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Reconfiguring food materialities: plant-based food consumption practices in antagonistic landscapes

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to conceptualize and discuss how plant-based food consumption is accomplished in an environment pre-configured by meat-based food practices. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with thirteen consumers, and using a socio-material practice approach, the paper demonstrates how plant-based shopping, cooking and eating practices are enabled and shaped by material reconfigurations. The paper shows how developments such as an expanding range of plant-based food products, the increased use of social media, and the re-appropriation of shops and kitchens all entail the continuous reconfiguration of the materials involved in shopping, cooking and eating practices. Together, these material reconfigurations form a socio-material landscape that is mutable and changing, thus enabling plant-based food consumption. In addition, the paper also suggests that these material reconfigurations are not something that can be managed due to having evolved as a collective process in which multiple actors take part, all guided by their own interests. In doing so, the paper illustrates that, in order to understand plant-based consumption, as well as its emergence, performance, and complexities, we must take into account the practical and material aspects involved, not just the cultural or cognitive mechanisms.

Introduction

During recent years, interest in plant-based eating, veganism and vegetarianism has been increasing in many countries. Reports by vegetarian and vegan interest groups, in various countries, together with numerous business reports, market analyses and public surveys, offer an overall picture of vegetarian consumption as a phenomenon that is increasing on a global scale (Axfood 2018; Hancox 2018). This paper takes an interest in vegetarian consumption and the way in which consumers acquire the agency to practice vegetarian eating. While previous scholarly work has emphasized the link between vegetarian diets, identity, and boundary work (Greenebaum 2012), we take an interest in the way materialities shape vegetarian food practices.

Over the years, the interdisciplinary field of food studies has fostered a lively scholarly discussion addressing plant-based diets and vegetarian food consumption. While this

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body of work is characterized by variety, scholarly discussions on vegetarian eating tend to center either on how you become a *vegetarian* or how you maintain a *vegetarian identity* in a meat-centered culture (Greenebaum 2018).

Scholars focusing on the former have explored various motivations for becoming vegetarian, including animal rights, personal health and sustainability (Fox and Ward 2007, 2008; Hirschler 2011; Janda and Trocchia 2001; Larsson et al. 2003). The literature often accounts for converting to a vegetarian diet in terms of being linked to a "catalytic experience", that is an event or incident instigating a shift in worldview and a redefinition of meat and meat-based diets (Greenebaum 2018, 681). Hence, becoming vegetarian is conceptualized as an ideological and social endeavor whereby this shift in diet is linked to a shift in identity and worldview (Fox and Ward 2007; Greenebaum 2018; Larsson et al. 2003).

The literature on maintaining a vegetarian identity generally conceptualizes this as a process of continuous boundary work (Asher and Cherry 2015; Greenebaum 2012; Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 2000; Roth 2005; Sneijder and Te Molder 2009). The literature illustrates how maintaining a plant-based diet is interlinked with the social relations and mundane practices of everyday life in a manner requiring continuous negotiation with friends and family, but also with personal ideals and principles, in order to manage everyday eating and cooking practices (Greenebaum 2012; Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 2000; Roth 2005). Many studies underline the pressure and powerplay that vegetarians and vegans experience in the context of family and friends, but also in public spaces and via discourses (Taylor 2013; Twine 2014).

In summary, vegetarian consumption has been thoroughly theorized as a socio-cultural phenomenon, being linked to identity work, norms and ideals and social relations. By centering on these social and cultural dimensions, the literature mainly accounts for becoming a vegetarian and maintaining a vegetarian diet in terms of narrative, sensemaking and sociality.

However, in depicting everyday meals, cooking and eating with friends and family, the literature also illustrates its embeddedness in food practices. That is, through accounts of identity work and the negotiation of social relations, the literature also discloses how vegetarian consumption is embedded in everyday shopping, cooking, and eating. This, in turn, suggests that vegetarian consumption involves more than meaning and identity construction. It also suggests that vegetarian consumption is embedded in food practice (see also Twine 2017b), thus also being a highly material and spatial endeavor (Neuman 2019). While these aspects are at times touched upon in the literature, they are seldom thoroughly empirically explored or conceptualized. Phrased differently, one can argue that, while previous work illustrates how a shift away from a meat-based diet toward a plant-based one is linked to a change in worldview, to a redefinition of self and to a renegotiation of social relationships, less attention has been paid to the material and spatial embeddedness of vegetarian food consumption. Vegetarian diets, we contend, are not merely social, but socio-material constructs as they are linked to the material infrastructures, devices and resources (Shove 2017b) involved in everyday food practice. What is more, plant-based consumption takes place in a setting where infrastructures, devices, and recourses are pre-configured to support meat-based food practices. Understanding how plant-based food practices are shaped and developed in relation to a meat-based socio-material environment would provide us with valuable insights into how plant-based food practices are maintained (Linnanheimo and Lundgren 2017). It

would also offer insights into the way the alternative modes of a practice can be supported, or hindered, by shifts in the material configuration of the infrastructures, devices and resources involved in the practice.

In an effort to address these issues, we will shift our attention away from the socio-cultural dimensions of becoming vegetarian, and of maintaining a vegetarian identity, toward the materially-anchored and spatially-distributed doings of vegetarian food consumption. That is, we will re-frame vegetarian foodways and vegetarian consumption, not as the result of internalized ideology or social identity, but as the consequence of the way in which materiality and spatially-anchored practices are negotiated and shaped to enable the shopping for, cooking, and eating of plant-based food.

The aim of the paper is to conceptualize and discuss how plant-based food consumption is accomplished in an environment pre-configured by meat-based food practices taking into account how socio-material arrangements enable and shape the performance of food practices.

More specifically, drawing on a qualitative study of vegetarian food consumption and making use of a practice theoretical toolbox, we conceptualize and discuss the ways in which existing food materialities are reconfigured to enable the shopping for, cooking and eating of plant-based food.

Practices, socio-technical landscapes, and their reconfiguration

The question underpinning this paper is: How can we understand the ways in which specific practice-material arrangements both enable and delimit the performance of plant-based food consumption? As made clear in the introduction, we take a socio-material practice approach in this paper (Gherardi 2017; Nicolini 2012; Reckwitz 2002) in order to conceptualize plant-based consumption as a phenomenon reproduced both through and within a nexus of socio-material practices. In doing so, we both draw on and contribute to the continuously growing field of practice-based studies conceptualizing consumption, specifically the consumption of food (for example Halkier 2017; Jackson et al. 2018; Warde 2016).

Practice-based studies share the aim of taking "practices" as their unit of analysis when describing, explaining and analyzing various social phenomena. Although there is not one but several theories of practice, there is still common agreement that practices consist of organized sets of action (Hui, Schatzki, and Shove 2017), and that these sets of action involve elements such as materials, meanings, competencies, knowledge and skills (Gherardi 2017). A common way of theorizing different social phenomena has been analyzing the interplay between action and elements, and how these are interlinked. Two studies in the context of food and eating can be used as illustrative examples.

In an ethnographic study of households in Manchester, UK, Evans (2012) takes a practice-based approach in order to understand how "food" turns to "waste". In this study, Evans tellingly illustrates how food waste is linked to the way in which food practices such as shopping and eating are socially and materially organized (Evans 2012). He shows how food waste is produced not as the result of carelessness regarding waste on the part of consumers, but as the unexpected outcome of modes of food shopping and eating, as well as the conventions and rules guiding these. For example, while the household member responsible for food shopping was keen to buy healthy food, in

accordance with notions of good parenting, other household members were not guided by these notions and often refused to eat this healthy food. Because of this, food waste was routinely produced in spite of the household member's efforts to reduce food waste.

Another example is to be found in Jackson et al. (2018), where a number of ethnographically-inspired studies of food practices, in five different countries, are used to challenge traditional notions of convenience food in terms of being inherently unhealthy and unsustainable. The practice approach taken in this book offers a means of illustrating how various sorts of convenience foods became convenient due to being embedded in household food practices and the infrastructures and devices that these involve. For example, in Sweden, commercial baby food was integrated into the practice of weaning and normalized as it offered both a material and symbolic means of enabling parents to adhere to ideals of care, health, and mobility, while striving to wean their children off.

These two examples highlight the significance, not just of the social, but also of the material aspects of practices (see also, Neuman 2019). In this study of plant-based consumption, we also take a specific interest in the way socio-material features are both constitutive of and constituted by practice (Blue and Spurling 2017; Gherardi 2017). More specifically, we approach the issue from a "socio-material" or "post human" vantage point, treating practices as both constituted by and constitutive of material arrangements (Gherardi 2017; Schatzki 2001). This branch of practice theory draws on the work of Latour (1993, 2005) and his fellow ANT colleagues (Callon 1998; Law and Hassard 1999), as well as their principle of symmetry whereby actors are seen in terms of being formed by networks of humans and non-humans (Schatzki 2001). Like actor-network theory, post-human practice approaches take a symmetrical interest in the way "all the elements within a practice hold together and acquire agency in being entangled" (Gherardi 2017, 50). This has a number of implications for the study of plant-based food consumption.

A socio-material practice perspective does not privilege humans, and neither does it presuppose human agency. Instead, a socio-material perspective assumes that actors and their agency are formed by networks of both humans and non-humans (Fuentes and Sörum 2019; Strengers, Nicholls, and Maller 2016). That is, agency is not an inherent quality of humans but is instead the result of actor-networks; i.e. socio-material assemblages interconnecting various elements. Each of these elements contributes toward the network's capacity to act (Latour 2005). In the context of plant-based eating, this means that we do not ascribe agency to individual consumers. Plant-based consumption is not solely the result of individual consumer constructions of identity, meaning or social relationships, it is also a consequence of consumers and heterogeneous materials forming a network, an assemblage, with the capacity to consume plant-based food.

Taking a socio-material approach also sheds light on the importance of the broader socio-material arrangements making a practice possible, what we refer to, following Jelsma (2003), as the socio-technical landscape. By this, we mean that practices occur in a socio-technical landscape that both enables and delimits them. A practice is thus supported by a socio-technical landscape, but it also contributes to the (re)production of the landscape. A socio-technical landscape, in turn, can and often does support, and become shaped by, multiple practices. While the practice is being carried out, the socio-technical entities it uses – including both the things and the meanings, ideas, concepts linked to these – become interlinked, thus forming the landscape. A socio-technical

landscape like this thus includes both larger entities, such as retail systems, and smaller entities, for example shopping carts, cooking appliances, and what Shove (2017a) refers to as resource material, i.e. materialities such as food and energy, which are often transformed as part of the performance of the practice.

Also, of importance to the subsequent analysis is the issue of scripted materialities. These socio-technical landscapes are scripted (Akrich 1992). That is, programmes of action are built into the artifacts and materialities comprising socio-technical landscapes. Scripted materiality is prescriptive; it encourages and enables certain actions, framing these as acceptable, desirable or convenient, while simultaneously counteracting other actions, making them unacceptable, undesirable, and inconvenient (Jelsma 2003). These scripts are the result of past acts of inscription. Through material design and discursive practices, materialities are inscribed, and given (new) plans of action that tell us what to do. In this sense, a socio-technical landscape is a moral landscape, reflecting past and present notions of what counts as good and right (Jelsma 2003). However, it is also important to keep in mind that this materiality is accumulative; it has developed over time and thus contains multiple and often conflicting scripts. We live, therefore, in landscapes that were largely designed during earlier times (Jelsma 2003); we are anchored in the moralities of the past. As new moralities develop, these have to be materialized, a process that is often slow.

However, these scripted materialities mediate actions but do not determine them. Scripts are de-scribed by users, translated in ways that often differ from the course of actions prescribed. That is, as these scripted materialities become incorporated into specific practices, the actions they allow can, and often do, change (Akrich 1992). The relationship between materiality and user is thus dynamic. Also further complicating matters is the observation that complex artifacts do not have a single script, but multiple ones. A smartphone application, for example, can be scripted to enable multiple courses of action (Fuentes and Sörum 2019). Such artifacts offer users a plethora of possible programmes of action.

Finally, staying true to the spirit of socio-materiality, users or consumers do not merely de-scribe technical artifacts differently. Every use of an artifact is also a re-inscription or (re)configuration of it (Fuentes and Fuentes 2017). Materialities are changed by the practices they form part of. Practices and materialities shape one another: Humans and artifacts are mutually constitutive. While materials (re)configure users and practices, practices and users also (re)configure materialities.

Taken together, these possibilities of material reconfiguration suggest that socio-technical landscapes, which are connected to and shaped by multiple past and present practices, while often slow to shift, are dynamic entities that change and can be changed in multiple ways. In what follows, we will trace how practitioners involved in the shopping for, cooking and eating of vegetarian food both make use of and are delimited by existing socio-technical landscapes. Approaching plant-based food consumption from a socio-material practice perspective entails understanding it as a mode of practice that is often performed in relation to socio-technical landscapes that are configured to encourage meat consumption. In the analysis that follows, we will discuss how this is accomplished, showing that plant-based food consumption is only possible as a result of a series of material reconfigurations.

Method

To understand how plant-based consumption is accomplished in an environment pre-configured by meat-based food practices we have utilized an adapted form of ethnographic interviewing (Spradley 1979) in which we combine interviews with photo journals (Phoenix and Brannen 2014). This combination of interviews and photo journals was used to capture both narrated and visual accounts of mundane and often inconspicuous food practices.

The fieldwork was conducted in Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden. Thirteen participants were recruited for this study. To come into contact with suitable participants, we contacted a local branch of an animal rights organization and circulated a recruitment letter to a group of students enrolled on a home economics programme. We also used referrals from the main authors' personal network and from participants in the study.

We tried to obtain participants with varying experience of plant-based food consumption in terms of how long they had been following a plant-based diet and which form of plant-based diet they had been following; i.e. vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian and flexitarian diets. All but one of the participants had been following a meat-based diet before opting for a plant-based one. Most of the participants had several years, or even decades, of experience of plant-based food consumption, and all of them had been following a plant-based diet for at least two years.

Although we were not aiming to get a representative sample, we made an effort to secure some variation in terms of age, household composition, and income levels among our participants (see Table 1). The participants' ages varied between 18 and 50, with 8 identifying as women and 5 as men. Some lived in single-occupant households, but most of them lived with partners or other family members. Three of the participants had children. Twelve of the participants were Gothenburg residents, while one participant worked in Gothenburg but commuted daily from a small town nearby.

Once recruited, the participants were first asked to complete a one-week photo journal, documenting events involving food and eating, i.e. having breakfast at home, buying coffee on the way to work, shopping for the weekend or lunch, and having dinner with friends etc. On completion of the photo journal, the informants were interviewed in an effort to solicit their accounts of (1) when and how they became involved in plant-

Table 1. Research participants.

Participants/Pseudonym	Household	Plant-based diet	Age	Occupation
Erik	Couple	Vegan	25	Student/part time high school teacher
Sara	Housing association	Vegetarian	23	Student
David	Family of three	Vegan	33	University employee
Jacob	Couple	Flexitarian	27	Lawyer
Emma	Couple	Pescatarian	40	Self-employed consultant
Johanna	Couple	Vegetarian	26	Employment officer
Clara	Family of two	Vegan	18	College student
Mikael	Couple	Vegetarian	48	Industrial worker
Anna	Family of three	Vegetarian	41	Librarian
Frida	Single	Pescatarian	21	Student/part time office clerk
Andreas	Family of five	Vegetarian	39	University employee
Christine	Couple	Vegetarian	27	Key commodity manager
Erika	Single	Vegan	26	Student

based food consumption and (2) their past and present ways of organizing and sustaining their everyday plant-based diets and provisioning. Lastly, the participants were also asked to guide the interviewer through the photo journal and to narrate and reflect on the events and food-related practices depicted in the images.

We recognize that neither interviews nor photo journals can capture the actual embodied doings of food practice (Jackson et al. 2018). Nevertheless, using a combination of interviews and photo journals gave the participants the role of "participant observers"(Czarniawska 2007), that is, observers of events and practices not available to the researcher. During the interviews, the participants were able to talk about their past and contemporary practices, and to account for the food practices captured and their social and material contexts. The use of photo journals proved to be a fruitful way of supporting consumer accounts of both general and specific ways of managing food and eating. Using an adapted form of ethnographic interviewing (Spradley 1979), we treat interviews as sources of information regarding food practices, both their performance and how they are discursively constructed by the participants in the study (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).The interviews were held by the first author in a conference room on campus and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed in full.

The interview accounts and photo journals were treated as one unit rather than two separate sources of material. Like the narrated stories, the photos were seen as the participants' accounts and illustrations of their everyday food practices. Hence, we did not conduct image analysis or any other specific analytical procedures to process the photo journals.

The material was analyzed by both authors jointly. This analysis was based on a constant comparative approach (Charmaz 2006), guided by the following analytical questions: How are plant-based shopping, cooking and eating performed? What socio-material landscapes are involved and how are they reconfigured? During the initial round of analysis, we read and coded the material based on these three questions. This initial analytical reading produced a number of themes, pertaining to navigation and modification, which offered a working understanding of the way in which the participants organized and re-organized their plant-based food practices. The results of our analysis are presented in the following section, and illustrated using interview extracts.

The practices of plant-based food consumption

In this section, we set out to describe and illustrate how plant-based food consumption is accomplished in a socio-material food landscape preconfigured for meat-based food consumption. When analyzing the interview and food diary material, it became clear that plant-based consumption is only possible because of a number of socio-material reconfigurations. In what follows, we describe the ways in which the participants account for their plant-based cooking, shopping and eating practices, along with the modifications and navigational acts required to accomplish plant-based food consumption. We will show that plant-based food consumption relies on shifts and reconfigurations of both food practices and socio-material landscapes. We will also show that shifts and reconfigurations happen continuously, giving the socio-material landscape a "living" quality

that enables and promotes plant-based consumption, thus shaping the route and development of food practices.

Shopping for plant-based foods

As previous practice-based research has shown, shopping is not an isolated activity that is encapsulated by the retail environment, but one that is shaped by the interplay between retail site and shopper (Fuentes, Bäckström, and Svingstedt 2017). Shopping practices take place in as well as shape a socio-material landscape that prescribes certain actions, while hindering others. Conversely, performing the practice of shopping, in its multiple modes, also shapes the retailscape. In this study, we focus on the way in which new modes of shopping are developed when consumers shift toward a plant-based diet. Even though plant-based diets are increasingly common, and starting to become normalized, retail environments such as supermarkets are still usually organized according to a meat-based way of eating (Smart 2004). Opting for a plant-based diet requires consumers to develop a plant-based mode of shopping in a socio-material landscape shaped and organized by a meat-based diet.

A key aspect of a plant-based mode of shopping was developing new shopping routines and routes. For the consumers we interviewed, switching to a plant-based diet meant reconfiguring their retail landscape. All the participants' accounts involved "food cartographies" (Everts and Jackson 2009), which mapped the retail landscape of both their neighborhoods and other parts of Gothenburg. These cartographies, involving supermarkets, corner shops, bakeries, and specialty shops, as well as detailed knowledge of their product ranges, gave support and structure to a new plant-based mode of shopping. Thus, it was not only a matter of certain stores being incorporated into the new plant-based mode of shopping, they were also ascribed certain meanings, and qualified in a certain way. Most of the informants' regular supermarkets were deemed sufficient for plant-based shopping. According to our informants, supermarkets and convenience stores in Gothenburg had significantly been expanding, over the last few years, their plant-based food product ranges and were now supporting plant-based shopping.

> But actually, most things are available there [supermarket]. I don't know if we've thought of it in terms of 'yes we're lacking that', or 'this is something they should've had'. At times, I think that the vegetarian range has really increased. However, for, fresh vegetarian products, not the frozen stuff, it's a bit so-so. Sometimes, you've wished there was a bit more. And then we've been in the ICA Maxi store in Kungälv once or twice. And there was a bit more stuff. Compared with this one here, where we live. So, it varies a bit. [Erik, aged 25]

While Erik points to a shortage of fresh plant-based products, he also makes it clear that regular supermarkets and convenience stores are able to provide many of the products needed. Often, it was not just a matter of visiting other stores in order to shop for plant-based foods, but also of learning to use regular stores in new ways, discovering plant-based foods and sections of products that had previously been overlooked.

The participants in our study describe two parallel processes whereby product ranges are increasing and thus they are developing, as individual consumers, new ways of navigating mainstream supermarkets. Together, these developments could be conceptualized as a continuous reconfiguration of the shopping practice and socio-material landscape involved. Adding elements (such as plant-based products) and developing new ways of understanding and navigating stores means that the socio-material landscape is being reconfigured in ways that enable a plant-based mode of shopping, even though the stores where this is taking place are dominated by, and organized around, meat.

In addition to the reconfiguration of familiar stores, there were also, however, examples of new stores being included in the informants' shopping practices, thereby expanding their shopping routes. This was particularly common when it came to buying products found in niche stores, e.g., health stores, Asian food stores, Indian food stores or vegan stores. Combining stores often allowed consumers access to a broader range of plant-based products (see also, Twine 2017a), in turn adding to their capacity to cook and eat various combinations of plant-based foods.

> Where do you usually go [shopping]?
>
> Well it varies. ICA, Willys and Hemköp and Coop. They're the most common ones I visit. But when I kinda want to buy vegan, ... buy some vegan sausage ... I go to the newly-opened [specialist vegan store] ..., now there's quite a good vegan range there.// ... The other day, I had a vegan chorizo with pesto and all that stuff. And then//Or I go to Asian food stores to find stuff if I want something a bit more specific ... // ... Yes well, I often buy Tofu there for instance. [Sara, aged 23]

The reconfiguration of the consumers' socio-material food landscape, via new products, new ways of navigating traditional stores, and the inclusion of niche stores, was not a one-off event. Rather, it seemed to be an ongoing process involving various actions and resources.

In their shopping practice, consumers commonly positioned stores using multiple criteria. Some stores were considered expensive while other were seen as inexpensive, with some being considered as stocking "quality" products (often vaguely defined), while yet others were seen as stocking low-quality products (old vegetables, for example), and were thus to be avoided. These colloquial ways of classifying stores configured a retailscape that was partly specific to each consumer and partly social due to qualifications reportedly being shared between consumers during casual conversations.

Also important to this practice was the use of social media. Like previous studies of plant-based consumption (Twine 2017a), this study brings to the fore the importance of social media as a consumption infrastructure. In most cases, social media was described as a vital source of information, and an important tool for developing and updating an alternative mode of shopping. Accounts regarding national and local Facebook groups, where consumers shared tips on products and shopping, were abundant. The informants talked about different ways of acquiring vegetarian foods. It was clear that adopting and maintaining a plant-based diet required that the informants learn how to shop in new ways. They were now shopping for more variety, and for larger quantities of vegetables, and they also had to learn to shop for completely new products, e.g., meat and dairy substitutes, nutritional yeast, tofu, and new spices. Social media and other digital resources were key to enabling this new mode of shopping and material reconfiguration.

It is also important, however, to note that, although shopping for plant-based food was possible, it remained, according to the participants, a difficult practice to perform in a landscape that was primarily preconfigured to enable meat consumption. Although consumers felt that plant-based products were becoming more available, abundant and normalized, they also described a significant gap between the available vegetarian product range and the meat-based product range. This in turn implies that some of the fundamental aspects of being a consumer in contemporary Western society were being circumscribed somewhat. The range of products available was not as abundant, with favorite brands sometimes being out of stock. One of our informants, David, described how new plant-based products could become instant hits, and sell out almost immediately. David also told us of instances where he had asked his local mainstream supermarket to expand its range of brands or products sizes:

> " . . . sometimes, I also ask why stuff is out of stock. I usually get extremely irritated by that, cause you want to be able to shop like everybody else, and I want "my" vegan cheese. No, but you know people make plans and that it's there anyway and you make your shopping list. And then it's just "no, it's out of stock at the suppliers". So that's something you hear the whole time as a vegan, that it's out of stock at the suppliers. [David, aged 33]

David also addresses the substantial difference between, for example, the plant-based and the traditional dairy-product ranges. Although plant-based products are available in traditional supermarkets, he highlights the relative difference between the number of plant-based dairy products and traditional dairy products. He describes how he settles for the products on offer, somewhat reluctantly describing a form of gratitude that these products are available, as well as the fact that he does not take this availability for granted. Here, it becomes clear that the participants in the study see themselves in terms of acting in a retailscape that does not fully support their mode of shopping. While this adversity is commonly seen as a difficulty, the participants can also find some meaning in it.

Taken together, the development of the mainstream food retailers' plant-based ranges, new ways of navigating stores, and the inclusion of niche stores all show that specific socio-materialities are reconfigured to enable a plant-based mode of shopping to develop in relation to where the consumers live, to the retailscape of their cities, and to the composition of their households and social networks. This tells us that, in addition to other more commonly-discussed issues, e.g., economic resources and taste, the ability to shop for plant-based foods is organized by the socio-material food landscapes' availability and composition.

Cooking plant-based food

Previous research illustrates that cooking, i.e., the activity whereby ingredients are combined and processed into meals, is not a uniform practice. Rather, it should be understood more broadly as a variety of household activities linked to the preparation and processing of foods (Jackson et al. 2018). As argued by Jackson et al. (2018), cooking is not a "discrete" activity but a set of scattered practices shaped over time by the everyday activities and understandings of consumers, and by the products, materials and infrastructures involved in cooking. Like shopping, cooking takes place in a socio-material

landscape shaped over time and inscribed with certain plans of action. As we will show below, this landscape involves multiple scripts and is open to reconfiguration.

In the material analyzed here, the practice of cooking was described as challenging by consumers shifting away from a meat-based diet toward a plant-based one. Before shifting toward plant-based cooking, the informants were part of as well as accustomed to a meat-based mode of cooking. Meals were planned and organized around various forms of meat, with both the cooking skills and the arrangements of the utensils and techniques used being shaped by the qualities and requirements of the meat. Cooking thus took place in a socio-material landscape orchestrated by meat. Our informants shared the understanding that a plant-based diet required new ways of planning and preparing meals. Hence, cooking plant-based foods involved the development of a new mode of cooking, where the orchestrating ingredient was replaced.

The interviews involved numerous accounts detailing how the informants had developed new habits in their kitchens. Interestingly, however, this new mode of cooking did not necessarily require the complete replacement of cooking materialities. In many cases, the new cooking strategies developed reconfigured existing materialities, re-appropriating them for plant-based consumption. This was made possible by the open or multiple scripts of these cooking materialities.

More specifically, the informants described the development of a plant-based mode of cooking in terms of having two strategies: "Replacing meat" and "cooking vegetarian from scratch" (see also, Twine 2017a). Replacing meat, often described as being used during the initial phase of switching to a plant-based diet, was closely tied to the use of meat substitute products. A plant-based mode of cooking was accomplished here by removing meat from the socio-material arrangement of cooking and then replacing it with substitutes like soy beef, soy sausages, or corn:

> It was probably the case that we made conventional meals that we really only changed a bit, to make things work. For example, instead of meat sauce, we used Quorn mince instead. So, there was a whole lot more, ready-to-eat products, that we used early on. And then it was actually the case that the more we worked at that, the more we were able to feel that, well yes, these items are also quite expensive. And we can manage without them too [Jacob, aged 27]

This meat-replacing strategy allowed Jacob and other informants to develop a mode of cooking plant-based food that was similar to their previous meat-based mode of cooking (see also, Twine 2017a). In this case, the substitutes, a new food materiality, enabled the reconfiguration of cooking. As described by Jacob, meat substitutes offered a means of planning and preparing the same dishes. Meat substitutes are generally "ready-made", or convenience products, designed to fit with meat-based modes of cooking. In this sense, they are designed to fit well with the existing socio-material landscape of cooking, which only requires, if anything, minor adjustments. The meat substitutes' similarity to previous meat or dairy products makes reconfiguration more convenient (for a similar argument, see Fuentes and Fuentes 2017).

However, convenient meat substitutes were also described as having a number of downsides. Besides the issue of price, alluded to in the quote from Jacob above, substitutes were also described in moralizing terms. Cooking with meat substitutes was described as a lesser alternative than the option of cooking with fresh ingredients. Meat substitutes offer convenience, but they are also categorized as convenience products with

negative moral connotations. Cooking from scratch was an ideal widely held by the consumers we interviewed (see also Halkier 2017). During the interviews, it became clear that the ideal was to cook a completely new kind of meal, i.e. one that does not emulate meat-based foods and is instead specifically plant-based. Therefore, the substitute-based replacement strategy was often described as inferior to the second strategy of developing plant-based modes of cooking.

The second strategy described by the informants – cooking vegetarian from scratch – entailed excluding meals that involved meat and including new dishes with only plant-based ingredients. This strategy required more effort in terms of both finding new meals and developing the skills enabling the participants to deal with and prepare ingredients they were not accustomed to:

> Otherwise, we've probably tried to keep away from that bit, of just substituting a part, preferring to make something new. So it's been a matter of learning to make food from scratch in some ways. It's not the thing when you put a piece of meat in a pot. And then it boils for a long time and then it gets a lot of flavour. You can put in loads of vegetables and boil it for a long time. It's not really the same outcome. [Erik, aged 25]

In the quote above, Erik describes how he and his partner had made an effort to refrain from "just substituting" meats with meat substitutes, and how they preferred to cook vegetarian from scratch. However, he also describes how cooking new plant-based dishes, and using new ingredients, required relearning how to cook. Using plant-based ingredients also means dealing with a new type of materiality, one that requires new forms of preparation and handling, but also new ways of composing a meal.

Searching for recipes and advice on how to prepare ingredients was key to the development of plant-based modes of cooking. While family or public sources, like home economics classes, did not work as regards supporting plant-based cooking, stories of how the informants had been advised by other consumers, bloggers, YouTubers, and celebrity chefs on social media were abundant (see also, Twine 2017a). As in the case of shopping, social media was described as key; although cook books were mentioned, there seemed to be agreement that the best way to acquire vegetarian cooking skills was to learn from another initiated consumer. This initiated consumer could be a friend or a social media profile. What these sources of competence offered was new recipes and support as regards how to prepare ingredients. This shows that the shift toward plant-based cooking was closely interlinked with the changing media landscape surrounding food. Here, the addition of new digital resources played a part in reconfiguring cooking.

While meat substitutes and digital media were key to plant-based cooking, new kitchen appliances were seldom required. Instead, much of the existing kitchen materiality could be repurposed, and thus also reconfigured, to suit plant-based cooking. Kitchens and kitchen appliances might seem fixed; however, like other socio-technical arrangements, they are rather the outcome of a continual material ordering that takes place through practices procuring the appearance of "closure" (Hand and Shove 2007). One outcome of the reconfiguration taking place in plant-based cooking was the fact that certain artifacts could become more significant. One artifact that stood out as crucial was the freezer. In addition to storing meat substitutes, such as soy or Quorn, products sold frozen, the informants also described using their freezers to manage the preparation of chickpeas and vegetables, and to extend their lifespan. Emma describes how she manages

her vegetarian diet by storing a variety of vegetables, for example broccoli, kale or home-made zucchini fritters, in the freezer. She then just grabs what she has in her cupboards, heating and serving it with olive oil, lemon and sourdough bread to boost her intake of iron. Hence, the freezer was described as key to her way of cooking:

> Cause [my freezer] is kinda, yes well, it's a precondition for being able to eat well. For being able to "ok now, I'm going to make a load of chickpeas". Then I know that all I have to do is take it out [of the freezer] and do some hummus. Which I take with me. And I eat loads of frozen vegetables. And berries for that matter. I make smoothies with all these milks and fruits and so on. Yes, my freezer is more important than my fridge actually. [Emma, aged 40]

To summarize, developing plant-based modes of cooking involved a bundle of acts of navigation and browsing through a food media landscape. Like shopping, plant-based cooking was enabled by continuous reconfigurations of cooking practices as well as the socio-technical landscape. Substitutes allowed the informants to keep their repertoire of meat-centric dishes, but these were also seen as inferior to the more demanding strategy of cooking vegetarian from scratch. Kitchen appliances could be repurposed and recon-figured to support plant-based cooking.

Eating plant-based foods

Like other studies of eating (e.g. Halkier 2017), our interviews and food diaries illustrate the routinized, mundane, and dispersed nature of eating. While the eating routines of the participants varied somewhat, depending on their work/study schedules and household compositions, a number of similarities were also to be found. Typically, the informants had breakfast either alone or in the company of partners, family or close friends. This was often followed by coffee or tea, either at work or school. Lunch was generally eaten at around 12 noon, involving, as is commonplace in Sweden, a hot meal that was either prepared at home or bought in a restaurant or food store. Most of the informants had lunch in a public space like a restaurant, canteen or lunchroom, and in the company of people such as colleagues or other students. Dinner was often eaten in the company of family or friends, sometimes at home and sometimes in a restaurant. It became clear that the socio-material settings surrounding these meals did allow plant-based eating, but that substantial reconfiguration work was needed in order to make this possible.

As mentioned previously, all of the informants interviewed had been following a plant-based diet for more than a year, with many of them doing so for several years or even decades. Hence, at the time they were interviewed, the informants' eating practices were described as well established. Similar to other studies, our participants also described their switch to vegetarian and vegan diets as the result of a "catalytic experience", an often deeply meaningful event that initiated a shift in their worldview followed by a shift in their diet (Greenebaum 2018, 681). Plant-based eating was often framed as meaningful but challenging, since it posed numerous social and practical challenges. Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that the practice of plant-based eating is entangled in a meat-based socio-material environment, but also in a meat- and dairy-based understanding of taste.

Eating both at home and in public spaces, such as restaurants or cafés, entailed specific challenges. Over and above the matter of obtaining plant-based food, a number of social relations also had to be managed.

The reorganization of meals at home was sometimes a source of tension (see also, Asher and Cherry 2015; Twine 2017b). Some informants described trying to make sure all household members ate the same food, while others solved any conflicts of preference or need by serving different dishes. Eating at home, however, also involved occasions when dietary choices were challenged. Having a restricted diet and eating the same thing over and over again were linked to feelings of boredom and the risk of not eating healthily enough (see also, Twine 2017a). Thus, in this case, it becomes evident that not only was there a need to replace food materialities but that these materialities also needed to be re-inscribed in a way that was acceptable to all household members.

Eating in public spaces like restaurants or cafés, or in the homes of others, was described as more complicated. Sharing a meal is a way of enacting and anchoring social relations (Asher and Cherry 2015), with informants describing how they could feel uncomfortable asking for vegetarian food when visiting friends and family. There were also many reports of people having to settle for food they really did not like in order to meet social expectations. Johanna specifically described the tensions linked to having to eat at restaurants with a limited plant-based menu.

> But there isn't so much you can do. Someone's having a leaving do. That person wants to go to a place that he/she thinks is nice. My feelings are that "I'd never have paid 150 crowns for lunch here. But for your sake, sure". Yes well it gets a bit like that at times. But I usually try to check things out beforehand. So I know, you see, a few times I've called the place. When there's nothing to read, and then I've said "Hi what do you have on offer? Just so you [meaning the restaurant] know I'll, I'll be making these demands". And then at other times, things have been, well "yes, ok. This isn't going to taste good but it's a leaving do so it's just a matter of biting the bullet and eating it". [Johanna, aged 26]

But there were also stories of more successful visits to restaurants. When asked, all the informants could easily name a number of restaurants serving vegetarian food that they enjoyed eating at. The participants also stated that the number of restaurants and cafés serving vegetarian food was increasing (see also reports in local media on the increased supply of plant-based restuants, Luks 2019), and that the quality of vegetarian food was getting better (see also, Twine 2017a).

It becomes clear that two forms of reconfiguration make it possible for consumers to eat plant-based food in a meat-dominated landscape. First, the socio-material landscape is changing. New vegetarian restaurants or, more commonly, the inclusion of plant-based alternatives on the menus of regular restaurants, are making eating plant-based food in public more convenient. Second, the existing material settings around eating are reconfigured by consumers. Whether or not this involves merely replacing meat and dairy products with substitutes, or completely changing the meals eaten, it is still an illustration of the re-materialization of eating. As the quote above shows, this reconfiguring work is not always successful. Learning to appreciate new tastes and food textures is not always easy. Moreover, a limited range often feels limiting to consumers used to the greater variety of meals and foods resulting from being a meat eater in a meat-centric socio-material food landscape.

In summary, eating plant-based food was described as a challenging practice. Changes in the broader socio-material landscape, in combination with the reconfiguration of existing meal materialities, made plant-based eating possible while it remained permeated by difficulties that had to be identified and continuously managed.

Material reconfigurations enabling plant-based food consumption

In the previous sections, we have shown how plant-based food consumption was performed in a largely meat-centric socio-material landscape. New modes of shopping, cooking, and eating were developed in which the socio-material landscape facilitating food consumption was reconfigured to enable plant-based consumption. We argue that it is this reconfiguration of food materialities that makes it possible to accomplish plant-based food consumption. We will now summarize and elaborate on this argument.

First, plant-based food consumption is possible because the socio-material landscape of retailing, cooking, and eating has changed over time. The informants regularly spoke of this change in positive terms, describing how the number of plant-based products has increased and how many meat and dairy substitutes are now readily available in supermarkets and convenience stores (see also, Björk 2019). The informants also spoke of the transformation of the restaurant-scape. According to them, not only are there more specialized vegetarian restaurants, "regular" restaurants are now also more likely to have one or more vegetarian/vegan alternatives on their menus (see, Luks 2019). Furthermore, the participants in the study also mentioned an increase in social media items, blogs, and other online resources focused on vegetarian/vegan cooking. These sources are part of the infrastructure facilitating plant-based consumption by means of making, as we saw above, cooking information and the other types of knowledge enabling plant-based consumption available (Twine 2017a). Taken together, these developments point to a major reconfiguration of food materialities, one that has supported and propelled plant-based food consumption. This material reconfiguration has evolved over time and involves multiple market and non-market actors (see also, Hagberg and Fuentes 2018). Retailers, food producers, restaurants, bloggers, influencers, online magazines and app developers, as well as the consumers themselves, are working, from their own vantage points and driven by their own interests, toward reconfiguring food materialities. Collectively, these actors are transforming, at least partly, the socio-material landscape of food consumption, making vegetarian consumption more possible. This change, however, is neither centralized nor formally coordinated.

Second, plant-based food consumption in a meat-centric socio-material landscape is also possible because material entities often have open or multiple scripts. While artifacts do script the actions of users, the scripts of these material entities is often open rather than closed. That is, although they may steer and make some actions more possible than others, they do not have any firm prescription that users cannot avoid (Jelsma 2003). Kitchens are a case in point (see also, Hand and Shove 2007). While some utensils and appliances are specific to the preparation of meat or dairy – e.g. steak knives, meat grinders, meat thermometers and cutlery – most are open in the sense that they can be used for the preparation of both meat- and plant-based dishes, with examples here including cutting boards, stoves, pots and pans, and freezers. The openness of these scripts means that consumers switching their diet away from meat and toward plant-

based dishes can re-appropriate these artifacts in plant-based food consumption prac-tices. In other cases, it is not that the artifact or socio-material landscape has open scripts, but rather that it is inscribed with multiple scripts. That is, in addition to not obstructing other modes of acting, these artifacts also encourage and enable various courses of action. A good example of this is restaurants. While these do not (typically) have an open script allowing you to order anything you like, they do offer multiple scripts that consumers can choose between. Selecting from the menu, consumers can choose different routes, with the practice of vegetarian eating being one potential route to take; however, this is only one of multiple scripted eating actions.

Third, also materialities with closed or single scripts can be actively reconfigured by consumers engaged in plant-based food consumption. As is made clear in STS studies, scripts are not deterministic; de-scription can deviate from the script, and some would argue that deviation is to be expected (Hand and Shove 2007). Over and above merely de-scribing scripts, users also commonly re-inscribe the artifacts they use. That is to say, materialities are not only inscribed by designers and marketers, consumers are also capable of (re)inscribing food materialities through their use (Fuentes and Fuentes 2017). As we saw above, in incorporating certain food materialities into plant-based shopping, cooking, and eating practices, these become reconfigured, re-inscribed with a new plan of action. For example, consistently choosing the vegetarian alternative at a certain restaurant, talking about that restaurant as a venue with a "good" vegetarian alterative, and perhaps also telling vegetarian friends about that restaurant will all lead to the re-inscribing of this restaurant as a "good vegetarian restaurant".

These various forms of material reconfiguration are intricately interconnected with plant-based food shopping, cooking and eating. Reconfiguration was both a prerequisite for and an outcome of the performance of these practices.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have set out to shift attention away from the socio-cultural mechanisms underlying the process of becoming a vegetarian, and maintaining a vegetarian identity, toward the socio-materialities involved in plant-based food consumption. Drawing on a socio-material practice approach, we argue that plant-based consumption is neither shaped nor driven solely by internalized ideology or social identity, it is also enabled and shaped by the socio-material landscape co-constituting the practices of shopping for, cooking and eating plant-based food. We show that this vegetarian socio-material land-scape was the result of acts of reconfiguration woven into the practices of shopping for, cooking, and eating plant-based food. Plant-based food consumption thus became possible in a meat-centric landscape because of the mutability of the socio-material landscape. This contributes to our understanding of plant-based consumption in three important ways.

First, it shows that, to understand plant-based consumption, as well as its emergence, performance, and complexities, we must also take into account its practical and material aspects   (see also, Linnanheimo and Lundgren 2017). The mechanisms driving and shaping this form of consumption are not "purely" cultural or cognitive, they are socio-material.

Second, it demonstrates that, while the socio-material landscape enables and shapes plant-based consumption, this landscape is neither deterministic nor static. Instead, what this study has shown is that the socio-materialities supporting plant-based consumption are mutable; i.e., they both shape and are shaped by the practices of plant-based consumption. This landscape, as a result, is both stable and dynamic. It serves to anchor plant-based consumption practices, stabilizing them to some extent; however, it is not immutable and can be reconfigured, and often was, by these practices.

Third, our analysis also suggests that the plant-based socio-material landscape that has emerged around, and in direct connection with, plant-based consumption practices is difficult to manage. It has not evolved as a result of the centralized efforts of a single actor, but rather as a result of a collective process in which multiple actors (e.g., retailers, restaurant owners, consumers) have partaken, all guided by their own interests.

This paper can be understood as part of an emerging body of work that treats food consumption as more than a social and cultural practice, also addressing the material and embodied nature of food practices (Daly 2020; Neuman 2019). This approach, at times referred to as post-human (Daly 2020), socio-material (Domaneschi 2019), or material-semiotic (Evans 2020) practice theory, allows us to offer a different, but complementary, explanation as to how plant-based consumption is increasingly becoming possible. However, it is important to underline that the findings of this study do not contradict previous scholarly work emphasizing the social embeddedness of vegetarian consumption. Rather, this study both builds on and adds to our understanding of plant-based consumption as a socio-cultural *and* materially-anchored endeavor. It illustrates how a plant-based diet is not only enabled, or constrained, by social or cultural structures, but also by material landscapes. It confirms the notion that plant-based consumption is propelled by "catalytic experiences" (Greenebaum 2018) and linked to continuous boundary work, while at the same time indicating that material forces can be vital in overcoming social and cultural barriers. Just as previous research has underlined how plant-based diets are augmented by vegetarian motivations and identities (e.g. Fox and Ward 2007), this study illustrates the role of material mutability in maintaining a vegetarian diet. The increasing range of plant-based products, together with the open scripts of contemporary socio material food landscapes, indicates a shift whereby plant-based diets are increasingly being supported by a materiality that allows food practices to be more flexible. This study suggests that the mutability of materiality can help consumers to overcome some of the social and cultural roadblocks.

Our analysis also both builds on and adds to existing socio-material practice approaches to plant-based consumption by expanding the scope of this analysis. Moving beyond a narrow focus on food itself, our approach broadens this scope to include the multiple material elements making up the socio-material landscape that enables and shapes plant-based consumption. This broader approach is also accompanied by a move away from examining vegan eating (Twine 2017a), or mealing-practice (Daly 2020), toward bundles of plant-based shopping, cooking, and eating practices.

To conclude, our approach and analysis both pinpoint the role of "infrastructures of consumption", e.g., stores stocking a wide range of products, a suitably equipped kitchen, and social media offering skills in a variety of areas ranging between finding suitable products or

restaurants and finding dishes to cook and techniques to use when cooking. The findings of this study are of interest to our understanding of the way plant-based modes of shopping, cooking and eating are developed, but also as regards the discussion about how socio-material arrangements enable and shape food practices in general. The reconfiguration of shopping, cooking and eating specifically addresses issues concerning the way materials relate to each other in practices.

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