



## Promoting 'pro', 'low', and 'no' meat consumption in Switzerland: The role of emotions in practices



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### ABSTRACT

Meat consumption has become a contentious issue among the Swiss population. The emotional character of the debates surrounding the necessity for a change of habits, namely a reduction in consumption and a shift in the kind of meat we eat, reveals its particular place in our societies: as a symbolic food with roots in our affective economies, as involved in the creation of a shared culture and national identity, and as a political object used to defend different views. To date, research in sustainable consumption has given much attention to environmental- and animal-friendly groups and their practices. However, certain interest groups have been voicing the right to meat, or promoting alternative forms of meat consumption. In this paper, we seek to understand the affective dimension of 'no', 'low' and 'pro' meat consumption initiatives in the Swiss context. Based on a qualitative study and an understanding of emotions as part of social practices, we draw out what affects and related moralities are being mobilized by prescribers and how they are picked up in practice. By doing so, we contribute to further understanding the emotions and moral registers linked to different approaches to meat (non)consumption, their role in promoting certain practices over others, as well as the dynamics that make reducing meat consumption so controversial. We conclude by discussing the need to take emotions and related moralities seriously as a crucial step towards understanding opportunities for 'healthy and sustainable' food practices.

### 1. Introduction

Over the last decades, meat consumption has become an ever-more contentious issue in relation to health and environmental impacts. Red meat has consistently been found to have a high environmental impact, not least in terms of greenhouse gas emissions (Herrero et al., 2016; Poore & Nemecek, 2018), while increasing disease risk, such as colon cancer (Forouzanfar et al., 2015). In 2019, the successive publications of the EAT-Lancet Commission report on healthy diets and sustainable food systems (Willett et al., 2019) and the special report on *Climate Change and Land* by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2019) brought the need for reducing meat consumption at the front stage of the debate on sustainability and food. To date, regarding meat, research has given much attention to environmental- and animal-friendly groups and their practices. Yet, moving towards healthy and sustainable diets as a normative goal requires taking the voices of pro meat consumption advocates seriously. More research is needed on understanding different initiatives aimed towards promoting or dissuading the consumption of animal products, namely the opposition

between 'no' and 'pro' meat approaches, as well as 'low' meat and its different forms, from gastronomy to alternative proteins.

Discourses aimed at influencing meat consumption tend to rely on emotions and affects in their communication strategies, which often reflects a moral stance. In this paper, we aim to untangle the various positions in the public debates in Switzerland about the transformation of meat consumption, the moralities and values they rely on, and the emotions and affects they seek to elicit, to better understand the affective dimension of meat consumption practices. We do so by analyzing various initiatives related to either 'no', 'low' or 'pro' meat consumption in the Swiss context and the food prescriptions they are tied up with. We draw out what emotions and related moralities are being mobilized by prescribers, and look at how these emotions are performed or expressed by people engaged in different forms of (no) meat consumption. In this way, we contribute to further understanding the moral registers and emotions linked to different approaches to meat, their role in promoting certain practices over others, as well as the dynamics that make reducing meat production and consumption such a contentious issue.

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We start by introducing our conceptual framework, rooted in Norbert Elias' notion of an affective economy and based on relating prescriptions to social practices and emotions, to then focus on the case of meat consumption in relation to emotions and morality. We introduce our methodological approach, involving mixed methods, followed by a section where empirical results are presented around different 'pro, and low' as well as 'no' meat consumption initiatives, and how they relate to consumer practices. We conclude with a discussion of the relevance of Elias' 'process of civilization' thesis to meat consumption today, in light of debates around planetary and human health, as well as animal wellbeing.

## 2. Conceptual approach

### 2.1. Food prescriptions and practices as part of an 'affective economy'

In his seminal work *The Civilizing Process* (1978 [1939]), sociologist Norbert Elias argues that in the Late Middle Ages, European royal courts became a breeding place for new codes of conduct or a new *étiquette*, which revolved around pleasing the higher orders such as kings and queens through the suppression of the 'animal character' of courtesans. This progressive distancing of people and their 'animality' is what Elias designates through the concept of 'civilizing process'. This translated into evolving table manners which gradually make it unacceptable to spit at the table and eat with hands, or by efforts to erase bodily odours and public defecation. While being critical of the notion of 'civilizing' as a normative goal, Elias argues that the process of civilization operates through what he terms an 'affective economy' in which appropriate conduct in relation to the body is enforced through the exchange of emotions, particularly anxiety, shame and blame, which serve as sanctions for allegedly inappropriate conduct. The 'affective economy' is thus a heuristic device for understanding how and in what way certain codes of conduct are promoted over others, and with what emotional handles.

The process of civilization was built through the development of ever more complex rules around table manners and, more generally, bodily self-control. The rules were formalized, among other places, in books made of either blunt statements or amusing rhymes about what is good and bad, including how to consume animal products. Elias introduces the reader to one such rule book. The *Distichs of Cato* (3rd or 4th century AD) were part of a popular medieval schoolbook for learning Latin and teaching morals. As one of the couplets exemplifies, the codes of conduct were quite explicit, and guided people on how to behave when eating a meal: 'A number of people gnaw a bone and then put it back in the dish – this is a serious offense' (in Elias, 1978 [1939], p. 63). Sayings such as these, both in their content and interpretation, are similar to what we might term 'prescriptions' – a set of guidelines stating what and how it is best to eat, which vary across different contexts, and that can have a hold on how practices play out (Plessz, Dubuisson-Quellier, Gojard, & Barrey, 2016). Although prescriptions are linked to social norms, they are different from them, as their adoption or the failure to conform to them may or may not result in moral sanction (Godin & Sahakian, 2018). Just like rules which used to be transmitted through *distichs* or couplets, prescriptions around food consumption today can take on different forms: for example, they can be communicated through media, such as paid advertisements or public-service brochures, or be carried by friends or family.

The use of an emotional register to communicate around what ought or should be, and what is discouraged or frowned upon, characterizes both the *Distichs of Cato* and contemporary prescriptions. In this respect, emotions embedded in prescriptions and mobilized in their communication play a crucial role in how they translate into actual practices. How prescriptions are put into practice depends on how the latter evolve over time and in different settings. As a social ontology, the practice-based perspective as developed by Schatzki (2002) considers 'doings and sayings' as the object of study, rather than discourse. He

proposes that practices are made of understandings and rules, but also what he terms teleoaffective structures, defined as: '... a range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects and tasks, to varying degrees allied with normativized emotions and even moods' (p. 80). Emotions are thus embedded into the goal people might try to reach, and the means by which they do so. As such, emotions are central to how practices play out, deeply embedded in contexts and constitutive of relationships between people, objects, and their environment. This is aligned with Scheer's (2012) work, whereby emotions can be viewed as a practical engagement with the world, emerging from 'bodily dispositions conditioned by a social context, which always has cultural and historical specificity' (p. 193). For Scheer, emotions are part of practices in three ways: emotive expressions are performative, and thus practices express emotions; emotions are also communicative, in that they engender a form of exchange with others; lastly, emotions can be mobilized in practices, as a form of mood management. Following Sahakian (2019), we posit that studying emotions in practices can help uncover how people understand priorities in terms of how things should or ought to be, revealing tensions or harmony in the interpretation of different prescriptions which oftentimes seek to mobilize emotions.

The study of emotions, tied up to prescribing one form of food consumption over another, relates to how different moralities with regard to meat consumption have a hold on how meat consumption practices play out at the household level. Following Zigon (2007), a distinction must be made 'between the unreflective moral dispositions of everyday life and the conscious ethical tactics performed in the ethical moment' (p. 148). For him, an 'ethical moment' represents a moral breakdown, during which conscious choices must be made in order to 'return to the unreflective state of being moral' (p. 133), or conforming to the ethical expectations of one's social group through 'ethical tactics'. Emotions, in prescriptions and practices, can play a role in that moral breakdown, as part of an 'affective economy' in that they lie in the interdependencies between people, practices and prescriptions. Our focus on 'pro, low or no' meat consumption initiatives in Switzerland is an effort to see how unreflective moral dispositions are either maintained or contested, and the role of emotions as a potential trigger towards intervening in and changing practices – towards the normative goal of reduced meat consumption.

### 2.2. Meat consumption marked by disgust, indignation and trust

Across cultures, meat has been the target of most food taboos and prescriptions, while being consistently considered among the most prized food (Navarrete & Fessler, 2003). Scientific literature shows how morals and emotions dominate our relationship to meat and its origins, from production to end consumption. Meat is a strongly symbolic food (Douglas, 1975), often linked to a high social status (Fiddes, 1991), which holds a special place in commensality practices in the Western world (Fischler and Pardo 2013). It is also a contentious issue, raising passions and decisive opinions on whether we should eat animals, and in which context (Holm & Møhl, 2000). Studying meat consumption through the lens of emotions means thinking about its place within social relationships attached to food, but also grasping the evolution of human-animal relations (Gouabault & Burton-Jeangros, 2010), specifically relationships with the animals that are destined to provide meat.

For a large part, in Europe, the relationship between humans and animals has been marked by rapid urbanization and the growing physical distance that separates spaces of livestock farming and slaughter of farm animals from where the majority of the population lives. At the same time, the killing of animals has been more and more delegated to specialized professionals and workers, often belonging to the most vulnerable segments of the population (Compa, 2004; Gouveia & Juska, 2002), who are almost the only ones to face this reality (Mouret, 2012; Mouret & Porcher, 2007; Rémy, 2009), which is increasingly perceived as morally shocking. This results in a large distance between animal

slaughter and the largest proportion of the human population, not only in physical terms, but also at a psychological (Benningstad & Kunst, 2020) and a social level.

Similarly, at the consumer level, the relationship between animals and humans is dominated by the dissociation between the living animal for which one feels empathy, from the meat in the plate, which has been termed *sarcophagia* (Vialles, 1988). Previous research showed how moral disengagement is a way to solve the 'meat paradox', which designates the discomfort induced by enjoying eating meat while being aware of animal suffering (Buttler & Walther, 2019). Moral disengagement is in part rendered possible by attributing animals with low mental capacities, and denying their ability to suffer (Ang, Chan, & Singh, 2019; Loughnan, Haslam, & Bastian, 2010), or seeing animals solely as a food commodity (Kupsala, 2018). This is reflected in Elias' work, where meat is a highly emotional and moralized issue. Based on his historical study, meat consumption can be associated with pleasure, but also with shame, and it is more generally imbued with moral judgments and significations which tend to be strongly expressed. And yet, in the 'civilizing process', humans have feelings, as suggested by this excerpt, with no consideration for the feeling of animals: 'From a standard of feeling by which the sight and carving of a dead animal on the table are actually experienced as pleasurable, or at least as not at all unpleasant, the development leads to another standard by which reminders that the meat dish has something to do with the killing of an animal are avoided to the utmost' (1978 [1939], p. 120).

Disgust is one of the most frequent emotions elicited by meat. In relation to food, Rozin and Fallon define disgust as the 'revulsion at the prospect of oral incorporation of offensive objects' (1987, p. 23), and argue that disgust is triggered by ideational factors, meaning that it is rooted into cultural and social rules, rather than in the food itself. Disgust is often presented as a moral emotion, which can roughly be defined as 'the emotions that respond to moral violations or that motivate moral behavior' (Haidt, 2003, p. 853). Research on vegetarianism suggests that the moral judgment on meat consumption, regarding the killing of animals for example, elicits disgust, as opposed to disgust motivating a change in diet (Fessler, Arguello, Mekdara, & Macias, 2003; Rozin, Markwith, & Stoess, 1997). However, there is no consensus on the nature of the connection between disgust and moral judgement. Whether disgust amplifies moral judgement, is a consequence of a moral violation, or is a moralizing emotion, remains debated and the general diagnosis is that more research is needed (Landy & Goodwin, 2015; Pizarro, Inbar, & Helion, 2011).

To discourage people from eating animal products, mobilizing disgust has proven to be a most effective strategy. In a quantitative study among German-speaking Swiss adults, Egolf, Siegrist, and Hartmann (2018) found that food disgust was correlated with the rejection of certain food textures, leading to more food waste. Mobilizing disgust can also be achieved by highlighting the proximity and similarities between animals and humans, especially in the common ability to experience sensory feelings, such as suffering. However, the use of disgust as a way to influence practices raises ethical and moral questions, as it can lead to the discrimination and stigmatization of certain groups (Lupton, 2015).

While disgust is a rich example of a moral emotion, especially in relation to meat consumption, it is far from the only one. Shame, guilt, sympathy, empathy, contempt, and anger have also been singled out (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999; Turner & Stets, 2006). From a more sociological perspective, Turner and Stets (2006) argue that the range of emotions *vis à vis* morality is much broader and has to be understood in relation to both psychological and sociocultural dynamics. This means that while shame and blame are the main vehicles for enforcing social norms by communicating negative judgments, as stated by Elias, the range of emotions that contribute to the formation of practices by making explicit what is good and bad is much larger. Indignation, for example, has been described as a 'morally grounded form of anger' (Jasper, 2014, p. 208) and foundational to protest

movements. It can be elicited by moral shocks – which Jasper describes as a 'visceral unease in reaction to information and events which signal that the world is not as it seemed' (2014, p. 210). Given its particular place in our cultures, the whole process of producing and consuming meat offers many grounds for indignation, as seen in the controversies surrounding it, which we will explore below.

Trust is not an emotion, but it is an important element in meat consumption practices and in initiatives that seek to influence meat consumption. For the sociologist Georg Simmel (1950), trust is a substitute to knowledge in the establishment of social relationships, which he refers to as intersubjective trust. Similarly, Barbalet (2009) defines it as an 'emotional facility or modality of action', and suggests that trust is relational and relies on the emotion of confidence linked to a positive evaluation of both someone and the future. Furthermore, trusting someone presupposes shared values and a positive moral evaluation (Bildtgård, 2008; Uslaner, 2002). In Europe, trust in food has been shown to be strongly influenced by cultural features, social practices and institutional performance (Poppe & Kjærnes, 2003). Poppe and Kjærnes found that while meat is generally less trusted than fruits and vegetables, it ranks higher than processed foods. In a recent study (GfK EU3C 2012), differences were found between European countries on how consumers trust the safety of meat on the market, as well as their trust of the main actors involved in meat provisioning. Similar to Vukasovič's (2009) research in Slovenia, the study also found that consumers tend to trust meat that originates in their own country.

### 2.3. Meat consumption, everyday life, health, and the environment

Meat consumption is still the norm among many in the Western world, but it is increasingly contested (Delanoue, 2018; Delanoue, Dockes, Roguet, & Magdelaine, 2015; Legendre, Sans, Barrey, & Boutin, 2018). Controversies arise around three topics: health, both at the individual level (with cardiovascular diseases for example), and at the population level (with sanitary crises, such as mad cow disease), the environment, in particular in relation to climate change, and finally animal welfare, with secondary concerns regarding the working conditions of farmers and industrial workers, and threats on peasant farming (Aiking, 2014; Westhoek et al., 2014). In this context, large meat producer associations find themselves battling with competing interests from groups promoting alternative forms of meat consumption, vegetarianism, and veganism. Health concerns have given rise to legal and marketing responses about food safety and risk (Blue, 2009; Macdiarmid, Douglas, & Campbell, 2016). Such concerns, alongside concerns about animal welfare and the general quality of meat products, do not seem to lead to significant changes in consumption practices (Holm & Möhl, 2000; Schröder & McEachern, 2004). The perception of the environmental impact of meat may be more of an influence on its consumption and that of meat substitutes (Siegrist & Hartmann, 2019), although other studies demonstrate that even knowledge of adverse health and environmental impacts are insufficient, when meat consumption is rooted in social and cultural factors (for the case of Scotland, see Macdiarmid et al., 2016). The meat and livestock industry, powerful in economic terms and through lobbying groups, often reacts to these controversies by building an opposing narration of meat production. Much of the discourse is around the passion associated with meat consumption, with, for example, burger advertising as conveying messages of male, heterosexual virility (Buerkle, 2009).

In response to growing health and environmental concerns around meat consumption, alternative proteins have been emerging in European markets. Sexton, Garnett, and Lorimer (2019) divide the field of alternative proteins between plant-based proteins, edible insects, and 'cellular agriculture', including in vitro or lab meat, and products obtained through genetic modification and fermentation of yeast cells (p. 48). Cellular agriculture technology and products are not yet ripe for introduction on the market, but plant-based 'meat', designed to replace

beef burgers for example, is now for sale in fast-food chains and grocery stores in the northwestern hemisphere. Sexton et al. (2019) argue that the marketing of such products, said to be the 'future of food', is structured around five promises: that plant-based meat can lead to healthier bodies, help feed the world's growing population, is good for animals and the environment, allows a better control for sale in relation to cleanliness and sanitation issues, and tastes like animals. These products, wrapped in the enticing glow of technological innovation, find themselves at odds with the habitual discourses around vegetarian and vegan food consumption, but also with pro-meat discourses narratives on passion, tradition and local production and consumption (Anderson & Bryant, 2018; Beekman, 2000).

How these different types of initiatives sit together, on a range from 'no' to 'low' or 'pro' meat consumption, and what emotions they convey in an affective economy, is the focus of this paper – studied in the case of Switzerland.

### 3. Methodological approach

To uncover food prescriptions and understand how they relate to food consumption practices, we used a two-staged, mixed-methods, qualitative approach. In a first phase, we worked towards identifying the dominant and emerging food prescriptions in Switzerland. These findings informed the second phase of the research, during which we studied food practices in relation to healthy and sustainable diets, and the role of prescriptions in the formation and sustaining of practices. As part of the first phase, in 2016, we completed a mapping of ninety organizations in Switzerland active in formulating or carrying prescriptions, ranging from public health authorities and associations, to private businesses and interest groups. In addition, we analyzed 188 articles published in Swiss newspapers and magazines (see Godin & Sahakian, 2018). As part of this review, we identified nineteen initiatives aimed at influencing meat consumption at the household level, advocating for the consumption of more meat, less meat, no meat, or meat of a specific quality or provenance (See Table 1 for a description). Our purposeful sampling criteria was to include initiatives that carried both a visual and text-based message, and that were developed by different type of actors (for example, for-profit and not-for-profit entities) across the food-value chain, including actors such as stock breeders, associations of producers, butchers, grocery stores, restaurants, blog and cookbooks authors, or vegan activists, to list but a few. We agreed as a team to the nineteen initiatives presented in Table 1, covering Western and Eastern Switzerland, and including at least three examples from each initiative type, from 'pro' to 'low' and 'no' meat initiatives.

In addition, we conducted five interviews with nonacademic project partners and other relevant actors from national and regional associations and public interest groups, working on food and nutritional issues. We also engaged in participant observation at health- and sustainability-related events across Switzerland. Based on these first results, we turned to consumer research through nine in-depth interviews and five focus groups with people from various sexes, age, type of households, and socioeconomic backgrounds, coming from urban, suburban, and rural areas. In total, we engaged with 39 participants. The focus groups were designed to access people who had strong views in relation to specific prescriptions: we selected a group of people who adopted vegan lifestyles for a focus group in Lausanne; we worked with a company in Basel, on the border with both Germany and France, where we met people who identify as 'expatriates' and who tend to provision food across borders; we discussed with people from a rural area in Western Switzerland, involved in the agricultural industry, such as a veterinarians or farmers; we brought together a group of people engaged in sustainable food production and consumption in Zurich; and we met with social workers and inhabitants of a lower-income neighborhood, with few food provisioning opportunities, in Geneva. Consumer interviews and focus group discussions addressed the

organization of everyday life in relation to food habits, along with representations of change. Our goal was to understand how prescriptions are translated in practices, with specific attention given to the tensions, contradictions, and synergies between prescriptions, and emotions as part of practices. Most citations from focus groups, interviews, but also initiatives included in the text have been translated from French or German by the authors. A few citations were originally in English; all participant names have been anonymized.

During interviews and focus groups, we turned to photo-elicitation to uncover ideas and emotions in relation to food prescriptions and practices that could have otherwise remained untold (Lachal et al., 2012; Sahakian & Bertho, 2018). The visual tools used to discuss meat consumption involved images of the nose-to-tail movement, of an insect burger, as well as a school setting where participants were asked to react to a scenario where schoolchildren would be provided with only meat-free meals. Select initiatives in visual format, identified through the media analysis and listed in Table 1, were brought into the focus group discussions, for example to illustrate 'low meat consumption' we used material from a nose-to-tail movement initiative. In terms of adhering to high ethical standards, approval of the study was given by the *École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne* (EPFL) Human Research Ethics Committee, a key partner in the project (HREC 014–2017) on August 25, 2017. Prior to their involvement in the study, for interviews and focus groups, participants received an oral explanation of the purpose of the study, and agreed in writing as to their informed consent.

### 4. The social and moral context of food prescriptions and meat consumption in Switzerland

As discussed elsewhere (Godin & Sahakian, 2018), discourses around food consumption can be decomposed into seven dominant prescriptions stating what and how we should eat, in relation to health and sustainability. Prescriptions on 'local and seasonal diets', along with 'natural and organic diets', form one defining axis for both healthy and sustainable food consumption. They often relate to the consumption of 'less of better meat consumption' as opposed to 'vegetarian and vegan diets'. These four prescriptions are included in the all-encompassing prescriptions related to 'eating as a pleasure, conviviality' and a 'balanced diet', which usually refers to the Swiss Food Pyramid. One last prescription refers to 'slimming', which can overlap with all prescriptions or come in opposition to them. These prescriptions offer a moral and social context in which to understand initiatives aimed at influencing consumption towards 'pro', 'low' and 'no' meat trends.

The 'less of better meat consumption' prescription is uncontroversial in Switzerland because what is 'less' and what is 'better' are loosely defined. Lowering meat consumption can involve what has been termed a 'flexitarianism' (de Boer et Aiking 2017) or 'reducitarianism' (Jallinoja, Vinnari, & Niva, 2019; Kateman, 2017) approach, with the main arguments putting forward the need to reduce meat consumption for human health and reduced environmental impacts. In the Swiss context, the emphasis on 'better meat consumption' is an attempt to strike a balance between health and environmental concerns on one side, and taste and pleasure on the other. For some, 'better' refers to local and organic meat, coming from animals who enjoyed a 'good life' and a 'dignified death'. For others, 'high quality' meat can refer to expensive products such as Argentinian steak or a more valued cut, and will mostly be defined through taste, texture and representations of luxury. This represents a shift from quantity to quality through 'less of better meat' – what has been found to be a possible entry point for more 'sustainable' food consumption (Schösler & de Boer, 2018).

The prescription on 'less of better meat consumption' can also be divided between what Legendre et al. (2018) have termed alternative meat consumption – referring to a farmer interpretative frame – and meat consumption preservation – oriented towards an industrial interpretative frame, which represents the dominant way of delivering meat through intense productivity. The farmer model is described through a



**Table 1**  
Initiatives aimed at influencing household meat consumption practices (data gathered August through September 2017, Switzerland).

Initiator	Category	Type	Description of the initiative	Website
Proviande (Promeat)	Pro meat	For profit	National cooperative promoting the interests of Swiss meat producers through ads, a website, an online toolbox, training for professionals, events, etc.	<a href="http://www.proviande.ch">www.proviande.ch</a>
Mühlerama Museum	Pro meat	Not-for-profit	National museum promoting Swiss gastronomic heritage through an exhibition ('Die Wurst Ausstellung' or Sausage exhibition)	<a href="http://www.muehlerama.ch">www.muehlerama.ch</a>
Um die Wurst: Meistermetzger der Schweiz (On sausages: Master Butchers of Switzerland)	Pro meat	For profit	Book by Andreas Heller, painting a panorama of Swiss butchers	<a href="http://www.echtzeit.ch/buch/um-die-wurst">www.echtzeit.ch/buch/um-die-wurst</a>
À la ferme (At the farm)	Pro meat	For profit	Producers selling meat through short circuits, namely direct sale and home delivery	<a href="http://www.alaferme.ch">www.alaferme.ch</a>
AuGust	Pro meat	For profit	Butcher and restaurant selling high-end meat consumption	<a href="http://www.au-gust.ch">www.au-gust.ch</a>
Zumfressgern (To feast)	Low meat	Not-for-profit	Platform promoting the nose-to-tail movement	<a href="http://www.zumfressgern.ch">www.zumfressgern.ch</a>
Kuhteilchen.ch	Low meat	For profit	Distributor selling meat through short circuits using a crowd butchering approach	<a href="http://www.kuhteilchen.ch">www.kuhteilchen.ch</a>
Metzger	Low meat	For profit	Butcher and restaurant selling high-quality meat inspired by the nose-to-tail philosophy	<a href="http://www.metzger-grill.ch">www.metzger-grill.ch</a>
Plan de restauration collective durable (Sustainable and collective restoration plan)	Low meat	Not-for-profit	Public policy promoting healthy and sustainable food consumption in schools, including a weekly 'meat-free' day, in Vaud Canton (western Switzerland)	<a href="http://www.lausanne.ch/durable">www.lausanne.ch/durable</a>
Manifesto Blood for food	Low meat	For profit	Platform for promoting blood cooking and the nose-to-tail philosophy through workshops and events, conferences, a website, social and mainstream media presence, etc., as part of a small business (Sobre Mesa)	<a href="http://www.sobre-mesa.com/bloodmanifest">www.sobre-mesa.com/bloodmanifest</a>
Le gibier du domaine (Game meat of the area)	Low meat	For profit	Producer selling game meat through a family farm, creating proximity between animals and customers offering access to its domain	<a href="http://www.gibier.ch">www.gibier.ch</a>
Post zur Chalthe Hose	Low meat	For profit	Producer with important media presence promoting animal wellbeing and dignity in death	<a href="http://www.zurchalthehose.ch">www.zurchalthehose.ch</a>
Flaora	Low meat	For profit	Distributor and consultant supporting organic farmers in marketing and distribution	<a href="http://www.flaoora.ch">www.flaoora.ch</a>
KAGfreiland	Low meat	Not-for-profit	Association promoting animal dignity and wellbeing through a label, ads, events, political campaigns, etc.	<a href="http://www.kagfreiland.ch">www.kagfreiland.ch</a>
Essento insects	Low meat	For profit	Company producing and promoting insects as alternative protein	<a href="http://www.essento.ch">www.essento.ch</a>
Migros Generation M	Low meat	For profit	Label from a major Swiss supermarket chain promoting more sustainable food and meat consumption through a label and marketing campaign	<a href="http://generation-m.migros.ch">generation-m.migros.ch</a>
Vegan.ch	No meat	Not-for-profit	Association supporting and promoting vegan diets through a website and social media presence, events, workshops, etc.	<a href="http://www.vegan.ch">www.vegan.ch</a>
Swissveg	No meat	Not-for-profit	Association supporting and promoting meat-free lifestyles through a website, a magazine, events, buying guides, political actions, etc.	<a href="http://www.swissveg.ch">www.swissveg.ch</a>
Hiltl und Tibits	No meat	For profit	Hiltl claims to be the first vegetarian restaurant in Switzerland (since 1898), also promoting vegetarian food through cookbooks. Tibits is its sister company and also a restaurant.	<a href="http://www.hiltl.ch">www.hiltl.ch</a> <a href="http://www.tibits.ch">www.tibits.ch</a>

defense of local production as a response to environmental and ethical issues, but also to a moral imperative of fairness (Legendre et al., 2018; Porcher, 2011). As for vegan and vegetarian diets, Legendre et al. place them in an 'antispeciesist' interpretative frame. The moral approach to killing and eating animals is what puts prescriptions around the consumption of 'less of better meat' in opposition with most vegetarian and vegan diets: promoters of vegetarian or vegan diets most often consider the slaughter of animals for human consumption as fundamentally wrong. People and groups promoting the consumption of less of better meat direct their effort towards a better use of resources in the name of planetary health, and put forward animal wellbeing in life and dignity in death. Therefore, neither prescriptions should be placed on a continuum, but rather can be viewed as opposed to each other. Emerging trends, such as the nose-to-tail movement or ultra-processed plant-based products, can be related to these and other prescriptions. For the former, an emphasis is placed on improving the process of animal slaughter or 'less of better meat consumption', but also ties to prescriptions around eating a balanced diet (which in most cases includes animal-based protein) and 'eating as pleasure, conviviality'. For the latter, plant-based products fall into the 'vegan and vegetarian diet' prescription, but can either be aligned with 'eating as pleasure, conviviality' (in how such products are promoted as alleviating feelings of sacrifice in their meat-like appearances) or in opposition (when such diets represent a form of treason from the 'traditional' meat diet).

The morality of how animals are treated, in life, is in contrast with the vegan stance – or the immorality of killing animals for human needs. The moral concept of animal dignity is enshrined in the Swiss Constitution. In 2008, it was a core tenant of the Animal Welfare Act (Swiss-Academies, 2010), which led to stricter and tighter rules regarding animal husbandry including detention, transport, and slaughter (Bolliger, 2016). Animal dignity is defined as the 'inherent value of the animal, which is to be respected by anyone who handles it; the dignity of animals is not duly respected if they are subject to stress which cannot be justified by overriding interests; stress involves in particular the infliction of pain, suffering or harm on animals, frightening or degrading them, profoundly altering their appearance or capacities, or unduly instrumentalizing them' (Swiss-Academies, 2010, art. 3). In accordance with this definition, new rules were implemented through the main tools already in place in agricultural policy, such as minimum standards, bans and orders, and financial incentives (Phan-Huy & Fawaz, 2003). This political innovation resonates with the fact that, in the Western world in general and in Switzerland in particular, people often express concern about animal welfare and show empathy towards mistreated animals (Tiplady, Walsh, & Phillips, 2013).

Vegetarian and vegan diets must also contest with the central role of the Swiss cow in the construction of Swiss national identity, tied to the imagery of alpine landscapes (Droz, 2002; Kaufmann & Zimmer, 1998). Meat and dairy-product consumption (including Swiss milk-based chocolate) are tied up with cultural belonging and tradition in Switzerland, often in relation to an idealized past, purer and more authentic. The countryside and its imagery, along with national values, are also common tropes in the promotion of meat consumption in other Western countries (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018). It is in light of this social and cultural understanding of Swiss food prescriptions that we now turn to an analysis of the nineteen initiatives covered in our study.

## 5. The use of emotions and morality in 'pro, low and no' meat consumption initiatives

The nineteen initiatives included in this study, as illustrative of 'pro', 'low' and 'no' meat consumption, are analyzed below in relation to two prescriptions that are dichotomous: 'less of better meat consumption', and 'vegan or vegetarian diets'. We assess what emotions and related moralities are being mobilized by prescribers, through the study of the initiatives, and discuss how they are picked up in practice, based on data from interviews and focus groups.

### 5.1. 'Pro' and 'low' meat initiatives

In the analysis of the different initiatives promoting 'pro' and 'low' meat consumption, the main messages put forward are around organic meat, regional and Swiss products, alternative production methods, or the reinforcement of cultural heritage around food products, dishes and food-related events. Such initiatives are mostly supported by private actors such as associations of producers, large-scale retailers, and butchers, although organizations concerned with regional development or cultural heritage can also be involved. They resort to strategies such as classic advertisements and marketing initiatives both on- and offline, cultural productions such as books, but also exhibitions or labels, among others. All actors have in common advocating for the consumption of Swiss meat and countering the negative image associated with meat production and distribution.

Many initiatives tie Swiss meat to sentiments of national belonging and pride, and to a sense of community expressed through ideals of authenticity and family values. The visual and written support materials often refer to family business and values by staging children and intergenerational relationships. They also tend to present a romanticized version of life on a farm as being more 'authentic' in regard to traditional lifestyles. For example, a visual for a publicity campaign from the biggest Swiss meat lobbying group shows a father and his son carrying a bucket of milk, with two lambs walking alongside, and wording underlying the prevalence of family farms in Switzerland; claims are made about environmental sustainability. When pushing for the consumption of 'conventional' meat, which in the context of this study mostly represents Swiss meat, the producers are the focus of attention and of the sales argument, as opposed to the animal and its quality of life. The producers represented in such initiatives play an important role in embodying so-called Swiss values and cultural identity.

In relation to discourses and initiatives promoting meat consumption in general, mostly carried by the main national meat lobby, concerns regarding free choice and autonomy are often put forward. Here, meat consumption crystallizes not only feeling of cultural belonging, but also the attachment to liberal values and the perceived freedom granted by a free market economy. As such, discourses around meat consumption are an occasion for the expression of the attachment to one's cultural heritage, but also to the rules and values embedded in the market economy. In many ways, representations of the economic system in discourses around meat and freedom are only partial, and they carefully exclude key elements that allow such a freedom to exist, in terms of the quality and the accessibility of products. Issues related to the regulation of meat production and distribution by the State tend to be erased, along with its contribution to avoiding foodborne diseases or chemical contaminants. At the same time, the imbrication of meat production in international markets – such as the import of animal feed from South American countries – is carefully removed from public discourses, as it would come in contradiction with sentiments of authenticity and national pride, but also environmental sustainability, on which most initiatives are based.

In initiatives that put forward consuming 'less of better meat', ideas of national culture and traditions, of family values, and of authentic lifestyles are also present, but are second to the relationship between animals and humans, which is presented both in a negative and a positive way. First, alternative approaches to meat consumption are presented 'by the negative', as a remedy to the perceived cruel treatment of cattle in large scale, industrial facilities. In this case, shame and disgust are used to trigger changes in practices. As a counterbalance, another trend of discourse insists on the responsibility we hold towards animals and the respect they deserve, suggesting that we can keep eating meat while treating animals with dignity. This implies not forgetting where the meat comes from, ensuring the quality of life of cattle, giving them a dignified, peaceful death, and making good use of all parts of the animal. In this spirit, one Swiss farmer gained significant media attention

because he kills his animals himself, with a gun, on the field, as an allegedly more humane way to slaughter, avoiding animal stress and suffering in transport and at the slaughterhouse. Respect and dignity are central to his relationship with cattle. As he puts it: 'We use the whole animal. If it were not the case, we would lose our honor' (Nils Müller in a newspaper article by Zünd, 2016; translation by authors).

The taste of high-quality meat and the gastronomic experience are also important elements of these initiatives. The visual tools used to promote local and organic food consumption involve images of various pieces of meat, often raw, along with pictures of people delivering, selling, or cooking the products. It reflects what Vialles (1988) refers to as a *zoophage* meat-eating approach, where animal origins of meat are valued as part of the gastronomic experience.

Next to this, some fringe initiatives build on more disruptive ideas that aim at significantly altering our relation to meat products and our consumption practices, by putting the animal at the forefront and closing the gap between the consumer and the origin of its food. They include the nose-to-tail consumption philosophy, which includes blood cooking, but also alternative retail practices such as 'crowd butchering', or marketing strategies that highlight the animal and its death. In this spirit, a butcher in Zurich used the image of a skinned rabbit in social media and other online communications, presenting it seemingly ready to jump as if it were alive, against a background of white kitchen tiles. This distinct group of 'pro' and 'low' meat initiatives also draws on Swiss culture and heritage to promote alternative approaches to consumption, but refers more often to traditions and practices that are represented as dating back to before the industrialization of meat production. An example of this is a cook, activist and blogger from Zurich promoting the nose-to-tail movement through blood-based recipes, linking this cooking practice to Swiss cultural heritage and urging consumers to overcome disgust, saying: 'The time has come, when we must learn the value of blood again [...]. A lot of people are afraid of it, because it reminds them of accidents. But it is part of an ancient eating culture. It contains a lot of proteins and iron, and it is a great thickener' (Laura Schälchli in a newspaper article by Schmid (2016); translation by authors).

While we cannot know the direct impact of such initiatives on consumption practices, we did study affects in regard to meat consumption among research participants, revealing the important role of trust and disgust; in addition, some images associated with the initiatives listed in Table 1 were used in interviews as a form of photo elicitation. In relation to trust in the context of meat consumption, a central preoccupation for participants was the quality of the products, which most often relates to the quality of life of cattle, the use of antibiotics, sanitary and traceability issues, and taste. In this respect, Swiss meat was generally seen as more trustworthy by participants, as has been found in other countries. One immigrant woman living on the border between Switzerland and Germany and sourcing her food in both countries says:

Meat, to be honest, I buy in Switzerland. Somehow since I've been living here I kind of lost trust versus the rest of the Europe, somehow, so I tend to buy [the] kind of meat coming from Switzerland. I have the idea that, like, animals live happily somehow.

For participants, trust was built through the relationship, actual or symbolic, between consumers and the animal food products, which includes a number of intermediaries. In many cases, trust was elicited by a direct contact with one or the other actor of the supply chain. Going to the butcher, preferably a small, independent one, as opposed to the butchery counter in bigger supermarkets, was seen as one way to build trust. It created an impression of familiarity with the product, with the butcher seen as a guardian against sanitary risks linked to meat. One elderly participant, who places great value in the quality of her food and dedicates time to cooking, gardening, and provisioning, explains:

- I have a butcher that I ... He has all the traceability of ... of what he sells. So, I trust him, because obviously, I don't go to the farmer but I trust him. So, I very, very, very rarely buy meat at the supermarket. Very rarely.

- Why?

- Because I don't trust it. That's how it is. I tell myself that necessarily, they [the supermarkets] must go through factory farming and it's true that from time to time, we see stories that, certainly are a bit exaggerated but it's horrible. You don't become vegetarian, you become outright vegan when you see how they treat some chicken and turkey. In the end, it's horrible. It disgusts you from meat.

Many consumers seemed to operate based on the idea that someone with whom they have a face-to-face interaction will necessarily sell them a 'good' product, mostly in terms of lack of antibiotics, quality of feed, and animal welfare. As such, the relationship offers a protection against mistrust and disgust, which seem to go hand-in-hand. For loyal customers, there was also a certain pride linked to being on a first-name basis with the butcher, which is also true of relationships with other producers and sellers. Nevertheless, the ideal, in terms of trust and sense of belonging, is a direct contact with the producer who took care of the animal and is able to provide information about its breeding conditions. In this regard, messaging from the various initiatives that emphasizes animals' dignity and agency, as well as our responsibility towards human and planetary health, takes part in strengthening the relationship between consumers and the product they will consume. Such messaging can also lead people to think they are about to ingest the meat or milk of a 'happy Swiss cow', as opposed to beef coming from industrial farms. For this reason, conflating meat production with family life on a farm and intergenerational relationships, as well as part of one's cultural heritage, as is often done by 'pro' and 'low' meat initiatives, allows to build upon positive affects already experienced by consumers regarding meat.

For participants in our study, disgust was an integral part of their food practices in that it influenced what they would not eat. It could also arise in relation to non-trusted foods or to harmless products that are nonetheless considered as non-comestible by certain people. In Switzerland, objects of disgust vary between generations, sometimes across the rural/urban divide, and in relation to family history. Entrails and giblets, often linked to the idea of 'less of better meat' as they are understood as reducing food waste, are an example of food with many different interpretations. For some participants, neglected or forgotten meat pieces were not seen as problematic, as it was usual to eat the whole animal during their or their parents' childhood – as also found in a study in Finland (Kupsala, 2018). For others, who have never been in contact with such food, the thought was revolting and they said they would rather quit eating meat than eating entrails, drawing a clear line between what can and cannot be ingested. A similar, more visceral reaction was elicited by the idea of animal mistreatment, as illustrated in the interview excerpt above.

## 5.2. 'No' meat initiatives

In Switzerland, meat-free diets are mostly put forward by not-for-profit organizations such as citizen associations, but also by restaurants, food producers, and retailers, and their labels. Initiatives promoting vegan and vegetarian diets to a general audience are designed to make the population aware of ecological issues as well as issues related to animal wellbeing, and to make such diets a real possibility for people, as opposed to a fringe lifestyle. Initiatives entail offering resources such as recipes, buying guides, cookbooks, and blogs. They can also work to create demonstration sites to show to a general audience what a vegetarian or vegan diet might look like (Godin & Sahakian, 2018), for example through vegetarian meals or 'meat-free Mondays' promoted in cafeterias. Promoters of vegetarian and vegan diets can also work

towards the creation of a community offering support and opportunities to meet like-minded people. Interviews and focus groups demonstrated that the feeling of community is especially important for people adopting more restrictive diets such as raw veganism, which implies a significant investment in time, the development of new competencies, and often involves spiritual beliefs that are confirmed and reinforced within a group. Being part of a community can also represent an opportunity to escape the frictions created in everyday life by food consumption practices that are at odds with more mainstream habits.

The communication strategy for promoting vegetarian and vegan diets tends to put forward the more innovative aspects of a meat-free lifestyle and positive emotions, or relies on negative affects – for example, in relation to animal suffering. On the positive side, some initiatives seek to elicit pride in taking a moral stance on the suffering and slaughter of animals, while also insisting on the pleasure of good food and trying new things. They also present vegetarianism and veganism as being ‘trendy’, counting on the development of a sense of identity. Such initiatives present cheerful, colorful images, sometimes suggesting cleanliness and purity. They also appeal to curiosity and the attraction to novelty. For example, an advertisement for a vegetarian restaurant in Zurich, featuring colorful vegetables staged as a garden with a pristine white backdrop tells potential customers that ‘There is no animal in this paradise’ – referring to both the plate and the restaurant, and excluding humans from the count. The promotion of vegetarianism and veganism tends to represent such diets as removed from tradition, and rarely invoke notions of patriotism or cultural belonging – although this seems to be changing, as we will discuss below.

On the more negative side, anger and disgust are common tropes and go hand-in-hand with anthropomorphic representations of animals as sensible beings capable of human-like emotions. Discourses and images in such initiatives insist on dramatic depictions of cruel breeding conditions and animal suffering. The imagery is dark, often composed of various shades of gray and black. It is accompanied by a narrative of proximity between animals and humans, along with the animals’ ability to experience sadness, fear, stress, and pain, and to build lasting relationships between them and with humans. In this spirit, a 12-min YouTube video placed online by a Swiss vegan association explains to viewers how clever, social, and close to us pigs are, before showing the ‘loveless’ conditions in which they are raised and how this leads to negative mental and physical effects. The goal of such videos is to induce disgust, but also shame among people who tacitly support such farming practices by eating animals raised in these conditions. Both the positive and the negative approaches to discouraging meat consumption draw on the consumers’ sense of responsibility by putting forward animals’ suffering, representing them as creatures that have rights and deserve respect, and insisting on the fact that humans belong to the animal reign, just as cattle and poultry animals. In all cases, there is an open attempt to change dominant norms and induce a cultural transformation, which would challenge the position of meat as an essential ingredient of communal meals.

In focus groups and interviews, the ideas of vegetarian and vegan diets created a whole range of reactions among vegetarian and non-vegetarian people, from an enthusiast adoption to a visceral rejection of what was perceived as an attack on a common culture. For adopters of such diets, pride and joy, but also feelings of indignation at poor animal treatment were the dominant affects. A woman in her late thirties, who adopted a raw vegan diet three years prior to our interview, around which she now organizes her daily life, experiences both emotions simultaneously. On one side, when seeing meat, her immediate feeling is that of animal suffering. Talking about meat, she says: ‘I see the suffering behind it and, and then, energetically, that burger has a lot of negativity in it because there’s a lot of suffering involved in that’. At the same time, preparing food is a ritual and eating is a source of great joy: ‘Well, for me, food is like a whole event. I love making it. I love preparing it. I love for it to look pretty. I like setting up the plate. I like enjoying it’.

In a similar manner, most participants in the ‘vegan’ focus group expressed finding great satisfaction in cooking and learning about new ingredients, dishes or techniques. Indignation at animal treatment and the intensive use of resources for producing meat was also common. For many participants, their veganism seemed to gain a political dimension over time, and their diet became explicitly related to their place in the world. A woman engaged in the vegan scene in Western Switzerland explains: ‘At the beginning, it may be just a step, you want certain products and with time, actually, we understand certain things. You understand actually the convergence among social struggles, the domination of humans even on nature ...’. All these statements are communicated with much conviction, as they are an important element in the formation of the participant’s identity. In this sense, certain forms of veganism are a good example of how personal consumption choices are a form of prefiguration towards political engagement.

Among non-vegetarian participants, vegetarian and vegan diets are sometimes an object of mistrust and ridicule, with perhaps a slight sense of fear at the prospect of being forced to give up meat. A man a few years into his retirement expresses his dismay in these words:

... it’s true that maybe we should reduce a little, regarding meat. And, being happy with just having good meat, it would work well, but vegetarian, it’s the first step to becoming vegan and then, when you start not putting shoes on anymore because of the poor calf, it kind of suffered in its life, it’s – it’s my opinion, I force no one to follow it, but then, it makes me half crazy.

In a similar manner, the description of vegetarian and vegan diets as ‘extreme’ was very common. When asked to comment on the possibility of a vegetarian school, a mother of two living in a wealthy household says: ‘It would disturb me because I find it extreme. And I don’t think we are allowed to force a diet on children, on families’, going on to explain that children need to have a source of protein in school meals, thus leading to some misunderstandings about the availability of protein in non-animal products. Another mother says she is ‘adamant’ in this regard, that she can’t think of a reason why daycares or schools should offer a vegetarian menu.

### 5.3. Emerging trends related to ‘no meat’ consumption

The opposition between vegetarian and vegan diets and the consumption of ‘less but better meat’ is relatively clear. However, new trends seek to disrupt this dichotomy by offering the possibility of reducing or giving up meat consumption without the impression of making sacrifices, through diverse forms of alternative proteins, or by betting on technological innovation as a new way forward. In the Swiss case, we found that meat alternative actors are solely private enterprises; associations promoting vegetarian and vegan diets are not involved in promoting these meat alternatives, which seem to be driven by profitability motives in a new market niche. A firm producing insects for human consumption uses images evoking both technological innovation and a gastronomical experience, while insisting on the healthy and sustainable character of their product. At the same time, we see the arrival of ‘terroir’ vegan products such as vegan Swiss cheese or vegan *cervelat* – an iconic Swiss sausage – which claim to belong to a ‘new kind of tradition’. Promoters of such products seek to root them in a gastronomic and agricultural tradition, while presenting new food production techniques as a viable alternative to meat consumption, in an attempt to mobilize positive emotions from both sides of the debate.

Consumers’ reactions to the eventuality of eating insects are somewhat ambivalent. Only a small proportion of participants expressed outright disgust at the idea of insects as food, but many stated they would rather avoid it and that they don’t see their advantage in comparison to plant-based proteins, rationalizing their refusal. Others mostly showed curiosity. One participant who tried a specific kind of insect while traveling in Africa said she would be open to eating it again, but only if she could remember the name and know exactly what



she is eating. Another said that she would be ready to try crickets for example, as she saw grilled ones on a market in Thailand and found them rather cute, but would not eat worms, or would at least need some time to get used to the idea. A participant otherwise very money-conscious argued it is food for worst-case scenarios, saying that ‘... we live like kings, we are rich, we are ... we earn incredibly high salaries [*salaires de ministres*], we will not eat insects! (Laughs)’. For people who oppose the killing of animals for human consumption, insects are also off limits and involve even more suffering, as illustrated in this discussion between vegan participants in a focus group:

Lucie: For me it is... Well, once more, it is animal exploitation. Insects had avoided it and... And now, it's their turn. It's terrible.

Eve: Even more dead...

Lucie: Yes, I'm shocked. Really.

Christian: You took the words right out of my mouth.

Cellular agriculture is described as a potential solution to problems of animal suffering, resource depletion, and sustainability, although it does not seem to be welcomed with great enthusiasm. Some participants pointed out the high costs and the technical challenge of cultured meat, and vegan participants in a focus group wondered about the relevance of producing artificial meat when it is possible to turn to plant-based proteins, or eat all of the animal (as in the nose-to-tail movement, that dissuades waste). Moreover, while new plant-based products and alternative proteins comply to higher moral standards on animals' dignity and welfare, their promoters still have to develop an image of proximity and familiarity to both create trust and avoid disgust.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The distancing of the animal as a living being from the animal as a meat product has been manifest in various ways, over time (Vialles, 1988; Fischler, 2001; Benningstad & Kunst, 2020). For Elias, distancing was part of a civilizing process whereby affects were used in social relations to embed practices that remind us of our ‘animal character’ with feelings of disgust and shame, as opposed to other practices that were seen as socially favourable. When applied to meat, this means that any element indicative of the animal nature of the food on our table should be hidden or evacuated. These sensitivities and associated morals have evolved over time: if the European urban elite of the 19th century found the smell and view of slaughter and blood upsetting, during the 20th century the killing of animals in itself came to be seen as increasingly shocking for some – not solely for our senses and affects, but in moral terms (Baldin, 2014).

Today, for actors seeking to promote meat consumption, the goal is thus not to hide the origins of meat, but to emphasize the quality of life of animals and our responsibility towards them. In relation to the civilizing process, the ability to demonstrate moral responsibility towards other beings is what seems to mark the difference between humans and other animals, thus the myriad of images and discourses depicting positive representations of animal wellbeing. In turn, the intention is for humans to have positive emotions around meat consumption. The act of killing the animal is very rarely represented, thus sidestepping the death phase, from happy life to food-in-plate; when the act of killing is present, it is about promoting a ‘better’ death. In parallel, the vegan movement is now turning this logic on its head by reframing who feels and who interacts to include animals other than humans, and whether the killing of non-humans for food is acceptable. The ‘animal nature’ is no longer something to be avoided, nor valued solely as a food commodity, but rather upheld as equal to human nature, and that of all sensory living beings. It is not solely our relationship to meat and its presentation on the table that is under question, but also how we feel about killing in the process of commodifying and consuming living beings.

The passionate character of the debates around ‘pro, low and no’ meat consumption in Switzerland – as exemplified in our empirical data – shows the particular place of meat in our societies: as a symbolic food with roots in our affective economies, as involved in the creation of a shared culture and national identity, and as a political object used to defend different views in society. The conflictual tone of the discussions is further reinforced by the reduction in meat consumption being both a focus in efforts to curb climate change and other environmental impacts, as a moral high ground, as well as a human health issue. This could lead to inflated tensions between ‘pro, low and no’ meat consumption discourses, where pressures to change meat consumption practices are perceived as a threat to preferred and culturally-established ways of doing. For some, appeals to reducing meat consumption is seen as a threat to their culture and sense of belonging; for others, meat consumption is a breach in morality in regard to our responsibility towards animals, but also an environmental threat. For all, it relates to foundational aspects of animals' place in society and the world. Dealing with the different voices will necessitate taking seriously and accounting for the broad range of emotions and related moralities tied to meat consumption, as a core element in explaining its highly conflictual character. These emotions, positive and negative, can both hinder and promote efforts towards the normative goal of ‘healthy and sustainable’ diets.

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## Author contributions

Marlyne Sahakian and Laurence Godin designed and conducted the fieldwork and qualitative data analysis. Irène Courtin contributed to the literature review. All authors contributed to the writing of the manuscript. Marlyne Sahakian coordinated the inter-disciplinary research project.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

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