁵⁰ Here it is important to underline not only the evolution of vegetarianism but also the use of the term in such a way that activated “a process of mutation of the vegan discourse from the status of a set of ethical claims to one related to health and culinary choices.”⁵¹ Like every other new social movement, vegetarianism generated its “own unique beliefs, symbols, values, and meaning related to sentiments of belonging to a differentiated social group” through a collective identity “closely linked with everyday activities.”⁵² And what better way of creating such identity than food consumption? Indeed, “in social-science disciplines like anthropology and sociology, food consumption is viewed as a social marker to construct social identities and lifestyles.”⁵³ As previously mentioned, and as explained in more detail in the next chapters, that was also the case of some countercultural movements: adopting food as a tool for questioning the whole dynamic of the society as well as of identification.

⁴⁷ West, David. 2013. *Social Movements in Global Politics*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. 77.

⁴⁸ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, p. 13

⁴⁹ Martinelli, Dario and Ausra Berkmaniene. 12 February 2018. *The Politics and the Demographics of Veganism: Notes for a Critical Analysis*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018, International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, p. 502.

⁵⁰ Smith, Andrew F. 2013. *Eating history*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 197.

⁵¹ Martinelli, Dario and Ausra Berkmaniene. 12 February 2018. *The Politics and the Demographics of Veganism: Notes for a Critical Analysis*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018, International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, p. 513.

⁵² Johnston, Hank. 2011. *States & Social Movements*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. 91-92.

⁵³ Snejder, Petra and Hedwig te Molder. 2009. *Normalizing ideological food choice and eating practices. Identity work in online discussions on veganism*. *Appetite*, 52(3), p. 621.

Thus, considering the historical context within which the movement emerged in the United States, together with the social aspect of vegetarianism, it is important to clearly define the difference between *ethical* and *health* veganism. The first one refers to a lifestyle that adopts a plant-based diet accompanied by a combination of values and rules, such as using cruelty-free (not tested on animals) products and not buying leather goods, impacting, therefore, the identity formation; that is to say, “the diet forms only part of a lifestyle that is structured around a philosophy of animal rights.”⁵⁴ The second one is instead based on the choice of veganism purely seen as a diet that brings physical health benefits, without deviating from mainstream values of anthropocentric individualism.⁵⁵

As just mentioned, during the decades following the foundation of the American Vegan Society, the ethical principle - although still being the core of the movement - started being overshadowed by other influences, such as nutrition, environment, and health. Nevertheless, over the past decade, that is to say since veganism started going global in the 2010s, the movement “partly reacquired its philosophical identity of any item not involving animal exploitation” – as proven by the increasing presence on the market of plant-based and cruelty-free products – “but its connotative dimension of diet remains its strongest feature in social perception.”⁵⁶ Thus, the evolution of vegetarianism and the growth of veganism show how the latter cannot be considered just a fashion trend of the last period but rather a phenomenon inherent to a number of social and cultural movements that focus on transversal topics. Considering the pattern of the vegetarian and vegan movements from the 1960s in the United States leads me to the hypothesis that such growth can be explained by an increase of awareness over animals’ condition, given by a wider usage and coverage of the media.

3. Vegetarianism during the 1960s and 1970s

Throughout whole human history, food has been utilized as a way of constructing identity, building communities and showing adherence to certain beliefs. In other terms, as stated in 1978 by the author of *The Physiology of Taste*, Jean A. Brillat-Savarin: “Tell me what

⁵⁴ Greenebaum, Jessica. 2009. *Veganism, Identity, and the Quest for Authenticity*. Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 15, p. 130.

⁵⁵ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Martinelli, Dario and Ausra Berkmanienė. 12 February 2018. *The Politics and the Demographics of Veganism: Notes for a Critical Analysis*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018, International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, p. 513.

kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are.”⁵⁷ This concept can be applied as well to the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, characterized by a great social change in which also food was used as a political tool. That was the case of some countercultural groups, arising from the Civil Rights Movement and American socialist movements of students and intellectuals, who resisted dominant policies and cultural mores and, at the same time, used food as an act of resistance.⁵⁸

Within this framework, vegetarianism was adopted as a dominant practice amongst some countercultural groups, who abstained from the consumption of meat for a variety of reasons that overall could relate to “the broader ethics the radicals sought to embrace, such as peace, harmony, and physical and spiritual health”.⁵⁹ By focusing the attention on the US vegetarian movement during the 1960s and 1970s, I am analyzing how the agitation and mobilization of those years influenced and laid the groundwork for vegetarianism – and subsequently veganism – to go increasingly mainstream during the subsequent decades. Therefore my focus lays on the meaning that food played during the 1960s in the United States, based on the symbolic interactionist theory, mainly using the exemplification of free food as a basic human right.⁶⁰ In this respect, adequate access to food was also mentioned in 1966 in the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.⁶¹ I move then to the correlation with the Civil Rights Movement, taking Dick Gregory as an example of a political activist who adopted a violence-free diet in order to express his statement of non-violence. Moving to the early 1970s, I take into consideration two of the main pillars of the vegetarian movement, *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé, and *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer to talk about the environmental and ethical side of the movement.

3.1. Food symbolism

To better explain the link between the vegetarian movement and the role played by food during the 1960s and 1970s in the United States it is necessary to refer to the theory of symbolic interactionism that helps to explain the origin of this lifestyle. The main principle of this theory

⁵⁷ Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. 1978. *The Physiology of Taste or Transcendental Gastronomy*. Translated by M.F.K. Fisher, Orlando: Harcourt, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Oxford Reference. “*Counterculture*,” The Concise Oxford Dictionary for World Religion.

⁵⁹ Johnson, Sandra. 2012. *Edible Activism: Food and the Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s*. Honours Theses, Colby College, paper 631, p. 27.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 29.

⁶¹ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 16 December 1966. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Art. 11. Retrieved 8 September 2019, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

by George Herbert Mead is that “the self is a reflection of an actor’s socialization.”⁶² As exposed by one of Mead’s students, Herbert Blumer, who also coined the term *symbolic interactionism*, the premises for this theory is that “humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances.”⁶³

Applying the symbolic interactionism theory within the sociological aspect of a diet provides additional meaning and function to food (besides the nutritional one), “establishing an ontological relationship between the person and his or her experience of social forces and structures”.⁶⁴ A symbolic interactionist approach contributes indeed to better understand the qualitative factors and developments that bring people to adopt a certain choice, offering a “theoretical framework within which insights regarding the specific empirical case of radical dietary change can be explained and understood.”⁶⁵ Food and the traditions associated with it become therefore a crucial element that defines historical identities of several social movements, like the countercultural ones. As defined by Janet M. Cramer, food is in fact “symbolically associated with the most deeply felt human experiences, and thus expresses things that are sometimes difficult to articulate in everyday language.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, food brings people together, constituting and defining group identities, but also creating them. Used as means of identifying with others, it allows building connections, both physically and symbolically⁶⁷, showing adherence to a certain set of beliefs.

Although not many scholars talked about the important role played by food throughout American history, it is undeniable how food was the impetus for social change⁶⁸ in several activist movements, challenging “either food production, preparation, consumption, or

⁶² Wendt, A. 1992. *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, International Organization, 46-2: 391–425, quoted in Maslow, S. and Nakamura, A. 2008. *Constructivism and Ecological Thought: A Critical Discussion on the Prospects for a ‘Greening’ of IR Theory Interdisciplinary Information Sciences*, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 137.

⁶³ Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective And Method*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

⁶⁴ Mauerer, Donna. 1998. Author meets critics: considering *Food and Society* by William Whit. *Agriculture and Human Values* 15, p. 85.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 86.

⁶⁶ Cramer, Janet M., Carlita P. Greene, and Lynn M. Walters. 2011. *Food as Communication/Communication as Food*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, p. 59.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. xii.

⁶⁸ Miller, Sally. 2008. *Edible Action: Food Activism and Alternative Economics*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing, p. 10.

distribution.”⁶⁹ As argued by Belasco, “food is a metaphor for what we like most or least about society [...] Indeed, throughout American history, food fights have often accompanied grassroots political struggles.”⁷⁰ That is exactly what American countercultural groups used to do when fighting for a variety of social causes, with the aim of bringing revolutionary changes to American society. That was, for instance, the case of the San Francisco Diggers, a radical group that supported universal free access to food during the 1960s by freely distributing it, using therefore food as a “medium to develop collective consciousness and social action.”⁷¹ Food for free as a symbol of freedom and liberation from capitalism is just an example of how the usage of food was characterized during the 1960s.

The fact that the vegetarian movement similarly used food as a tool for activism underlines how food could not be considered merely from a nutritional point of view; indeed, it allowed the formation of cohesive communities, bringing together people with the same beliefs that wished to distinguish themselves from the dominant society and its food culture. By doing so, food choices allowed the expression of different political, social and religious views, boosting, inspiring and being inspired by revolutions at different scales.

3.2. The Civil Rights Movement: Non-Violence Principle

In the course of the 1960s, on the wave of the Vietnam war, as well as of race-, gender- and socio-economic- based inequalities, tension started arising amongst groups of young Americans. During those years, the Civil Rights Movement became well established and organized as part of the countercultural groups, using both direct action and nonviolent resistance against discrimination and racism in the United States. Collective action, in particular, was considered as the solution through which “their generation had to unite in order to produce the change they felt was necessary.”⁷² Amongst other, food became one of the tools for political and social activism, showing independence from corporate America, as well as inviting Americans to take into consideration the impact of their food consumption choices on the politics and on the society.⁷³

⁶⁹ Johnson, Sandra. 2012. *Edible Activism: Food and the Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s*. Honours Theses, Colby College, paper 631, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Belasco, Warren. 1989. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry 1966-1988*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 15.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 17.

⁷² Case, John and C.R. Taylor. 1979. *Co-ops, Communes and Collectives: Experiments in Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 5.

⁷³ Hartman, Stephanie. 2003. *The Political Palate: Reading Commune Cookbooks*. *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 3, p. 30.

By trying to distance themselves from the mainstream culture, some of the exponents of these countercultural groups adopted also a vegetarian diet, embracing and supporting a non-violent lifestyle. Although vegetarianism did not have the same big impact on the Civil Rights Movement as it did for other countercultural groups during this period, there were some civil rights advocates who chose to adopt a vegetarian diet for political reasons⁷⁴. One of them was Dick Gregory, Afro-American comedian, activist, and vegetarian, who stated during an interview: “‘If thou shalt not kill,’ that should mean animals too. So in 1963, I just decided I wasn’t going to eat anything else that had to be killed.”⁷⁵ Gregory decided therefore to give up on eating animal products in order to demonstrate his belief of nonviolence, not only towards human beings but also by adopting a violence-free diet. The activist furthermore believed that the unhealthy American diet was at the root of other problems, as stated in his vegetarian cookbook: “Americans who think so little of their own bodies that the average individual American consumes one hundred pounds of refined ‘drugged’ sugar each year will certainly allow the continued dropping of millions of tons of bombs on innocent people in Southeast Asia.”⁷⁶ By arguing so, Gregory compared the American diet to the American values, which prioritized political and economic power over peace and health.

3.3. Environmental Vegetarianism: Sustainable Principle

The beginning of the modern ecological movement in the United States was marked by the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962 by the biologist Rachel Carson’s. Although the book had little to do with vegetarianism, the author raised attention on “the ecological consequences of humanity’s attempt to control and regulate the environment.”⁷⁷ On the wave of the arising American environmental movement, activists assimilated responsible food consumption to responsible actions towards natural protection, attributing importance to diets both for communities and for the health of the planet.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Johnson, Sandra. 2012. *Edible Activism: Food and the Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s*. Honors Theses, Colby College, paper 631, p. 51.

⁷⁵ Opie, Frederick Douglass. 2008. *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America*. New York, Columbia University Press, p. 165.

⁷⁶ Dick, Gregory. 1973. *Dick Gregory’s Natural Diet for Folks Who Eat: Cookin’ with Mother Nature*. New York: Harper and Row, p. 166.

⁷⁷ Kirk, Andrew G. 2007. *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism*. Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, p. 34.

⁷⁸ Johnson, Sandra. 2012. *Edible Activism: Food and the Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s*. Honors Theses, Colby College, paper 631, p. 57.

Therefore, the link between the US ecological movement and the sustainable side of vegetarianism during the 1960s and 1970s appears clear. In 1971 the American writer and activist Frances Moore Lappé wrote *Diet for a Small Planet*, drawing for the first time the attention on the link between livestock production, environmental consequences, and world hunger.⁷⁹ As referred by Belasco, the book “soon became the vegetarian text for the ecology movement”.⁸⁰ Contrasting the uprising concerns over insufficient protein and micronutrient intake deriving from a plant-based diet, Lappé focused her work on how to maximize people’s nutritional needs while, at the same time, minimizing their impact on the planet. To do so, attention was put on plant-based proteins: on the one hand, they could have been used in a more appropriate and efficient way to increase the amount of protein eaten by Americans, while on the other hand they could have helped reducing world hunger in developing countries. Indeed, “by feeding vegetable protein (grain, soy) to animals rather than directly to humans, Americans were wasting scarce protein resources at a time when much of the world went hungry.”⁸¹

By introducing the idea of protein combination (e.g. beans with rice), the author included in her book some appealing vegetarian (actually vegan) recipes, in order to provide practical help to her readers who wanted to follow the diet (see Figure 3). Furthermore, besides the nutritional and hunger arguments, she claimed that the cultivation of vegetables used far fewer land than the livestock industry, in terms of protein production, as exemplified by the production of spinach against the breeding of beef.⁸²

In addition, as plant products absorbed less chemical components (like DDT) than livestock ones, Lappé also argued that a vegetarian diet was the most appropriate one in order to reduce the intake of toxicity deriving from food. Laying the bases for a more conscious food consumption amongst Americans, this book definitely met the intent of the author of sensitizing over the fact that “the act of putting into your mouth what the earth has grown is perhaps your most direct interaction with the earth.”⁸³

⁷⁹ Walters, Kerry S., and Lisa Portmess. 1999. *Ethical Vegetarianism: From Pythagoras to Peter Singer*. State University of New York Press, p. 209.

⁸⁰ Belasco, Warren. 1989. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry 1966-1988*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 56.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Spinach produces twenty-six times more protein per acre than beef, according to: Lappé, Frances Moore. 1971. *Diet for a Small Planet*. New York: Ballantine Books, p 3.

⁸³ Lappé, Frances Moore. 1971. *Diet for a Small Planet*. New York: Ballantine Books, p 3.

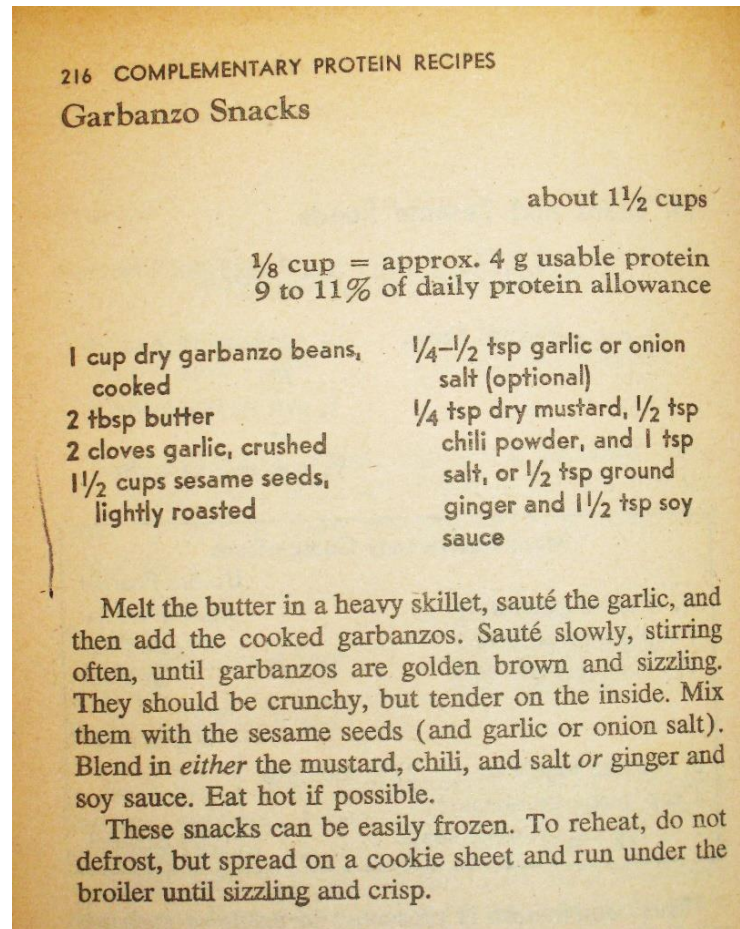


Figure 3. Example of a complementary protein recipe from *Diet for a Small Planet* (Lappé, 1971, p. 216)

A branch of this ecological movement was constituted by the ecofeminism, with women playing an active role within the environmental activism during the late-1960s and early 1970s.⁸⁴ Amongst them, Robin Morgan encouraged other feminists in a 1979 magazine article to adopt a vegetarian diet: “If it is our goal to live in a world without oppression, where does meat-eating fit into this vision?”⁸⁵ Therefore, if American women rejected men’s mistreatments, they should have done the same with animals. Although the concept of the *sexual politics of meat* took hold only later in the 1980s, as I will illustrate in chapter 4 of this thesis, the ecofeminist movement laid the background for the rejection of the patriarchal system, focusing on “violence against women and animals as well as the destruction of the earth itself.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Belasco, Warren. 1989. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry 1966-1988*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 35.

⁸⁵ Morgan, Robin. 2003. *Sisterhood is Forever: the Women’s Anthology for a New Millennium*. New York: Washington Square Press, pp. 499-500.

⁸⁶ Manton, Catherine. 1999. *Fed Up : Women and Food in America*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, p. 70.

3.4. Animal Liberation: Anti-Speciesism Principle

In order to move to the ethical side of vegetarianism and veganism, I start by taking into consideration Johnston's discussion of *cognitive liberation*, as mentioned in the introduction. As already mentioned, the collective interpretation of this new injustice frame derives from the idea of justice and liberation for all living beings, including non-human animals. This interpretation is strictly interlinked with the philosophical argument that "justifies veganism as a cultural practice [...] and provides the ethical dimension to veganism."⁸⁷ In 1975, a year after the foundation of FARM (Farm Animal Rights Movement, the oldest farmed-animal rights organization) by the Holocaust survivor Alex Hershaft⁸⁸, the philosopher and animal rights activist Peter Singer published his *Animal Liberation* book. Singer addressed the seriousness of the animal liberation movement, emphasizing how it could be related to other (human) liberation movements.⁸⁹ Indeed, from the very beginning of his book, Singer focused on his rhetorical approach on seriousness, stating as his first sentence that "'Animal Liberation' may sound more like a parody of other liberation movements than a serious objective"⁹⁰, as well as that "widespread practices of cruelty to animals exist only because we do not take seriously the interests of other animals."⁹¹ Singer lays the basis for his abstention from the consumption of animal products in speciesism, that is to say, the idea that "species allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species."⁹² By raising awareness over speciesism, arguing how morally unacceptable such a form of discrimination is, the author suggested explicitly the elimination of speciesist practices addressed to animals, and implicitly any kind of discrimination amongst human beings. As in fact confirmed more than two decades later, the book "was specifically intended to appeal to readers who were concerned about equality, or justice, or fairness, irrespective of the precise nature of their commitment."⁹³ The philosophy on speciesism is based indeed mostly on the principle of "equal consideration"⁹⁴, affirming that if a living being has the capacity to suffer, then it possesses "the

⁸⁷ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, p. 9.

⁸⁸ The Vegan Society. History. Retrieved 12 December 2018, from <https://www.vegansociety.com/about-us/history>.

⁸⁹ Mintz, Daniel R. 2016. *Of Trivial Importance: Lessons from Literary Vegetarianism*. Contemporary Literature. University of Wisconsin Press. Volume 57, Number 4, p. 473.

⁹⁰ Singer, Peter. 1975. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Perennial, p. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 22.

⁹² Ibid, p. 9.

⁹³ Singer, Peter. 1999. *A response. In Singer and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 283.

⁹⁴ Singer, Peter. 1975. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Perennial, p. 2.

vital characteristic that gives a being the right to equal consideration.”⁹⁵ Here below a crucial and straightforward point of Singer’s *Animal Liberation* book:

*“If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—insofar as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being.”*⁹⁶

The equal consideration with which we should treat all living beings is applied through the vegetarian and vegan approaches to all “sentient” beings. Indeed, “although reverence for all living things is clearly an important sensitivity, the case for vegetarianism most clearly focuses on killing sentient beings.”⁹⁷ Hence, the counterargument often used against vegetarians and vegans consuming plants does not stand up if by “sentient” we mean that “animals are capable of pleasure and pain”.⁹⁸ And here comes the biggest difference between plants and animals: while the first ones can experience some kind of adverse physical stimuli, the sufferance experienced by the second ones also involves “mental and emotional suffering, such as fear, distress, foreboding, trauma, terror, anticipation, stress.”⁹⁹

Furthermore, in 1975 the 23rd World Vegetarian Congress was held for the first time on American soil, in Orono, Maine (see Figure 4). It became the most important vegetarian gathering of the twentieth century in the United States. With 1500 participants from all over the world, breaking the previous records of attendance by a 3 to 1 ratio¹⁰⁰, the event organized by the International Vegetarian Union received attention from the American and the European press. The reasons that brought all those people together was well summarised by The New York Times in one of its articles: “To them, vegetarianism is a serious political, social and economic issue, and many believe that a failure to create a vegetarian world may result in a failure to save the world.”¹⁰¹ As shown by this event, vegetarianism was already going

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

⁹⁷ Linzey, Andrew and Clair Linzey. 2018. *Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism*. London: Taylor & Francis, p. 4

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

⁹⁹ Rollin, Bernard E. 1990. *The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain and Science*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press; and Bernard E. Rollin. 2013. *Animal Pain*. The Global Guide to Animal Protection, ed. Andrew Linzey. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, pp. 256–7.

¹⁰⁰ The Vegetarian Times. 1975. *23rd IVU World Vegetarian Congress 1975*. No.12.

¹⁰¹ The New York Times. Klemmerud, Judy. 22 August 1975. *World Vegetarians Meet to Talk - and Eat*. Special In The New York Times.

mainstream during the first years of the 1970s and was about to increase more and more both in terms of adherence and stringency.

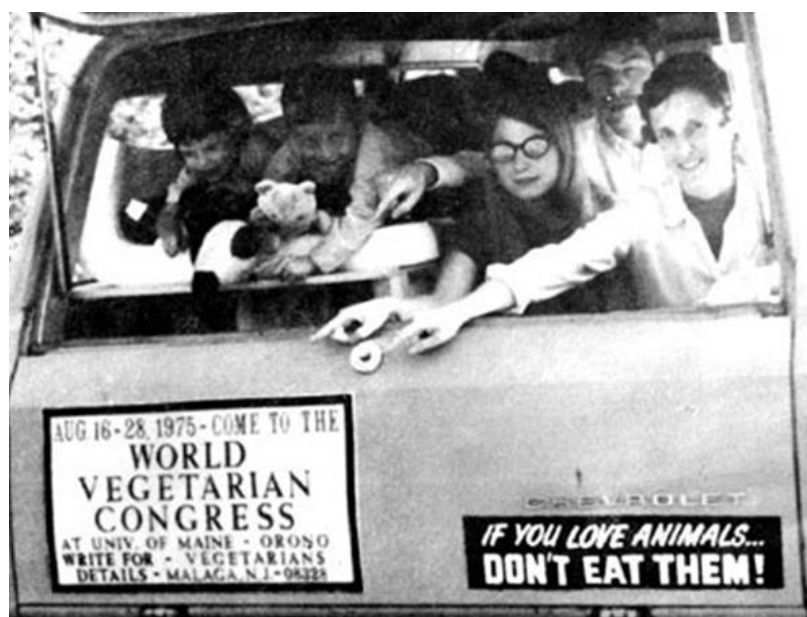


Figure 4. 16 August 1975: a group of activists from the San Francisco Veg Society (SFVS) is heading towards Orono to attend the 23rd World Vegetarian Congress.
Source: SFVS, http://www.sfvs.org/cool_timeline/sfvs-speaks-at-ivu/

4. Vegetarianism during the 1980s

Moving to the vegetarian movement in the United States during the 1980s allows me to make the connection with another social movement, the feminist one. While having in mind that the consumption of meat is seen as the main cause of oppression to non-human animals¹⁰², feminists appeared to be the “most apt and condone, especially in heavily industrialized countries”¹⁰³, to fight against this kind of oppression. As previously mentioned in the last chapter, the ecofeminist movement had already created a link with the vegetarian lifestyle, primarily based on the environmental effects derived from the consumption of animal products. During those years, in 1975, Adams published the first article through which she underlined the connection between feminism and vegetarianism.¹⁰⁴ This connection further deepened during the following years, in particular during the 1980s, resulting in the first publication of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* in 1990. The advocates described by Adams adopted the broad agenda initially indicated by The Vegan Society when arguing that ethical vegetarianism encompasses

¹⁰² Dunayer, Joan. 2001. *Animal equality: Language and liberation*. Derwood, Md.: Ryce Publishing.

¹⁰³ Sheri, Lukas. 2005. *A Defense of the Feminist-Vegetarian Connection*. *Hypatia* vol. 20, no. 1, p. 150.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

the idea that “to achieve a reasonable and human society”¹⁰⁵ we have to eliminate all forms of exploitation. As stated in the preface to the twentieth-anniversary edition, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* “is about making connections [and] about liberation from harmful and limiting beliefs.”¹⁰⁶

To do so, Adams starts off by explaining the identification of meat-eating societies with male’s choice of food, endorsed by books like *The Meat We Eat* that advertises meat as a “virile and protective food”.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, associations like this one measure meat-eater’s individual and social virility. Such patriarchal custom could be found worldwide around the nineteenth century and, subsequently, vegetables were viewed as women’s food.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, in the past century, cookbooks reflected the idea of men eating meat, by addressing to them the barbecue sections or advising meat-based dinners for Father’s Day.¹⁰⁹ Besides this sort of food discrimination based on gender, episodes of discrimination occurred also based on racial and working-class factors. For instance, when in the United States in the nineteenth-century meat supplies were controlled, enslaved black men received less meat per day than white men, and enslaved black women received even less.¹¹⁰ While, during the wars of the twentieth century, soldiers were entitled to receive much more meat than the rest of their household constituted by civilians.¹¹¹ Again, cookbooks were suggesting meat-based dishes for soldiers, while carbohydrates-based ones for civilians. Therefore, Adams claims that “the hierarchy of meat protein reinforces a hierarchy of race, class, and sex.”¹¹² And that is why for many years meat was considered a relevant economic commodity, entitling those who controlled it to achieve power.¹¹³

4.1. The Vegetarian-Feminist Movement

During the 1980s the idea of physically active men needing to eat meat, and women having to eat plants was popular more than ever, reinforced by health considerations influenced

¹⁰⁵ Stepaniak, Joanne. 2000. *Being Vegan: Living with Conscience, Conviction, and Compassion*. Los Angeles: Lowell House, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Adams, J. Carol. 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p.2.

¹⁰⁷ Ziegler, P. Thomas. 1966. *The Meat We Eat*. Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, pp. 5, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Adams, J. Carol. 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹ Sunset Books and Sunset Magazines. 1969. *Sunset Menu Cook Book*. Menlo Park, CA: Lane Magazine and Book Co., pp. 139, 140.

¹¹⁰ Savitt, Todd L. 1978. *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, p. 91.

¹¹¹ Adams, J. Carol. 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 52.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 53.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 58.

by the 19th century health reformists Sylvester Graham (1794-1851), John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943), and Max Bircher-Benner (1867-1939), who in the tradition of moral physiology ascribed a less aggressive attitude and therefore softer eating habits to women. According to “Brillat-Savarin’s theory that you are what you eat, to eat a vegetable is to become a vegetable, and by extension, to become womanlike.”¹¹⁴ The word *vegetable*, indeed, acted as a synonym for women’s passivity, as stated by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: “the difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants. Men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants because their development is more placid.”¹¹⁵ In accordance with this concept, the 1988 US Presidential Campaign was characterized by the patriarchal disdain for vegetables, with several illustrations and slogans equating the candidates to different food products. T-shirts asking “George Bush: Vegetable of Noxious Weed?” or featuring a bottle of ketchup and a picture of Ronald Reagan with the slogan “Nutritious Quiz: Which one is the vegetable?”¹¹⁶ are just a couple of examples.

Some of those women that during the previous decade were identified as ecofeminists, during the 1980s started to “identify the interrelated oppression of women and animals”.¹¹⁷ The uprising vegetarian feminist movement was supported by activism and scholarship addressing the relationship between violence against human and non-human animals, including “woman-battering and animal abuse.”¹¹⁸ In the United States, an important role was played by the Feminists for Animal Rights organization, founded in California in 1981 by the vegan ecofeminist Marti Kheel. The group was active for over two decades, and it is currently inactive¹¹⁹. As described on their website, it was dedicated to preserving and carrying their legacy, while trying “to shine light on the connections between the treatment of women and animals under patriarchy.”¹²⁰ Kheel, along with her friends Batya Bauman and Carol Adams, “as one of the first people to draw critical connections among the oppression, exploitation, and abuse of women, other animals, and the rest of the nature [...] paved the way for the very

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 61.

¹¹⁵ Tuana, Nancy. 1994. *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman’s Nature*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, p. 263.

¹¹⁶ Northern Sun Merchandising. Catalogue 2916 E. Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN, 55406.

¹¹⁷ Adams, J. Carol. 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 20.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Biography Of Marti Kheel: August 25, 1948 - November 19, 2011. Retrieved 1 October 2019, from <http://martikheel.com/marti-kheel.html>.

¹²⁰ Feminists for Animal Rights. *History*. Retrieved 27 September. 2019, from http://www.farinc.org/FAR_home_contd.html.

possibility of feminist animal studies.”¹²¹ Besides being an organization of vegan feminists, the group was also a network of women trying to live a cruelty-free life, promoting a lifestyle free from any abuse on animals (including the usage of products that were not tested on animals). They offered to house pets of abused women and provided information on domestic violence. They considered it a model program for working with battered women.¹²² Furthermore, they regularly delivered speeches at conferences and events (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Marti Kheel and Carol Adams at the first March on Washington for Animals, 1990.

Photo by Bruce A. Buchanan.

Sources: http://www.farinc.org/FAR_home_contd.html

Strong connections between women and animals occurred during those years also from a gender point of view. *Playboar*, the pig farmer’s version of the magazine *Playboy*, published a picture of a sow, Ursula Hamdress,¹²³ dressed up and posing like a playmate (see Figure 6). As pointed out by Adams, “how does one explain the substitution of a nonhuman animal for a woman in this pornographic representation? Is she inviting someone to rape her or to eat her?”¹²⁴ The author, in 1987, used this representation to present the panel “Sexual Violence: Representation and Reality” at a Princeton’s conference on feminism. During the same month, in Philadelphia,

¹²¹ Gruen, Lori. 2012. *Marti Kheel Remembered (1948-2011)*. Hypathis, Vol. 27, No. 3, Special Issue: Animal Others, p. 490.

¹²² Adams, J. Carol. 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 20.

¹²³ The Beast: The Magazine That Bites Back 10. Summer 1981, pp. 18–19.

¹²⁴ Adams, J. Carol. 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, pp. 64-65.

body parts of a woman were found in the kitchen of a man who had kidnapped, chained and repeatedly raped three other women. Adams connected these raped, butchered and eaten women to “an overlap of cultural images of sexual violence against women and the fragmentation and dismemberment of nature and the body in Western culture.”¹²⁵ Images referring and representing, in particular, the slaughtering of animals for food consumption, “the most frequent way in which we interact with animals.”¹²⁶



Figure 6. “Ursula Hamdress” from *Playboar*. This copy appeared in *The Beast: The Magazine That Bites Back*, 10 (Summer 1981), pp. 18–19. It was photographed by animal advocate Jim Mason at the Iowa State Fair where it appeared as a “pinup.”

In conclusion, US vegetarian feminists of the 1980s supported the connection between the two movements by believing that inflicting unnecessary pain and suffering, as well as killing non-human animals, was a form of exploitation absolutely rejectable. A lack of compassion towards non-human animals is strictly interconnected to and supports other forms of oppression, like sexism and racism. In all the cases of discrimination, the victims (human or non-human animals) are “arbitrarily discriminated against when we deny their subjectivity, stereotype them, and use their differences as a warrant to abuse them for our benefit.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp. 65-66.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 66.

¹²⁷ Sheri, Lukas. 2005. *A Defense of the Feminist-Vegetarian Connection*. *Hypatia* vol. 20, no. 1, p. 169.

5. Veganism during the 1990s

Shifting the attention to the 1990s enables me to focus more on the vegan movement, rather than on the vegetarian. Due to the increasing efforts of activists from animal rights organizations, the vegan movement started to gain increased attention. As mentioned in the introduction, analyzing social movements from the constructivist theory point of view allows underlining how human agency can be at the core of human affairs also inside the vegan movement. And that is exactly what I do in this chapter, considering animal rights organizations as crucial parts of the vegan social movement, given that “a social movement is what it does, as much as why it does it.”¹²⁸

Before proceeding, it is important to draw attention to a few terms used and the differences between them. Firstly, it is necessary to differentiate between animal welfare and animal rights movements. The first one is based on a theory that argues for the protection of animals from pain through a “reformatory agenda: for it only seeks to ensure that animals are treated better or more humanely, and is non-abolitionist when it comes to animals being used as means for human ends”.¹²⁹ On the contrary, the animal rights movement confers an inherent value to any “subject of a life” and, through a radical agenda, it opposes “the use of animals for human ends.”¹³⁰ Therefore, animal rightists not only reject the consumption of animal-based food, but also the use of animal products for clothing as well as products tested on animals. The agenda of the latter group appears, therefore, more in line with the vegan movement, rather than with the vegetarian one. And the increase of actions taken by animal rights organizations during the 1990s cannot be anything else but the confirmation that the vegan movement was growing both in terms of numbers and strictness. According to my initial hypothesis, this growth can be explained by an increase of awareness over animals’ conditions, thanks to a wider usage and coverage of the media.

The second differentiation I would like to stress the attention on is the one between strategies and tactics. The first refers to “the broad organizing plans” that allow to gain and apply certain resources in order to achieve the goals of a movement¹³¹, while the second ones are the “forms

¹²⁸ Tilly, Charles. 1985. *Models and Realities of Popular Collective Action*. Social Research, 52, Winter.

¹²⁹ Marcus, Erik. 2005. *Meat market: Animals, ethics and money*. Ithaca, NY: Brio Press.

¹³⁰ Whelan, Glen and Jean-Pascal Gond. 2017. *Meat Your Enemy: Animal Rights, Alignment, and Radical Change*. Journal of Management Inquiry, Vol. 26(2), p. 129.

¹³¹ Turner, Ralph and Killian, Lewis. 1987. *Collective Behavior*. 3rd edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, p. 286.

of action” and set of techniques applied to implement a strategy¹³². In the next section I analyse from a theoretical point of view how animal rights organizations have been using certain strategies (publicity and interference ones) through a series of tactics, and what is their narrative frame, while in the following one I will provide concrete example of strategies and tactics used by the main animal rights organizations during the 1990s in the United States.

5.1. Animal Rights Organizations: Strategies, Methods, and Narrative Frame

Given the wide choice of strategies used by social movements throughout human history, and in particular during the nineteenth century, animal rights activists seem to prefer non-violent tactics. These so-called tactical repertoires, that is to say, “learned and shared understandings of how to protests”, are indeed “shaped by the values of the movement.”¹³³ And, in the specific case of animal protectors, the power of the movement is given by their ability to bring together different types of collective action.¹³⁴

As analyzed by Lyle Munro in *Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and the Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement*, and as summarized in Table 1, the strength of these actions relies in particular upon two types of strategies, identifiable as publicity and inference ones.¹³⁵ The first are “the legal, mostly non-violent institutionalized strategies”¹³⁶, also referred to as “liberal governance”¹³⁷ or “conventional”¹³⁸ strategies. These strategies have been applied through tactics of persuasion and protest, moved respectively by a mechanism of persuasion and facilitation. While the interference strategies, usually used by more radical activists, can be categorized into non-cooperation and intervention tactics, based respectively on mechanisms of bargaining and coercion.

¹³² Rucht, Dieter. 1990. *The Strategies and Action Repertoires of New Movements*. Russell Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (eds.) *Challenging the political order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹³³ Doherty, Brian. 2000. *Manufactured Vulnerability: Protest Campaign Tactics*, in B. Seel, M. Paterson and B. Doherty (eds.) *Direct Action in British Environmentalism*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 62.

¹³⁴ Munro, Lyle. 2005. *Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, p. 129.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 132.

¹³⁷ Newell, Peter. 2000. *Environmental NGOs and Globalization: The governance of TNCs*, in Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai (eds.) *Global social movements*, London and New Brunswick, NJ: The Athlone Press.

¹³⁸ Tarrow, Sidney. 1994. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

STRATEGIES	PUBLICITY		INTERFERENCE	
TACTICS	Persuasion	Protest	Non-cooperation	Intervention
MECHANISMS	Persuasion	Facilitation / disruption	Bargaining	Coercion
EXAMPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Petitions - VIP's speeches - Information stands and pamphleteering - Posters, banners, and ads - Books and articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrations - Vigils - Bearing witness - Parades and marches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boycotts - Occupations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animal rescue - Sit-ins - Undercover investigations

Table 1. Strategies and tactics of actions used by animal rights organizations and activists. Adapted from Ackerman and Kruegler (1994, p. 6) as cited in Lofland (1996, p. 271) and Munro (2005, p. 130).

For all the above-mentioned tactics, it is important to underline the (often interlinked) role played by the use of violence and media coverage. Although, as already mentioned, the movement seems to be more inclined to adopt non-violent forms of action, at times violent ones were and are still chosen in order to attract the attention of the media. As we all know, media are often more interested in stories that make dramatic news. And, as argued by Thomas Rochon, “the power of a movement resides in its militancy, size, and novelty.”¹³⁹ Thus, media coverage is essential to spread the message of animal rights organizations, allowing them to gain both legitimacy and publicity. Therefore, media and animal rights activists often benefit from each other: while media need reportages and headlines of violent actions provided by animal rightists, the latter need the media to promote their message. The relationship between media and social movements leads then to what has been defined as “the kiss of life or death to a cause”¹⁴⁰, with animal rights movements having to ponder the resonance and the morals brought to their cause by their actions and consequently by the reactions to news on mass media and social media.

A good example of animal rights groups characterized by the use of direct – and often considered violent – actions is the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Founded in 1976 in the United Kingdom by Ronnie Lee, the organization came into existence after Lee’s arrest in 1974 and his release a year after. The activist, part of the Band of Mercy, a group of hunt saboteurs,

¹³⁹ Rochon, Thomas. 1990. *The West European Peace Movement and the Theory of New Social Movements* in R. Dalton and M. Kuechler (eds.) *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, Cambridge: Polity, pp. 105–21.

¹⁴⁰ Munro, Lyle. 2005. *Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, p. 132.

expanded his focus into other forms of animal exploitation, like vivisection.¹⁴¹ ALF quickly took hold in other 20 countries outside the United Kingdom, becoming an international movement and establishing a strong presence in the United States from the early 1980s. The movement, which is still active, is formed by small autonomous groups of activists who carry out direct actions for the animal liberation (see Figure 7), and its philosophy is described on their website as follows:

“The Animal Liberation movement is a loosely-associated collection of cells of people who intentionally violate the law in order to free animals from captivity and the horrors of exploitation. As activists in one cell do not know activists in another cell, their non-hierarchical structure and anonymity prevents legal authorities from breaking up the organization. Animal Liberation activists break into any building or compound - be it a fur farm or university laboratory - in order to release and/or rescue animals. They also destroy property in order to prevent further harm done to animals and to weaken exploitation industries economically. Their actions have damaged many operations, shut down others, and prevented still others from ever forming for fear of attack. They may also utilize intimidation to prevent further animal abuse and murder.”¹⁴²

Critics can be raised if thinking that ALF’s activists have often been arrested and labeled as “extremists” and “terrorists”. Consequently, in the public eye, animal rights organizations are often associated with violence. Although the presence of “violent and extreme elements on the fringes of the mainstream movement cannot be denied [...] they are a minority who evidently do not accept the non-violent stance of the mainstream movement.”¹⁴³ Indeed, animal rights activists tend to prefer avoiding violent actions because many activists consider them counterproductive; strategies are more successful and, therefore, productive, when they do not require repression. And, consequently, they can be “facilitated by elites in government and the media if they are non-violent.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, as noticed from the actions of the social movements arose during the last decades of the twentieth century, non-violent techniques have allowed

¹⁴¹ North American Animal Liberation Press Office. History. Retrieved 2 October 2019, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080611140821/http://www.animalliberationpressoffice.org/history.htm>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Munro, Lyle. 2005. *Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, p.134.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 133.

protesters to gain a certain moral advantage, avoiding the moral, social and political implications that would derive from disruptive episodes.



Figure 7. Protestors from the Animal Liberation Front following a raid on a laboratory owned by Boots the Chemist in London.

“Hardline American animal rights activists are visiting Britain to take lessons in intimidation from the Animal Liberation Front” a BBC TV documentary claims. London, 4 November 1990.

Source: PA Images

Furthermore, when peaceful ways of protesting reach the media, they are more likely to gain sympathizers, allies and followers amongst the audience. However, when violence-free actions fail to gain enough attention and results, animal rights activists “become frustrated and are tempted to turn to more aggressive tactics.”¹⁴⁵ As a result, when some of these activists choose to perpetuate and follow a more extreme path, it can happen that the more moderate ones gain more respect, according to the so-called phenomenon of *the radical flank effect*.¹⁴⁶ An example of such positive effect is reported below, in the following statement released by Adele Douglass of the American Humane Association in an interview in 1996:

“I know for fact that the 1985 amendments to the Animal Welfare Act would never have been passed without the PETA protests and all the stuff that they were doing. Because then – and it helps us I have to say from the perspective that we’re at – when you have extremists and then we come in and where the extremist

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 135.

¹⁴⁶ Haines, Herbert. 1984. *Black Radicalization and the Funding Of Civil Rights: 1957–1970*. Social Problems, 32(1), pp. 31–43.

say “we want research ended this afternoon” and we say “we want the animals treated humanely”, they pay attention to us because that’s the other option [...] I don’t think the laws since at least the 1980s would ever have gotten this far without those organizations.”¹⁴⁷

Veganism, and as an extension animal rights organizations, use certain narrative frames through which their advocates justify their actions.¹⁴⁸ As explained by Johnston, in order to create an efficient and suggestive frame, the members of a certain movement should meet four criteria: “internal consistency, credibility to the audience, integration with the audience’s core beliefs, and meaning in terms of the audience’s everyday experiences.”¹⁴⁹ As identified by Kai R. Blevins the main narrative frames of the vegan movement, noticeable in several animal rights organizations, are effective compassion, normality, and authenticity.¹⁵⁰ The first one refers to Singer’s notion of anti-speciesism, and it includes all the four criteria of a resonant frame since: is it consistent with the philosophy of the movement; it is credible and it integrates with audience’s beliefs as it uses persuasive language and “core cultural beliefs about compassion being right and cruelty being wrong”¹⁵¹; has a meaning in terms of everyday experiences as people can show their compassion towards animals by adopting a cruelty-free lifestyle based on daily choices. The second narrative frame, normality, considers a vegan choice in line with mainstream practices. Although it is tough to define what is “normal” in a society, the vegan movement has often been subjected to several attacks that made the advocates becoming defensive. Therefore, “doing being ordinary (Sacks 1984) is an important and relevant activity for rebutting the notion of veganism as a complicated and unhealthy lifestyle.”¹⁵² That is to say, following a vegan lifestyle bridges to the normality of being healthy while following a consistent and feasible diet. Lastly, the narrative frame of authenticity allows vegans to “construct identities for specific interactional tasks, like undermining some of the potential negative interferences about their eating practices.”¹⁵³ By distancing themselves from the exploitation of animals, they justify their violence-free identity while persuading other people to empathize with them through their day-to-day choices. As already mentioned, and as

¹⁴⁷ Douglas, Adele. Washington Director of the American Humane Association. Interview from 1996.

¹⁴⁸ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, p. 18.

¹⁴⁹ Johnston, Hank. 2011. *States & Social Movements*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, p. 81.

¹⁵⁰ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, pp. 19-21.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁵² Sneijder, Petra and Hedwig te Molder. 2009. *Normalizing ideological food choice and eating practices. Identity work in online discussions on veganism*. *Appetite*, 52(3), p. 627.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 621.

discussed below in the following section, some of these patterns of narrative frames can also be noticed in animal rights organizations.

5.2. PETA as an Example of Animal Rights Organization

Following Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights*, published in 1983, Gary Francione "launched the second wave of animal rights"¹⁵⁴ in the United States in 1995 with *Animals, Property, and the Law* and in 1996 with *Rain without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement*. Francione argued in the first book that because of the American legal system based on humans as property owners and animals as property, "animals do not and cannot have rights."¹⁵⁵ While, with the publication of the following year, he highlighted how during the second half of the twentieth century the welfare and treatment of the animals got worse because of intensive animal farming and the increase in animal experimentation.¹⁵⁶ Within this framework, animal rights organizations deepened the outreach of their actions and extended their scope inside (and outside) the United States.

The common ground for all these organizations consisted of framing the problems as "cruelty and suffering; commodification; harm to humans and the environment; and needless killing."¹⁵⁷ As previously explained, some of the proposed solutions based on animal rights, while others opted for improving the animal welfare. For this thesis, I choose PETA, known for its "uncompromising, unwavering views on animal rights"¹⁵⁸ as an example of an organization active during the 1990s for the protection of animals. PETA was founded in 1980 in Norfolk, Virginia. With almost 400 employees and around 6.5 million members and supporters from all around the world, it is the largest animal rights organization in the form of a non-profit corporation. Here below their mission statement:

"PETA focuses its attention on the four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time: in the food industry, in the clothing trade, in laboratories, and in the entertainment industry."

¹⁵⁴ Smith, Jack. 2016. *Vegetarianism and Veganism: Animals and Moral Status*. The Missouri Review, Vol. 39, N. 2, p. 181.

¹⁵⁵ Bisgould, Lesli. 1996. *Review of Francione's Animals, Property and the Law*. Between the Species, Winter and Spring 1996, p. 73.

¹⁵⁶ Stingl, Michael. May 1998. *Review of Rain without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement*. Bioscience, Vol. 48, N. 5, p. 407.

¹⁵⁷ Freeman, Carrie Packwood. 2010. *Framing Animal Rights in the "Go Veg" Campaigns of U.S. Animal Rights Organizations*, Society and Animals 18. Leiden: Brill, p. 163.

¹⁵⁸ PETA. *Uncompromising Stands on Animal Rights*. Retrieved 8 October 2019, from <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/why-peta/>.

*We also work on a variety of other issues, including the cruel killing of rodents, birds, and other animals who are often considered “pests” as well as cruelty to domesticated animals. PETA works through public education, cruelty investigations, research, animal rescue, legislation, special events, celebrity involvement, and protest campaigns.”*¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, PETA states on its website: “Our positions may be controversial, but they are always true to our driving mission: to stop animal abuse worldwide.”¹⁶⁰ By sorting through PETA’s campaigns, it is indeed true that some of them can be considered controversial, like the ones “emphasizing health messages regarding weight and sex appeal”¹⁶¹, or the ones using naked celebrities (Pamela Anderson amongst the most famous ones). Many critics have been raised around this topic: if we condemn the sexual objectification of the woman’s body in the case of its association with meat, why should we promote an ethical message in defense of animals by using such provocative campaigns? Although on one hand the logic behind this criticism makes sense, on the other hand it should be taken into consideration that the popularity given by the use of naked celebrities for animal rights campaigns may be beneficial in order to attract attention of the public and possibly gain new supporters. Without counting that those celebrities offer to (or are asked to) promote such campaigns because they have the same moral values advocated by those organizations, differently to those women whose parts of bodies were assimilated to animals’ meat (see Figures 8 and 9).

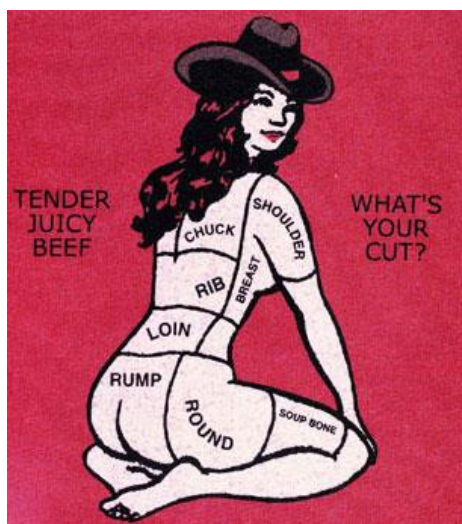


Figure 8. *Break the Dull Beef Habit* (1968) was on a t-shirt sold at Urban Outfitters. It juxtaposes the fragmentation of women’s and animals’ bodies.

Source:

<http://www.satyamag.com/jan05/matthews.html>

¹⁵⁹ Sullivan, Katherine. 1 May 2017. *What is PETA’s Slogan?* Retrieved 8 October 2019, from <https://www.peta.org/misc/what-is-peta-slogan/>

¹⁶⁰ PETA. *Uncompromising Stands on Animal Rights*. Retrieved 8 October 2019, from <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/why-peta/>.

¹⁶¹ Freeman, Carrie Packwood. 2010. *Framing Animal Rights in the “Go Veg” Campaigns of U.S. Animal Rights Organizations, Society and Animals* 18. Leiden: Brill, p. 171.

Figure 9. Gina Schock, Kathy Valentine, Belinda Carlisle, Jane Wiedlin, and Charlotte Caffey were music to animals' ears when they launched PETA's "naked" ad campaign in 1991. Source: <https://www.peta.org/blog/go-go-s-naked-ad-started/>



However, I would like to list and quickly analyze here the main achievements of PETA during the 1990s. Although the organization had been active for already a decade, thanks to wider usage of strategies and increased attention from the media, its actions became increasingly remarkable from the 1990s. In 1990, PETA's first vegetarian commercial "Meat Stinks" was released, featuring the Grammy-winning singer k.d. lang, bringing a lot of success to both the campaign and the singer's album that went gold. In 1991, PETA's case "Silver Spring monkeys" marked the first animal experimentation case ever heard by the US Supreme Court, with a positive and unanimous ruling (see Figure 10). The following year, one of PETA's undercover investigations on the production of foie gras triggered the first-ever police raid on a factory farm. In the same year, PETA's campaign "Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur" reached Tokyo (see Figure 11), making headlines on media all around the world, starting the "iconic naked celebrity ad series." In 1993, following PETA's campaign against the use of animals in crash tests, all car-crash tests on animals stopped worldwide (see Figure 12). In 1994, after an occupation took place in Calvin Klein's office in New York (see Figure 13), the designer was the first major fashion creator to announce to no longer use fur in his creations. In 1995, major oil companies are persuaded by PETA to cover their exhaust stacks in order to avoid that further birds and bats became trapped and burned to death in them. In the same year, the first-ever cruelty charges filed against a factory farmer for cruelty to chickens took place, with the president of the company eventually pleading guilty. In 1996, following another PETA's campaign, NASA bailed out of BION (a joint US, French, and Russian experiment with monkeys intended to be launched into space. In 1997 another undercover investigation led to the first-ever guilty plea by a fur rancher to cruelty-to-animals charges. In 1998 PETA's success

reached Taiwan, where the first-ever law against animal cruelty passed some activists rescued several dogs from being beaten, starved and electrocuted. In 1999 another undercover investigation, this time into a pig-breeding factory farm, lead to the first-ever felony indictments of farmworkers. In the same year PETA, together with congressional testimony and scientific documentation, convinced the White House and the EPA to spare 800,000 animals that were intended to be used for tests on chemical toxicity.¹⁶²

Going back to the strategies adopted by animal rights organizations described in the previous part, PETA did (and is still doing) a great effort for bringing together various types of collective actions, both publicity and interference ones. Amongst the listed ones from the 1990s, we can identify the use of celebrities and media as part of persuasive strategies in the case of the first vegetarian commercial as well as on the campaign of using naked celebrities against fur. Campaigns, in the shape of protest strategies, were used in the case of car-crash tests with animals, against oil companies, and to prevent NASA by launching monkeys into space. In all three cases, the results were positive for PETA's campaigns, and contributed to an adjustment in the industrial and research process of these businesses. Besides using these publicity strategies, PETA adopted interference ones in all the other above-mentioned actions of the 1990s. Through the non-cooperation strategy of occupations, it managed to convince Calvin Klein to stop designing with fur, which led to other fashion designers during the following years to do the same. Intervention strategies were used in all the cases of undercover investigations that led to either police raids, in the foie gras case, or to law interventions, in the cases of the "Silver Spring monkeys", of the chickens' factory, and of the pig-breeding factory. Direct action was also used, as part of the intervention strategies, in the case of rescued dogs from Taiwan, leading again to positive legislative outcomes.



Figure 10. 1991 case “Silver Spring monkeys” marked the first animal experimentation case ever heard by the US Supreme Court.

Source: <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/milestones>

¹⁶² PETA. PETA's Milestones for Animals. Retrieved 9 October 2019, from <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/milestones/>.



Figure 11. 1992 campaign “Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur” reached Tokyo
Source: <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/milestones>



Figure 12. 1993 campaign against the use of animals in crash tests led to all car-crash tests on animals stopped worldwide.

Source: <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/milestones>



Figure 13. 1994 occupation of Calvin Klein’s office in New York, following which the creator no longer used fur in his creations.

Source: <https://www.peta.org/about-peta/milestones>

6. Veganism during the 2000s and 2010s

Statistical data have shown that the number of vegans has increased in the new millennium, in particular in Western societies. However, as discussed so far, and “without denying the fashionableness of the last period”¹⁶³, it is fair to say that the movement seems to

¹⁶³ Martinelli, Dario and Ausra Berkmaniene. 12 February 2018. *The Politics and the Demographics of Veganism: Notes for a Critical Analysis*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018, International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, p. 514.

be a “solid manifestation of the social and cultural changes of the last 50 years or so.”¹⁶⁴ Since it appears particularly difficult to estimate the number of vegans, in the United States or elsewhere, I limit myself to report a few data retrieved from recent surveys and studies, for the sake of giving an idea of the numbers we are talking about – and with keeping in mind the premises made in the introduction about the difficulty faced when collected both qualitative and quantitative data about vegetarians and vegans. The average number of vegans in the world in 2017 oscillated between 2% and 5%¹⁶⁵, with Israel considered to be the country with the highest percentage (5%) of vegans per capita¹⁶⁶. While, when we take into consideration also the number of vegetarians, the United States in 2014 resulted the country with the highest percentage, 6%, of vegetarians and vegans per capita.¹⁶⁷ More recent studies and surveys have affirmed that, on average, the number of US vegans ranges between 1% and 2% of the country’s population.¹⁶⁸ Without getting lost in numbers, suffice is to say that the curves of the exponential increase in the number of vegetarians and vegans hit 500% during the last few years.¹⁶⁹ As a result of the increased global demand for vegan products, the “global meat substitute market size is expected to be valued at \$8.1 billion by 2026, registering a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 7.8% from 2019 to 2026”¹⁷⁰, with the United States amongst the main countries affected by the phenomenon.

After this short numerical overview of the current (or at least most recent) vegan situation, I examine in the following sections which further factors contributed to the rise of veganism over the past two decades. The analysis here is based on elements and factors, rather than on other cultural movements as done so far for the decades previous the 2000s. However, I start off by describing the main forms of activism used during the first two decades of the 21st century,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 507.

¹⁶⁶ Leichman, Abigail Klein. 26 March 2017. *Israel has the most Vegans per Capita and the Trend is growing*. Israel21c. Retrieved 9 October 2019 from <https://www.israel21c.org/israel-has-most-vegans-per-capita-and-the-trend-is-growing/>.

¹⁶⁷ Humane Research Council. 2014. *Study of Current and Former Vegetarians and Vegans: Initial findings*. Retrieved 9 October 2019, from https://faunalytics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Faunalytics_Current-Former-Vegetarians_Full-Report.pdf.

¹⁶⁸ Zampa, Matthew. 20 May 2019. *How Many Vegans are there really in the U.S.?* Sentient Media. Retrieved 9 October 2019, from <https://sentientmedia.org/how-many-vegans-are-there-in-the-u-s/>.

¹⁶⁹ GlobalData. 2017. *Top Trends in Prepared Foods 2017: Exploring Trends in Meat, Fish and Seafood; Pasta, Noodles and Rice; Prepared Meals; Savory Deli Food; Soup; and Meat Substitutes*. Retrieved 9 October 2019, from https://www.researchandmarkets.com/research/235vq9/top_trends_in.

¹⁷⁰ Vig, Himanshu and Roshan Deshmukh. September 2019. *Meat Substitute Market by Product (Tofu-based, Tempeh-based, TVP-based, Seitan-based, Quorn-based, and others), Source (Soy-based, Wheat-based, Mycoprotein, and others), Category (Frozen, Refrigerated, and Shelf Stable): Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2019–2026*. Allied Market Research. Retrieved 9 October 2019, from <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/meat-substitute-market>

followed by elements such as social network, documentaries, climate change, and healthy diets, that helped vegan supporters to spread their message and allowed veganism to go mainstream.

6.1. Modern and Current Forms of Vegan Activism

Ever since I was a teenager, I have been exposed to a variety of forms of activism promoted by vegan advocates on social networks. Before describing the usage of social networks and the social influence played by vegans online, I analyze several ways of social protests and manifestations that activists have been put in place over the past two decades. Most of these demonstrations are organized by international animal rights organizations; I list here below the main ones, that are active also in the United States, following the chronological order of their foundation and describing their main types of actions.

Animal Equality was founded in 2006 in Spain and is the organization for farmed animals' rights active in most countries: United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Brazil, Spain, Germany, Mexico, and India. Their strategies are primarily based on undercover investigations, legal advocacy, corporate outreach, education, and campaigns. The organization has so far investigated 741 animal agriculture facilities, reaching 1.4 billion views through media and social media only in 2017. Describe as “the most powerful tool to expose the cruel and abusive treatment of animals inside the secretive world of industrial animal agriculture”¹⁷¹, the results of these investigations are shared with the public encouraging consumers to be more aware and conscious of their purchases. Positive results are given also by the use of legal advocacy, by collaborating with Senators, MPs, and other officials in order to promote better legislation for the protection of animals. By now, 4 facilities closed thanks to Animal Equality because of not being in accordance with the law, and 8 prosecutions of workers for cruelty on animals have been successful.¹⁷² Changes are made also through corporate outreach, encouraging both large and small businesses to implement practices for animal protection, with citizens signing petitions addressed to the involved companies. One of the main requests made by Animal Equality to businesses is to ban the use of eggs from hens kept in cages; it is estimated that over 40 million hens benefited from around 25 successful campaigns of corporate outreach.¹⁷³ The education method consists of both online and on the ground forms of outreach to inform people

¹⁷¹ Animal Equality. *The Power of Undercover Investigations*. Retrieved 15 October 2019, from <https://animalequality.org/investigations/>.

¹⁷² Animal Equality. *Putting the Law on the Side of Animals*. Retrieved 15 October 201, from <https://animalequality.org/legal-advocacy/>.

¹⁷³ Animal Equality. *Corporate Outreach*. Retrieved 15 October 2019, from <https://animalequality.org/corporate-outreach/>.

about different forms of animal exploitation and to encourage them to adopt a cruelty-free lifestyle. While, regarding campaigns, according to their website “leading effective campaigns lead to a more compassionate world for animals.”¹⁷⁴ The campaigns are either national or international, and they all require better conditions for farmed animals. Amongst the main ones, ending cages for hens is a campaign carried out both nationally and internationally. One of the main victories in this regard was achieved in 2018 in the United States: Animal Equality gathered over 600,000 signatures in favor of Prop 21, ending cages for farmed animals in California and other states¹⁷⁵. In addition to all these actions, the organization holds every year on International Animal Rights Day, December 10, an international demonstration with activists holding “the lifeless bodies of non-human animals to expose the public to the hidden victims of animal exploitation.”¹⁷⁶ This type of protest, started in Spain, is performed by volunteers standing in silent while holding the bodies of victims of animal exploitation, in most cases obtained from farms where they died because of extreme conditions. Through this action, Animal Equality certainly helps consumers that walk by them to make a stronger connection “between the dead animals they are witnessing and the dead animals on their plate.”¹⁷⁷ A similar



demonstration, defined *silent line*, is often organized by other animal rights organizations: it consists of activists that stand in silent while forming a line (usually on busy city streets) while holding images of animals being exploited. I myself participated in one of those, during my first year of Master’s in Leipzig, Germany (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. My boyfriend Nicolas and I, participating in a *silent line* organized by a German animal protection organization, Albert Schweitzer Foundation, in May 2018 in Leipzig.

¹⁷⁴ Animal Equality. *Campaigning to End Animal Cruelty*. Retrieved 15 October 2019, from <https://animalequality.org/campaigns/>.

¹⁷⁵ Animal Equality. *Our History*. Retrieved 15 October 2019, from <https://animalequality.org/our-history/>.

¹⁷⁶ Animal Equality. 3 August 2018. *Animal Equality Activists Gathered to Memorialize the Victims of Animal Exploitation*. Retrieved 15 October 2019, from <https://animalequality.org/blog/2018/08/03/animal-equality-activists-gather-to-memorialize-the-victims-of-animal-exploitation/>.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

The Save Movement was founded in Canada in 2010, with the inception of Toronto Pig Save. The organization today is formed by over 660 groups all around the world who bear witness to farmed animals in front of slaughterhouses. By holding these vigils, the organization aims “to raise awareness about the plight of farmed animals, to help people become vegan, and to build a mass-based, grassroots animal justice movement.”¹⁷⁸ By caressing the animals through the bars of the trucks, giving them water and talking with them, the activists get as close as possible to the animals and their pain, inspired by Tolstoy’s philosophy:

*“When the suffering of another creature causes you to feel pain, do not submit to the initial desire to flee from the suffering one, but on the contrary, come closer, as close as you can to him who suffers, and try to help him.”*¹⁷⁹

While, at the same time, documenting their situation of distress and pain, and then sharing videos and photos of the vigils on social networks.

Direct Action Everywhere (DxE), another international grassroots animal rights organization, founded in 2013 in California. Through a forty-year roadmap¹⁸⁰ to animal liberation, the network seeks to “end this violent system and create a world where all animals are viewed and treated with respect and have autonomy over their own bodies.”¹⁸¹ Just like Animal Equality, DxE uses a variety of strategies, tactics, and campaigns in order to achieve its goals. What makes DxE activists peculiar is their use of “proven tactics of nonviolent civil resistance, social influence, and mass mobilization”.¹⁸² One of their main actions is the so-called *open rescue*, a tactic through which activists enter animal farms and not only document the conditions in which animals are kept (as it usually happens with undercover investigations), but they also rescue them. Differently from ALF activists, DxE ones do not stay anonymous; although the operation is initially kept secret, eventually the information is released along with the identities of the activists, because “(they) are proud of what (they) are doing and know that (they) are taking

¹⁷⁸ The Save Movement. *What is The Save Movement?* Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://thesavemovement.org/the-save-movement/>.

¹⁷⁹ Tolstoy for Everyone. Sorrell Jane. 30 April 2013. *Interview: People to Know: Anita from Toronto Pig Save*. The Vegan Sprout. Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://tolstoyforeveryone.org/interviews/>.

¹⁸⁰ Direct Action Everywhere. September 2016. *The Forty-Year Strategic Roadmap*. Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YN7KpuShiZltqVuQtWv6ykrjrNv6rAnmjVOcsofRj0I/edit>

¹⁸¹ Direct Action Everywhere. *What and Why DxE?* Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://www.directactioneverywhere.com/1-what-is-and-why-dxe>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

morally just action.”¹⁸³ Many critics have been arisen over the years against this type of direct action, labeling such activists as terrorists. That could be the case if the activists release the animals from cages and farms without then taking care of them and just leaving them free – with the consequence that the farm-raised animals cannot survive in nature and end up dying anyway. By doing so, these actions merely cause economic damage to the involved businesses, while not giving any moral message of real animal rescue. On the contrary, in the case of DxE actions, the open rescue is not only about releasing the animals, but it involves also the animal care after the rescue, given by a community building for support. Furthermore, “being a public face to an investigation breaks down the stereotypes of animal activists as criminals, vandals, and terrorists.”¹⁸⁴ Therefore, although these actions cause financial struggles to farmers, they clearly document the extreme conditions in which farmed animals are kept and that – at least for me – is already a good justification for the rescue.

Another recent and prominent organization for animal rights is Anonymous for the Voiceless (AV), established in Australia in 2016. The movement is formed by over 1,000 groups, called chapters, all around the world, and has held nearly 12,000 events since its foundation¹⁸⁵. AV organizes demonstrations called *Cube of truth*, structured into two teams: while the activists of one team wear the Anonymous mask and hold either a “TRUTH” sign (a sign with written *truth* in capital letters on it) or a device showing videos of animal exploitation, while standing silently and forming a cube, the activists of the other team stands around doing outreaching (see Figure 15). As they state on their website, their organization is specialized “in using conversation and high-quality footage to educate the public about animal exploitation.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, such demonstrations take the form of an artistic performance thanks to the cube team, while at the same time encourage passersby to question their lifestyle and purchasing behavior through the outreaching one. As a result, the cube “taps into onlookers’ emotions by shedding light on injustices from the victim's point of view.”¹⁸⁷ As mentioned, the activists that form the cube wear the Anonymous mask, notoriously associated with the movie *V for Vendetta* and with the cyber hackers of anonymous. As explained by AV’s founders, Paul Bashir and Asal Alamdari, “the mask stands for stamping out oppression, it represents the fight for truth, it is against

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Anonymous for the Voiceless. *The Cube of Truth*. Retrieved 21 October 2019, from <https://www.anonymousforthevoiceless.org/what-is-a-cube-of-truth>

¹⁸⁶ Anonymous for the Voiceless. *Who We Are*. Retrieved 21 October 2019, from <https://www.anonymousforthevoiceless.org/about-us>

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous for the Voiceless. *The Cube of Truth*. Retrieved 21 October 2019, from <https://www.anonymousforthevoiceless.org/what-is-a-cube-of-truth>

all sorts of injustice and discrimination, thus against speciesism as well.”¹⁸⁸ In addition, the movement participates also in other forms of activism, by organizing and being present to workshops, conferences, festivals and similar types of events.

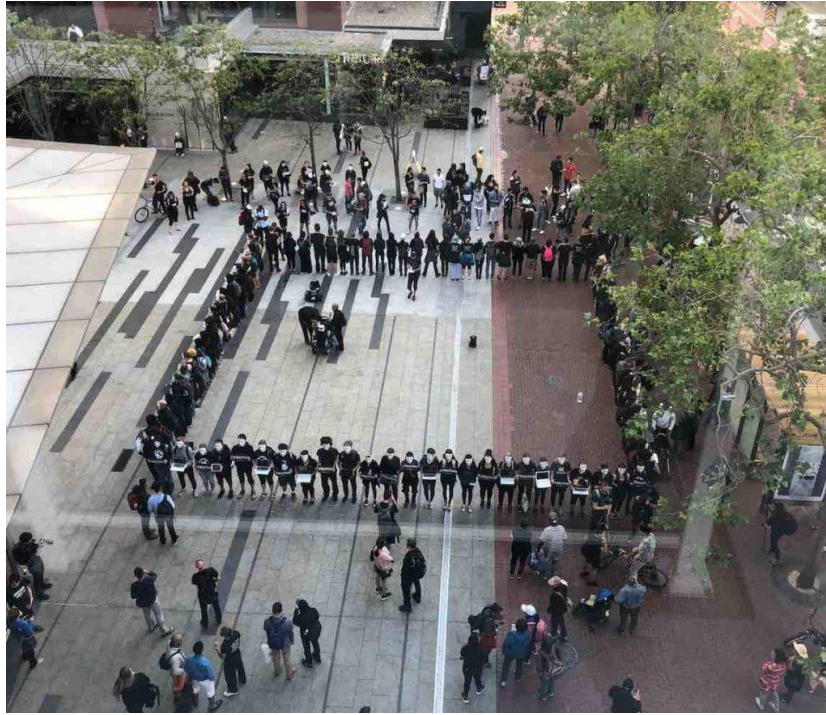


Figure 15. Cube of Truth in San Francisco organized by Anonymous for The Voiceless and Direct Action Everywhere during the 2018 Animal Liberation Conference.

Source: <https://theirturn.net/2018/07/14/anonymous-for-the-voiceless-cube-of-truth/>

In addition to all the organizations mentioned so far, from 2016 the animal rights movement counts also on an Official Animal Rights March, founded in England by the grassroots animal rights organization Surge. The philosophy of the latter is that “change comes through education, campaigning and community building”¹⁸⁹, while the purpose of the annual vegan march is “is to unite the vegan community globally and to inspire vegans to speak up for animals in their everyday lives and get active in their local communities.”¹⁹⁰ In 2018 over 28,000 attendees marched in 25 cities around the world, demanding the end of animal exploitation. This year the march took place during different days in August in 43 cities from 31 different countries, including 10 US locations (New York City, Dallas, Portland, San Diego, Los Angeles, Tampa

¹⁸⁸ Anonymous for the Voiceless. *The Mask*. Retrieved 21 October 2019, from <https://www.anonymousforthevoiceless.org/why-the-mask>.

¹⁸⁹ SURGE Activism. *About Surge*. Retrieved on 22 October 2019, from <https://surgeactivism.org/aboutsurge>.

¹⁹⁰ The Official Animal Rights March. Retrieved 22 October 2019, from <https://www.theofficialanimalrightsmarch.org/>.

Bay, Washington DC, Chicago, Orlando, and Miami)¹⁹¹ (see Figure 16). There are still no official data regarding the attendees of this year, but suffice is to say that only London recorded around 12,000 vegan activists¹⁹². The number of participants has certainly grown over the years, as it is the number of vegans people.



Figure 16. Activists took the street of San Diego on 19th August 2019, during the Official Animal Rights March.

Source: <https://janeunchained.com/2019/08/19/the-official-animal-rights-march-hits-sunny-san-diego/>

Although by definition *veganism* excludes the consumption of all animal products, attention is often stressed mainly on land-animal products. That is why it is worth mentioning here at least one organization that focuses on the conservation of marine wildlife: Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Founded in 1977 by Captain Paul Watson, the movement is formed today by independent entities in over 20 countries around the world. The activists define themselves “risk-takers” that put themselves “on the front line to expose the truth, save marine wildlife, conduct vital research and stop illegal activity through collaborative campaigns with communities and governments.”¹⁹³ The “risk-takers” label is given by their most popular actions: several operations conducted aboard their vessels, on hostile waters, saving thousands

¹⁹¹ SURGE Activism. *The Official Animal Rights March*. Retrieved 22 October 2019, from <https://surgeactivism.org/theofficialanimalrightsmarch>

¹⁹² Metro. James Hockaday. 18 August 2019. *Record 12,000 vegan activists take part in London Animal Rights March*. Retrieved 22 October 2019, from <https://metro.co.uk/2019/08/18/record-12000-vegan-activists-take-part-london-animal-rights-march-10591790/>.

¹⁹³ Sea Shepherd. *Our Story*. Retrieved 22 October 2019, from <https://seashepherd.org/our-story/>.

of whales from being hunted.¹⁹⁴ The protection and conservation of sea wildlife are strictly connected with fishing activities. According to FAO, in 2017 the total production of tonnes of fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and other aquatic animals reached 172.6 million tonnes, out of which 92.5 million tonnes derived from captures and the rest from aquaculture production¹⁹⁵. With the United States being amongst the main importing countries (United States and Japan account for 25% of the total)¹⁹⁶. Considering these data, overfishing alone is one of the main threats to our environment and ecosystem. While fishing per se is not ethically acceptable for a vegan point of view.

6.2. Social Networks: Social Influence and Collective Identity

Human behavior is often characterized by a loss of interest when there is no tangible image. This psychological issue is easily understandable by using the example of images of melting icebergs to increase the awareness of global warming and climate change: most people cannot relate to that since they are not physically around that environment, and therefore the level of concern for climate change is not that strong. This also involves other forms of images that lack tangibility among populations and suppressing forms of concrete action to help mitigate climate change response. Indeed, in the same way, the behavior regarding the consumption of animal products is generally neglectful because of the distance that often exists between animal farms and slaughterhouses (and the environmental damages inducted by these businesses), and the final consumer.

Considering this frame, a dominant role has been played by social networks over the past two decades. According to Elizabeth Cherry, there are three main features of vegan's social networks that indicate that in order to maintain a vegan lifestyle depends more on having strong social networks supportive of veganism, rather than individual willpower and strength: discourse, support, and network embeddedness.¹⁹⁷ The discourse part is important as the only fact of being informed over an issue does not necessarily lead to an ideological change; that is why social networks create "a discursive repertoire"¹⁹⁸ through which vegans create their own social world that supports veganism. Furthermore, creating an overlap of social networks, as it

¹⁹⁴ Sea Sheperd. *Sea Sheperd Worldwide Fleet*. Retrieved 22 October 2019, from https://seashepherd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SSCS_Fleet.pdf

¹⁹⁵ FAO. 2019. FAO yearbook. *Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2017/FAO annuaire. Statistiques des pêches et de l'aquaculture 2017/FAO anuario. Estadísticas de pesca y acuicultura 2017*. Rome, p. xvi.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. xvii.

¹⁹⁷ Cherry, Elizabeth. 2006. *Veganism as a Cultural Movement: A Relational Approach*. Social Movement Studies, 5:2, p. 157.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 161.

can happen for instance in the case of vegan feminists or vegan environmentalists, is defined as a “critical moment in the formation of [a] vegan identity.”¹⁹⁹ As a result of these interactions, some social problems (e.g. feminism) can be analyzed within the vegan frame, and veganism becomes a way to the means. Regarding the support received from social networks, is it definitely important to feel supported by both vegans and non-vegans, in order to enjoy this lifestyle. Unfortunately our society still stigmatizes veganism, criticized for being too extreme of a choice, unhealthy and helpless for the planet. Consequently, vegans are often mocked and ridiculed for their beliefs. Biasedly talking, I cannot help but agree on how important it is to have a supportive social network, and how annoying and unhelpful most of the criticisms are. But, having said that, it is definitely important to keep in mind that apart from the good intentions behind such a choice, it is more helpful (both for other vegans and for the animals) to be rational about it and avoid behaviors that would jeopardize the credibility of the movement. With regard to the network embeddedness, it seems that in case of having a strong and supportive social network, vegans are more likely to “replace conventional norms with subnormal norms”.²⁰⁰ This whole concept can be summarized by saying that “veganism is collectively interpreted through the dominant narratives of a participant’s culture while maintaining adherence to the rejection of speciesism.”²⁰¹

Such considerations are essential for veganism if we apply them to online social networks. Indeed, many animal rights groups are present on several platforms, promoting their messages including events, campaigns, and actions, while allowing many vegan people from all over the world to connect with each other and to share those messages. Consequently, once this information is being shared online, many non-vegan people get as well exposed to them. And, as said at the beginning of this section, they get a bit closer to the reality of animal exploitation and, sometimes, eventually, decide to adopt a vegan lifestyle.

6.3. Vegan Documentaries

In addition to the use of online social networks, another way of spreading the vegan message consists of documentaries. Many documentaries have been released over the past few years, focusing at least on one of the reasons behind veganism (ethical, environmental or health), exposing the reality behind the production of animal products to an enormous public.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 162.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 167.

²⁰¹ Blevins, Kai R. 2016. *A Cultural Analysis of Veganism in the United States: Examining an Emerging Social Movement*. Carleton University: Department of Political Science Faculty of Public Affairs, p. p11.

Most of these footages are also available on platforms for online streaming like Netflix, making them accessible to an even broader public. Just like for images of melting icebergs, watching pictures or, even better, videos related to the production of animal products helps humans to get closer to such realities, empathize more with them, and at times also making the connection that brings them to change their behavior as consumers. I mention here three of the most popular documentaries of the past two decades, one for each topic.

Earthlings is a 2005 American documentary, often defined as the number one must-watch vegan documentary, and is probably one of the most graphic ones. Narrated by Joaquin Phoenix, it is divided into 5 parts, one for each industry responsible for violence against animals: pets, food, clothing, entertainment, and scientific research²⁰². The movie provides a variety of graphic violent footage, with the aim of giving a contribution to the ethical side of veganism. By exposing such harsh realities that take place far away from most humans' eyes, as said on the playbill poster, the documentary helps the audience to "make the connection". Since farms, slaughterhouses and labs are usually situated far from residential areas, this physical distance is translated into a mental one when people are not able, avoid or refuse to acknowledge the way a piece of meat (or any other animal product) arrived on their plate, or how some products have been tested on animals. Criticism against the ethical side of veganism argues that not all the places treat the animals with violence, and that there is an animal welfare legislation against such lawbreaking, or that stronger legislation should be implemented. Unfortunately, though, the reality seems to be similar in all these places, as confirmed by results of several undercover investigations – amongs which the ones by Mercy for Animals²⁰³ – taken place in different countries and businesses. Furthermore, even with the animal welfare legislation at its best, there will never be a human way of killing animals. That is simply because animals are someone, not something. And unnecessarily taking someone's life cannot and should not be considered human.

Moving to the environmental side of veganism, *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* is definitely the most popular documentary. The 2014 American movie shows through reliable facts²⁰⁴ and sources how "animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation, water consumption, and pollution, is responsible for more greenhouse gases than the

²⁰² Nation Earth. *Earthlings*. Retrieved 25 October 2019, from <http://www.nationearth.com/>.

²⁰³ Mercy for Animals. *Undercover Investigations*. Retrieved 30 November 2019, from <https://mercyforanimals.org/investigations>.

²⁰⁴ Cowspiracy. *The Facts*. Retrieved 25 October 2019, from <https://www.cowspiracy.com/facts>.

transportation industry and is a primary driver of rainforest destruction, species extinction, habitat loss, topsoil erosion, ocean ‘dead zones’”²⁰⁵. As suggested by the title, there is a conspiracy behind what the creators of the documentary tried to find out: “why the world’s leading environmental organizations are too afraid to talk about it.”²⁰⁶ However, the movie leaves the audience with this doubt, and no answer has been provided by these organizations that rather refused to release statements on this. I discuss in more detail the environmental topic chapter 6.4, proving some quantitative data in support of environmental veganism.

Lastly, the main documentary that links veganism to the health side is *What the Health*, from the same filmmakers behind *Cowspiracy*. Released in 2017, the movie reveals “the insidious roles played by pharmaceutical companies, agribusiness, and processed animal food companies in the nation’s health”²⁰⁷. By bringing the scientific and professional contributions of doctors and researchers, the documentaries provide the perfect counterargument for those who criticize veganism for being unhealthy. Furthermore, it exposes the health risks deriving from the consumption of animal products. Surely in order to make this counterargument valid and solid, it is necessary to follow a diversified and equilibrated vegan diet. However, I talk more in detail about the healthy side in chapter 6.5.

6.4. Veganism and Climate Change

Taking into consideration what highlighted by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2006, namely that the farm animal production sector is “a major threat to the environment”²⁰⁸, the vegan diet seems to be the one with a less harmful environmental impact. As defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in its Article 1, climate change is “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”²⁰⁹ Therefore, on one hand, climate change may be due to natural internal or external processes

²⁰⁵ Cowspiracy. *About the Film*. Retrieved 25 October 2019 <https://www.cowspiracy.com/about>.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ What the Health. *About the Film*. Retrieved 26 October 2019, from <https://www.whatthehealthfilm.com/about>.

²⁰⁸ UNFAO. 2006. *United Nations: Livestock a Major Threat to Environment*. New York, United Nations.

²⁰⁹ UNFCCC. 9 May 1992. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Retrieved 10 October 2019, from <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>.

attributable to natural causes and, on another hand, it can be caused by human actions through constant anthropogenic activities that alter the atmospheric and land composition.

One of the main consequences of this phenomenon is the so-called “global warming”, which refers to climatic changes caused by greenhouse gases that increase atmospheric solar heat gain. Major scientific organizations consider anthropogenic global warming as a significant cost deriving current and potential risks. For instance, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) argues that “warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level.”²¹⁰ Considering the increasingly devastating impacts of climate change, many international negotiations have taken place, establishing targets in order to reduce emissions and to implement and share mitigation and adaptation strategies. December 2015 was a key moment for the discourse on climate change, with the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement by 195-member states party to the UNFCCC. According to the Conference President, Laurent Fabius, the result can be considered “the most balanced, comprehensive and ambitious”²¹¹ that the conference could hope to achieve. In fact, the agreement is characterized by universal participation, being legally binding, which means that all parties have obligations and rights. The agreement is meant to be durable and dynamic, and its main aim is to increase the efforts of each participant simultaneously: mitigation of emissions, mitigation of adverse effects, and mobilization of finance and support for the needed transformation.²¹²

On the first front, the agreement focuses on a long-term goal for mitigation, establishing as its aim “holding temperature rise at well below 2 degrees, and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.”²¹³ As indicated in the article 4.1, the aim is “to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, [...] and to undertake rapid reductions, [...] on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.”²¹⁴ The article is better explained by the need of finding a “balance

¹⁶⁶ European Environment Agency. 2 February 2007. *Proof of Climate Change ‘Unequivocal’*. Retrieved 10 October 2019, from <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/proof-of-climate-change-unequivocal>.

²¹¹ Brun, Aslak. 2016. *Conference Diplomacy: The Making of the Paris Agreement*. Politics and Governance, Volume 4, Issue 3, p. 115.

²¹² Ibid, p. 116.

²¹³ Dröge, Susanne; Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. 2016. *The Paris Agreement 2015: Turning Point for the International Climate Regime*. SWP Research Paper 4/2016, p. 30.

²¹⁴ UNFCCC. 12 December 2015. *Paris Agreement*. Art. 4.1, p. 4. Retrieved 10 October 2019, from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century”²¹⁵, and it also mentions the role that science should play in establishing the needs and means for emission reductions.

One of these just mentioned needs should be to increase the awareness about the environmental impact of factory farms, also called “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations” (CAFOs), which are responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions. Originated from livestock manure, the emissions are both released as the manure breaks down, and through particulate released into the air by the movement of animals.²¹⁶ In fact, as determined by FAO in 2006, the global greenhouse gas emissions coming from the animal agriculture sector exceeded the amount of emissions caused by transportation, with “18% of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions coming from the animal agricultural sector.”²¹⁷

The above-mentioned data regarding greenhouse gas emissions is all the more worrying if we consider the rate of global population growth, from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.9 in 2010, directly linked to an increase in the consumption of animal products; as underlined by FAO in 2012, “the amount of meat needed to feed and sustain these populations is immense”.²¹⁸ Only in the United States, in the last 50 years, not only the amount of meat production tripled, but also the amount of milk production doubled and the one of eggs quadrupled.²¹⁹ These data do not surprise if we consider that the vast majority of the US population is omnivore, and that over 7% of US greenhouse gas emissions come from livestock operations.²²⁰ Furthermore, the production of meat is expected to double from 2005/2007 to 2080, from 258 annual million tons to 524 annual million tons.²²¹

Heavily transitioning to a livestock-diet, both in the last few decades and in the next few ones, especially in Western societies, means that the only way to meet this demand is through large-

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Hribar, Carrie. 2010. *Understanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and their Impact on Communities*. National Association of Local Boards of Health, Bowling Green, Ohio, p. 5.

²¹⁷ Grahari, Jennifer. M. and McAdam, Jennifer A. 2018. *Combating Climate Change One Bite at a Time: Environmental Sustainability of Veganism (with a Socio-Behavioural Comparison of Vegans and Omnivores)*. Research paper, Journal of Social Sciences, William Paterson University, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 2

²¹⁹ PCIAFP. 2009. *Putting meat on the table: Industrial farm animal production in America*. Pew Commission Industrial Animal Farm Product.

²²⁰ Massey, Ray and Ann Ulmer. 2008. *Agriculture and greenhouse gas emissions*, University of Missouri Extension.

²²¹ UNFAO. 2006. *United Nations: Livestock a Major Threat to Environment*. New York, United Nations.

scale CAFOs – also called intensive farming. Such activities are responsible not only of a huge amount of greenhouse gas emissions, as mentioned earlier, but also of other ways of pollution.

Furthermore, a loss of biodiversity can be mainly observed in tropical areas, where the poor quality of water, together with a high rate of deforestation, is threatening both flora and fauna. Tropical rainforests offer in fact the best climate and soil for production of grains for animal feeding stuff, and over the last few years have dramatically experienced a loss of biodiversity because of “degradation, fragmentation, and loss of habitat”²²² due to “agriculture intensification, intensively managed forests and urban sprawl”²²³. In addition, biodiversity loss can indirectly be identified also through the decline of the ecosystems’ resilience, which causes vulnerability to the diffusion of invasive species.²²⁴

In addition to issues deriving from farming land-species, it is worth mentioning that environmental damages come from the consumption of seafood as well. The activity of overfishing is in fact heavily impacting the marine ecosystem, with more than 100 million tons of fish supplied for human consumption only in 2006, and the United States being part of the top 10 fishery-producer countries.²²⁵ Furthermore, “the maximum wild capture fisheries potential from the world’s oceans has probably been reached,”²²⁶ considering that 80% of the world’s fish stocks have been “fully exploited or overexploited”²²⁷, and therefore risking to have domino effects of the whole food chain.

This very complex topic has been perfectly summarized by Jonathan Safran Foer, the vegan author of the 2009 bestseller *Eating Animals*. Foer refers to reports of the United Nations, as well as findings of the “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Pew Commission, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Worldwatch Institute, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, to name a few.”²²⁸ Foer reference, in particular, the above mentioned 2006 FAO

²²² Castane, Silvia and Assumpcion, Anton. 2017. *Assessment of the Nutritional Quality and Environmental Impact of two Food Diets: A Mediterranean and a Vegan Diet*, Journal of Cleaner Production 167, p. 934.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ De Baan, L., Mutel, C.L., Curran, M., Hellweg, S., Koellner, T. 2013. *Land Use in Life Cycle Assessment: Global Characterization Factors Based on Regional and Global Potential Species Extinction*. Environmental Science & Technology 47 (16), pp. 9281-9290.

²²⁵ Grahari, Jennifer. M. and McAdam, Jennifer A. 2018. *Combating Climate Change One Bite at a Time: Environmental Sustainability of Veganism (with a Socio-Behavioural Comparison of Vegans and Omnivores)*. Research paper, Journal of Social Sciences, William Paterson University, p. 4.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ JOOSR LTD. 2016. *A Joosr Guide To... Eating Animals by Jonathan Safran Foer*. Clitheroe: Joosr.

report *Livestock's Long Shadow*, through which the organization assessed the environmental impacts of the livestock industry. The results of the report underling how this sector is “one of the top or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global”, and that these findings “should be a major policy focus when dealing with problems of land degradation, climate change, and air pollution, water shortage, and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity.”²²⁹ Following the publication of his 2009 bestseller, Foer just published (in August this year) a new book, *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast Hardcover*. Through this publication, the author stresses again the attention on the current climate change crisis, believing that we cannot “save the planet unless we significantly reduce our food consumption of animal products”.²³⁰

All these above-mentioned issues related to the consumption of livestock are increasingly gaining attention worldwide. This is also one of the reasons why the vegan diet is not anymore a narrowed life choice; especially, since print and social media and documentaries are playing a key role in our society, vegans and animal rights organizations have been using social networks to spread and increase the awareness over these problematics, emotionalizing their campaigns for animal rights and increasing the impact of influence on people's views towards related issues.

Since last year, the vegan environmental movement has been having a new prominent supporter: Greta Thunberg. The 16-year-old Swedish vegan girl began the popular Fridays For Future movement in August 2018, when for the first time she sat in front of the Swedish parliament every schoolday for three weeks. After posting online her way of protesting against the lack of attention and action on the ongoing climate crisis, the teenager decided to continue her school strikes every Friday until the Swedish government started to take action and adopted policies in line with the Paris agreement²³¹. Her strikes, supported by the hashtags #FridaysForFutre and #Climatestrike, have increasingly gained the attention of both students and adults from all over the world, that soon started protesting in front of their local parliaments and city halls. So far, 8.6M strikers from 215 countries have protested in 6.3k cities through

²²⁹ FAO. 2006. *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options*. Rome, p. xx.

²³⁰ Medina, Gari. 2019. Review: Foer, Jonathan Safran. *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*. El Camino Coll., Torrance, CA, p. 93.

²³¹ Fridays For Future. *About #FridaysForFuture*. Retrieved 27 October 2019, from <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/about>.

49k strike events.²³² Amongst these events, the first global strike took place in March 2019, gathering more than one million strikers around the world²³³. The second one, in May 2019, was attended by over 1.5M people²³⁴ (I myself participated in Vienna – see Figure 17), was held on the second day of the four-day 2019 EU Parliamentary election; according to Thunberg, the day was defined as “the last chance to affect the E.U. elections. Politicians are talking about climate and environmental issues more now, but they need more pressure.”²³⁵ A third global climate strike took the shape of a Global Week for Future, held in September 2019, with a series of strikes and events that happened right around the UN Climate Action Summit in New York City. Thunberg also participated in the Summit, after sailing from England to the United States in order to avoid the use of an airplane. The teenager not only inspires millions of people around the world through her speeches, but also through her daily actions: she does not only travel by train or vessel in order to avoid the carbon emissions of planes, but she also follows a vegan diet. However, she does not seem to promote her message by stressing too much of attention on this “detail”; in my opinion, that is because veganism is still viewed by many with critical eyes, and it seems safer to advocate for the environmental cause without mentioning too often the diet, while gaining more followers and then, eventually, begin increasing the attention on veganism and its relation to the climate change as well.



Figure 17. My boyfriend Nicolas and I, participating to the Global Climate Strike in Vienna on May 2019. The demonstration was led by Greta Thunberg, and several marchers were holding signs pro-veganism.

²³² Fridays For Future. *Statistics*. Retrieved 27 October 2019, from <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/statistics/graph>.

²³³ The Guardian. Damian Carrington. 19 March 2019. *School climate strikes: 1.4 million people took part, say campaigners*. Retrieved 27 October, from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/19/school-climate-strikes-more-than-1-million-took-part-say-campaigners-greta-thunberg>.

²³⁴ Extinction Rebellion. 2nd Global Climate Strike for the Future. Retrieved 27 October 2019, from <https://rebellion.earth/event/2nd-global-climate-strike-for-future/>.

²³⁵ Time. Suyin Haynes. 24 May 2019. *Students from 1,600 Cities Just Walked out of School to Protest Climate Change. It could be Greta Thunberg’s Biggest Strike yet*. Retrieved 27 October 2019, from <https://time.com/5595365/global-climate-strikes-greta-thunberg/>.

Lastly, a note on a criticism that is often raised against veganism, labeled as a non-sustainable lifestyle. Realistically speaking, even the fanciest of the vegans that consume tons of processed meat-alternative products made of soya and avocados, will still have a more sustainable lifestyle style than an omnivore. According to a study published by the World Economic Forum 2019, animal products not only produced many more GHG emissions per calorie compared to plant-based ones (cf. Figure 18) but also require much more land and water for their production (cf. Figure 19). Having said that, it is clear that a sustainable vegan diet, based on products as local and as little processed as possible is highly recommendable.

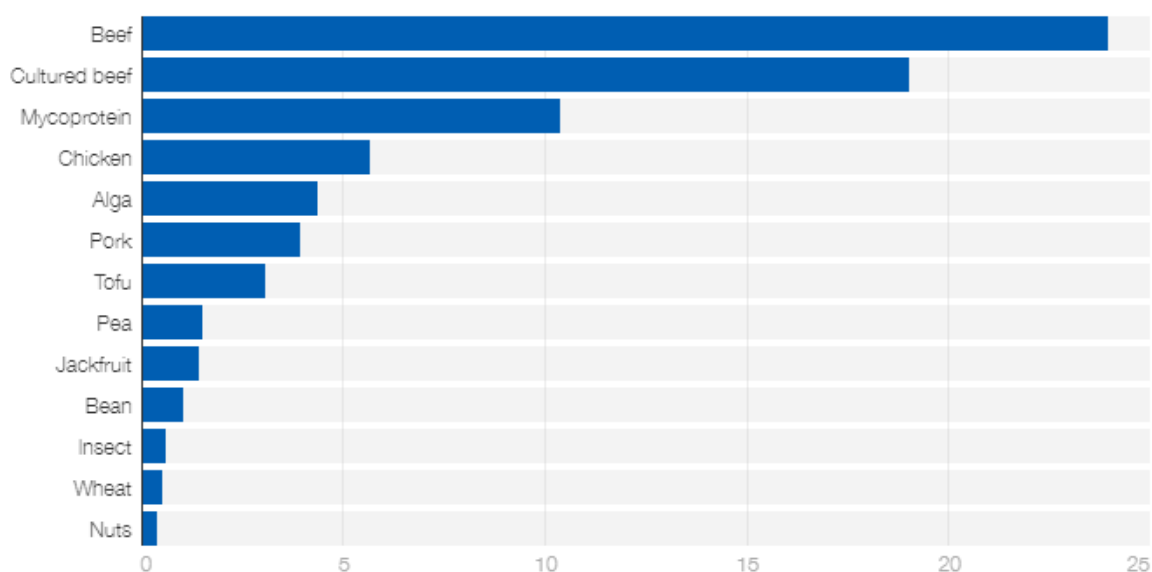


Figure 18. Emissions intensity kgCO2EQ per 200kcal.

Source: *Meat: The Future Series. Alternative Proteins*, World Economic Forum 2019, page 11.

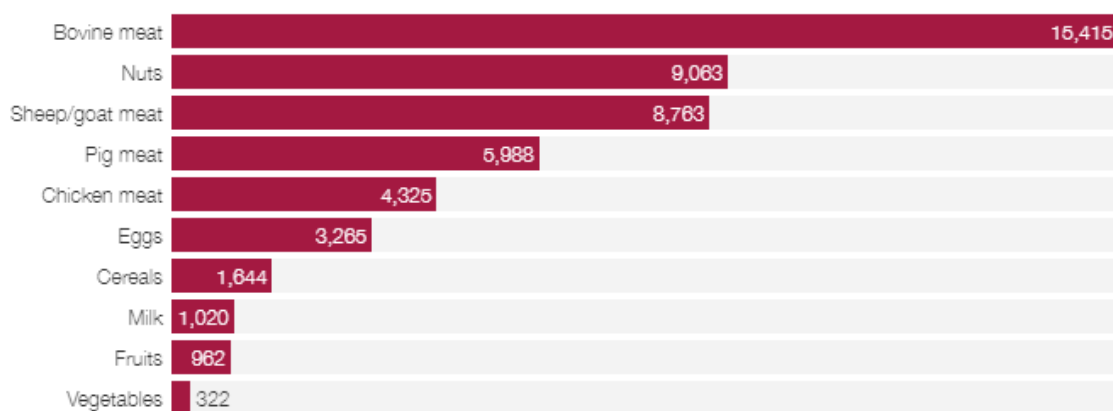


Figure 19. Liters of water required to produce one kilogram of the following food products (global averages).

Source: Water Footprint Network.

6.5 Veganism as a Healthy Diet and Global Trend

As mentioned in the introduction, I reserved a part towards the end of this thesis to shortly touch the health topic. Since I do not have any technical medical expertise, and although I have personally experienced on my skin health improvements ever since I went vegan, here I limit myself to state the main benefits claimed to be given by a vegan diet.

First of all, GHG emissions coming from animal farms affect both workers and communities living in the surrounding areas, causing higher rates of asthma, with US researchers suggesting that there is “consistent evidence” that asthma comes from the farms.²³⁶ Furthermore, “particulate matter and suspended dust emitted from manure, which is linked to incidences of asthma and bronchitis, can actually be absorbed by the body and can have systemic effects”²³⁷ (such as decreased lung function). Health risks come from the contamination of water too, with more than half of the US population (or even more in rural areas) relying on groundwater, much more contaminated than the surface one.²³⁸ The risk of being contaminated and face severe health problems increases when talking about people with lower immune systems, such as infants, pregnant women, the elderly and immunosuppressed patients; a group that represents at least 20% of the US population.”²³⁹ In addition to the health topic, there are also evidences that people who follow a plant-based diet are not only less likely to contract disease caused by contaminated air and water, but have also “lower levels of cholesterol in plasma and lower blood pressure, reducing the risk of heart disease.”²⁴⁰

However, as already mentioned when talking about *What the Health*, in order to be a healthy vegan it is necessary to follow an appropriate diet. The point that I want to make here, though, is that a vegan diet does not necessarily require the purchase of expensive products. By consuming for instance legumes, it is easily possible to reach a high intake of proteins, while at the same time not spending too much on expensive processed food that often supermarkets

²³⁶ Sigurdarson, Sigurdur T. and J. Nathan Kline. 2006. *School proximity to concentrated animal feeding operations and prevalence of asthma in students*. Chest, 129(6), p. 1486.

²³⁷ Grahari, Jennifer. M. and McAdam, Jennifer A. 2018. *Combating Climate Change One Bite at a Time: Environmental Sustainability of Veganism (with a Socio-Behavioural Comparison of Vegans and Omnivores)*. Research paper, Journal of Social Sciences, William Paterson University, p. 3.

²³⁸ Hribar, Carrie. 2010. *Understanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and their Impact on Communities*. National Association of Local Boards of Health, Bowling Green, Ohio.

²³⁹ Grahari, Jennifer. M. and McAdam, Jennifer A. 2018. *Combating Climate Change One Bite at a Time: Environmental Sustainability of Veganism (with a Socio-Behavioural Comparison of Vegans and Omnivores)*. Research paper, Journal of Social Sciences, William Paterson University, p. 3.

²⁴⁰ Castane, Silvia. and Assumpcion, Anton. 2017. *Assessment of the nutritional quality and environmental impact of two food diets: A Mediterranean and a vegan diet*, Journal of Cleaner Production 167, p. 930.

offer. And, of course, being as sustainable as possible. Therefore, the criticism of who claims that being vegan is an exclusive privilege that only some people from developed countries can afford is easily counterarguable.

It is important to notice how the increase in the number of vegans, that is to say, the increasing demand for vegan products has led to a rise in the range of vegan products offered both by supermarkets and restaurants. However, most of these products are highly processed, which cannot be considered neither healthy nor sustainable. In addition to that, many celebrities and athletes – amongst which Joaquin Phoenix, Pamela Anderson, Paul McCartney, Moby, Venus Williams, and Lewis Hamilton²⁴¹ – and promote a vegan diet mostly through the lens of a global trend; that is to say, using images and hashtags that suggest that veganism is only about fancy food (e.g. avocados), which definitely has very little to do with the vegan cause, and does not appear to be the most sustainable way.

7. Summary

This thesis is the product of a social analysis of veganism, here defined as a transversal topic inherent to a number of social movements. The work is focused in particular on this social phenomenon in the United States, from the 1960s to the present. Each chapter talks about one or two decades, describing the evolution of veganism and its connections with the vegetarian movement and at least one other social movement per decade.

In order to analyze veganism as a social phenomenon, I took a step back and started off by discussing the vegetarian movement. Although vegetarianism seems to date back to pre-history, one of the first historically documented cases of vegetarianism is related to *ahimsa*-based religions that took root in the Indian subcontinent starting from the 6th century BCE. The same *ahimsa* philosophy allowed the vegetarian movement to gain some prominent representatives during the 1700s and 1800s. During the 1800s, in particular in 1847 and in 1850, the first Vegetarian societies were founded, respectively in the United Kingdom and in the United States. Following the industrial revolution, animal products became cheaper and easier to store and distribute, with a consequent increase in their consumption during the first decades of the 1900s. The distressful process of production of animal products resulted from modern intensive farming, as well as the violence experienced during the two World Wars, made some people

²⁴¹ Livekindly. 5 March 2019. *51 Celebrities who are Vegan for Life*. Retrieved 30 November 2019, from <https://www.livekindly.co/vegan-celebrities/>.

realize that vegetarianism was not enough anymore and that the production of eggs, dairy and honey implied exploitation and suffering, too. Consequently, in 1944, the first Vegan Society was found in the United Kingdom, while the American one was established in 1960. As suggested also by the definition of veganism given by the Vegan Society, the origins of the philosophy were ethical, with the goal of eliminating exploitation of and cruelty to animals. However, since this thesis is not about veganism as a personal choice but rather as a transversal topic, the reason behind it (ethical, environmental, health or any other) does not necessarily matter in order to analyze it. Nevertheless, following the historical social development of vegetarianism and veganism allowed me to differentiate between them, linking the first one to some social movements of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and referring to the second one from the 1990s on.

Chapter 3 is focused on the 1960s and 1970s, analyzing the vegetarian movement in the United States alongside other prominent social movements. Brillat-Savarin's philosophy of "Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are" helped me underlying the importance of food symbolism for several social movements, within which food was used as a tool for activism. Countercultural groups of these two decades, indeed, expressed their different political, social, and religious views through their food choices, inspiring and being inspired by other revolutions. Amongst them, the Civil Rights Movement was one of the most well established and organized groups, fighting against racial discrimination. In some cases, like in the one of Dick Gregory, a vegetarian diet was adopted alongside direct actions of protest, in order to express political views that rejected the use of violence, both on human and non-human animals. Moving to the sustainable side, the rise of the US ecological movement happened alongside the publication of the first book by Lappè stressing the attention on the link between livestock production, environmental damages, and world hunger. For the ethical principle, I mainly referred to Singer's *Animal Liberation* and his philosophy of anti-speciesism. The author invites his readers to adopt an equal consideration of all living sentient beings, and not to refuse to take into consideration their suffering according to their species.

Chapter 4 is about the ecofeminist movement of the 1970s that further evolved during the 1980s. Referring to Adam's *Sexual Politics of Meat*, and to the Feminists for Animal Rights organization, helped me to talk about how the consumption of meat and women's oppression can be assimilated. By referring again to Brillat-Savarin's theory, and the idea of men needing to eat meat and women having to eat plants, the consumption of meat used to be associated with

strength and virility, while a plant-based diet was a more of a symbol for weakness. Furthermore, the vegetarian feminist discourse identified an overlap of images of sexual violence against women and images representing dismemberment of slaughtered animals.

Moving to the 1990s, I started chapter 5 by focusing more on veganism, rather than on vegetarianism. Animal rights organizations, founded around the 1980s, increased the extent of their actions, attracting more attention over the vegan cause. Furthermore, the use of media helped activists to spread their message. After briefly analyzing the different types of strategies, tactics, mechanisms, and actions adopted by animal rights organizations, I draw the attention on the difference between violent and non-violent organizations, and the crucial role played by media. In order to provide concrete examples, I referred to PETA and the main milestones achieved during the 1990s.

The densest chapter of this thesis is probably the sixth one, through which I focused on veganism at its most popular times: the past two decades. Given the increasing number of vegans all around the world, especially in Western societies, I analyzed here the factors that contributed to this boom. Describing the modern and current forms of vegan activism helped me focusing on the social aspect of this phenomenon, listing and describing various types of actions undertaken by the main most recent animal rights organizations. After providing these concrete examples, I continued by taking into consideration the social influence derived by social networks. Such influence, applicable both in real life and online, contributes to further strengthen the vegan collective identity. In addition to this, I quickly mentioned three of the main documentaries of the last two decades that increase the attention on veganism and brought to light different aspects of the phenomenon: ethical, environmental, and health. Since I had already focused a lot on the ethical side, I dedicated the last two sections of the chapter to the environmental and health aspect, although I kept the last one quite short given my lack of medical expertise. Regarding the environmental part, I referred to reports that confirmed how the production of animal products is unsustainable as it contributes to climate change through its great GHG emissions, high usage of water, deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Increasing concerns are raised around this topic so much so that an international movement, led by a vegan teenager, is striking every Friday all around the world to protest against climate change. With regard to the health part, I limited myself to report a few data stating the health benefits given by a plant-based diet, and the risks deriving from consuming animal products.

Considering veganism merely as a healthy diet is more of a global trend that comes together with the increasing amount of vegan products offered by the market.

8. Future Research

Writing this thesis in 2019 was personally very inspirational, considering that this year is “the most vegan year” our society has been experiencing so far. With an increase in vegan products of any type, from food to cosmetics and clothing, and with more and more activists from various movements, as well as celebrities and athletes adopting a vegan lifestyle, it will certainly be interesting to do some future research on this topic in a few years.

In particular, I would be interested to see how veganism will be integrated into future societies, and if the phenomenon will ever take a catch on in developing countries. It would be also useful to analyze further techniques used by animal rights organizations and review how the ones described in this thesis will be doing. I would also like to examine the topic from a more economic point of view, given the current high prices of vegan products, and see how the increasing demand and offer of plant-based products will be affecting the demand of offering animal products. Moving to the more technical side of the topic, it would be nice to work in collaboration with some experts from the environmental and health side, in order to bring further related data and analyze them with objective expertise.

9. Conclusion

Through this thesis, I have both given an answer to my initial research question and gathered enough evidence to confirm my hypothesis. Following the development of vegetarianism and eventually veganism in the United States, alongside other inherent social movements, has allowed me to create connections through which to establish how and why veganism has evolved this way. The phenomenon initially started to take root through vegetarianism during the 1960s and 1970s, with its ethical side allowing some social movements to adopt this lifestyle as a political tool to protest against violence towards both human and non-human animals. Soon the ethical side got overshadowed by other influences, such as nutrition, environment, and health. However, the ethical side of veganism kept being active through animal rights advocates and organizations that have increasingly fought for the abolition of animal exploitation. As a result of intense and diversified campaigns, and especially through a wider usage and coverage of media, veganism started going global in the 2010s. The fact that the phenomenon has acquired a mainstream feature, as proven by the increasing

number of both vegan people and products - in particular in western societies - confirms my hypothesis that the growth of veganism can be justified by increasing awareness of this topic. And, as said, this growth coincides with wider coverage of media and social media reporting actions that took place both on the streets and online. Furthermore, veganism has been increasingly resembling a social movement, thanks to an increasing number of demonstrations gathering people to fight for animal rights.

Consequently, since veganism started going global, the movement partly regained its philosophical identity that characterized its origins, strictly linked to the elimination of any type of animal exploitation. However, its connotative dimension of diet remains its strongest feature even in current societies, with the phenomenon being associated with a healthy lifestyle as well as a global trend. Although what led me to go vegan was first and foremost the ethical side, and therefore I am not a big fan of the mainstream idea of veganism being a trend, I do acknowledge the fact that the whole topic can be associated with a variety of other movements, and its increasing presence can be seen as a trend. Indeed, as shown through this thesis, the evolution of vegetarianism and the subsequent rise of veganism, proof how the latter cannot be considered just a fashion trend of the last period but rather a phenomenon inherent to a number of social and cultural movements that focus on transversal topics. And, since the final goal for any vegan advocate moved by ethical reasons is the abolition of animal exploitation, any means that allow getting closer and closer to that should be considered helpful. Therefore, I distance myself from vegan “extremists” that disregard both vegetarians and vegans that do not adopt such lifestyle merely for ethical reasons; such extremism, in my opinion, obstructs many people from trying to change their habits, categorizing veganism as a radical choice, rather than gaining more vegan supporters.

In conclusion, writing this thesis has allowed me to dig deeper into the main social movements related to veganism. While gaining further knowledge about the historical and social background of both vegetarianism and veganism, I have become more aware of the intrinsic dynamics that link broad phenomena to a variety of sources as well as means of reaching their goals. Once again, I acknowledge the presence of biases, as well as the use of technical data (like in the case of environmental and health issues) not well analyzed. Despite these limitations, I hope this thesis has given a clear overview of the development of veganism from a social point of view and maybe can motivate the readers to consider adopting a more cruelty-free lifestyle.

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