**Food waste**

Exploring consumers’ attitudes towards household food waste



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**Abstract**

This Master’s Thesis is a contribution to the knowledge on attitudes towards household food waste. In this study, attitudes towards household food waste are analysed and discussed based on a qualitative study of 22 in-depth interviews and one focus group of five people. The interviewees ranged from age 23 to 59, these are then individuals in different life stages with a bias towards young adults and empty nesters. Included herein are 4 exploratory interviews with dumpster divers in order to enhance my understanding of the more alternative approaches to food waste. Food waste is a highly complex phenomenon and no single area of research can rationalize this phenomenon in its entirety, as a result this study draws on several different research areas in order to get as close as possible to exhaust this subject.

Some of the major themes found in this thesis were:

It was found that food waste is not always intentional. The interviewees did not like to waste food, however, as it is an action that is interconnected with other daily processes they often found it hard to avoid. One way of easing their conscience was to procrastinate food waste, to wait till the food had gone off and then discard it. Furthermore, the cheapness and availability of food weakens the need to build a plan for food so bad planning often led to more waste. However, if there was food planning it was often deprioritised compared to other daily chores, furthermore, fresh foods and variety were prioritised the highest and expensive products were prioritised over cheap products.

There was a difference in when the interviewees classified foods as rubbish, some followed the best before date and some used their senses. Some even discarded it before the best before date due to a decline in aesthetic qualities or in search of freshness and variety. Thus, if the food appearance was below somebody’s acceptable level of edibility, then intentional food wastage turned into a tolerable act. Additionally, some interviewees always used their leftovers as an active habit of anti waste while others did it to save time or money and some did not eat leftovers.

Furthermore, some food practices are undertaken more clear-cut front stage such as eating out while others take place partially front stage such as grocery shopping. But household food waste happens back stage. As it happens as a consequence of what goes on front stage, the more focus there is on activities front stage the more work there is backstage and thus more leftovers. These leftovers often get wasted.

Another theme found was that our relation to the production process of food has become minimal, thus leaving us disconnected from the food. When we invest ”psychic energy" in an object to which we have directed our efforts, time, and attention, making it a part of our self, thus wasting less food.

Furthermore it was found that external objects are viewed as part of self when we are able to exercise power or control over them. Thus if we have knowledge and skills on how to put together a good meal we feel a connection to it, it is a part of our self. Furthermore it seems the more knowledge and skills one have on cooking the less food one wastes. But it would be almost impossible to have knowledge on how to prepare every single food product we have access to today so naturally households that consume more of the same wastes less and some households’ tendency to be "occasional gourmets" might result in more food waste.

It was also discovered that there was an altruism-hedonism dichotomy in attitudes towards food waste. The altruistic households were recyclers in general, buying predominantly organic and hated food waste. Furthermore they used their senses to determine whether foods are edible or not. The hedonist households eat what they feel like, do not buy organic and do not try to avoid food waste. Furthermore they follow the best before date stringently or discard foods before this in a search for variety and freshness.

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# Introduction

*“I think it’s very impressive to see what is thrown away and then you realise that it’s actually one place, in one street, in one city, in one country, in one day.”*

[Francois, 26 years old, talking about dumpster diving: 2.45]

Food fulfils a fundamental human need and it is vital for our existence as human beings. Nevertheless our eating habits and the way we consume (i.e. acquire, prepare, eat and possibly dispose of) food is not only affecting our own life but also the environment, the economy and the society as a whole (Morgan, 2009; WRAP, 2009 (Waste & Resource Action Programme); von Braun, 2007; Stuart, 2009). In more recent years, this has led to an increasing interest in the world food situation due to changes in the driving forces of the food system and global circumstances (Morgan, 2009) and particularly, food waste i.e. the food we discard on an everyday basis, has become a key issue. Loss and wastage occur on all steps in the food supply chain, such as harvesting, processing, storage, retail distribution, food service and households (Jones, 2006). In the U.S., the losses in only three of the marketing stages (retail, food service and households) account for 27% of all the edible food made available for consumption in these stages (Kantor et al. 1997). Moreover, the consumer sector has been shown to be the single biggest contributor to the total amount of food wasted (Kantor et al., 1997, Griffin 2009). In Denmark, the situation seems just as bad; “*It is estimated that 303.000 tonnes of edible food is wasted every year in the food industry. Danish households discard 237.000 tonnes. The value of the total Danish food waste is estimated to at least 8.4 billion Danish kroner a year*.” (www.fvm.dk). Such high rates of food waste have negative consequences on the economy, on the environment and on society. In this thesis the focus is on food waste that occurs domestically, in the households. Thus, it should be mentioned that, since I am focusing on the consumption stage of food waste it is mainly consumption theory I employ. People are familiar with the experience, week after week, of occasionally throwing out unopened or partially eaten foods and know, consciously or unconsciously, when they fill their baskets in the supermarket that they are paying for something that they might throw out. As Stuart (2009) argues, food availability and food prices have led to ignorance towards food waste and many people do not link their food waste with the environmental problems we face and are going to face in the future. Food will not always be available to satisfy the excessive way we consume and waste food the way we see it today (Stuart, 2009) and thus attention needs to be brought to this issue.

Even if this problem is an important one, there is still little research conducted to understand the underlying causes of food waste arising in households; this might be the case because the topic is relatively new. Moreover, almost all of the existing studies investigate the effect of socio-demographic factors on food waste (e.g. Dowler, 1977; Wenlock and Buss, 1980; Van Garde and Woodburn, 1987 and Skourides et al., 2008) but very few look at psychographic factors, such as people’s attitudes towards food waste (WRAP, 2009). This study explores the factors in this latter category because such variables have been proved to be strong predictors of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage and Connor, 2010). This thesis aims to provide a variety of input to the knowledge on attitudes towards food waste in households to support further studies.

The proportion of income that households spend on food has decreased in recent years due to increases in incomes and declining of food prices. This coupled with more consumer choices and the availability of food has led to increased domestic wasteful behaviour, especially in the developed countries (Partiff, 2010; Stuart, 2009). In the industrialized countries people are buying more food than they ever did before and the amount of food available for consumption has increased significantly in the past decade, these increases in the end lead to food wastage (Stuart, 2009). In recent years though, food prices in global markets have raised significantly leading to the food crisis in 2008. The scarcity of resources have since become a concern for mankind, bringing the problem of global food shortages and food waste at the centre of attention (Hall et al., 2009; Chalmin and Gaillochet, 2009), Today, the issue of food waste seems to be appearing everywhere; on the radio, in the news and in articles in magazines and newspapers. A quick search on Google leads you to numerous pages containing numbers and figures showing the severity of food waste all over the globe and other pages showing recipes on how to use your leftovers instead of throwing them out. Even retailers, whose ‘business’ is to sell as much food as possible, now have TV ads saying they are in the fight against food waste and mass offers (see for example www.rema1000.dk). As Eckhardt et. Al. (2010) argue, many consumers today seem profess to want to avoid food waste at home, yet few seem to act on this inclination. However, some consumers engage in anti waste behaviour. These consumers, named ‘environmentally conscious consumers’ (Ottman, 1993) or ‘green consumers’ (Elkington et al., 1990; Tanner and Kast, 2003), are individuals willing to use some of their time doing deeds greater than fulfilling personal desires and satisfaction for the self (Black and Cherrier, 2012). And then there are those that go beyond green consumption, to participate in ‘anti-consumerist’ activities, as for example dumpster divers, who live their environmental and social justice beliefs by practising alternative consumption choices (Edwards & Mercer, 2007).

I wish to investigate people’s attitudes towards household food waste. The main focus of the thesis is thus on the domestic food waste that happens everyday in every home, all year round. To guide the research conducted, the following research questions will be answered:

*How is food waste thought of in everyday life at a consumer level?*

Sub question:

*How do consumers make sense of food and waste and how do they construct classifications pertaining to these phenomena?*

## Elaboration

The aim of this study is first and foremost to examine consumption processes in rather ‘mundane,’ every-day life settings, to understand some of the attitudes towards food waste at home. This is not in the sense of how things “really happen” but how people interpret these events in their everyday lives, thus, trying to capture the subjective standpoint of the consumer to learn about how and why people think, and make meaning as they do. There are naturally also situational variables influencing household food waste but the focus is mainly on the psychological variables.

To answer the research questions I am interviewing people with different lifestyles and at different stages in their life, analysing their interpretations of food waste. One of the main objectives of the sampling of interviewees was to collect a sample with diversity in food and food waste practices and food and food waste attitudes. An ideal sample would be distributed equally throughout the range of food waste experience levels (Wagner, 1997) but such a sample is difficult to achieve. However I have attempted at this by choosing people with different lifestyles and at different stages in their lives, I have chosen people who are somewhere between the full nest and empty nest life stage (as a few of them still had one child still living at home), however these will henceforward be named empty nesters, and I have chosen young adults were some a still students and some are not. Furthermore I chose to include people who have more alternative attitudes towards food waste in the exploratory phases, namely dumpster divers, or freegans. Because the aim of this thesis is not to show how’ things really happens’ but rather to provide a string of glimpses of how people interpret their relations to food and food waste in their everyday, I thought it would be more interesting to try and analyse different attitudes rather than a range of similar ones. However, I will attempt at reaching some general themes during the analysis process.

In this study, I deal with a set of basic issues that must be resolved before the research questions elaborated above can be researched effectively. The subject of household food waste raises many interesting aspects to investigate, however specific sections of literature was chosen in order to answer the research questions and consequently some was left out that did not seem relevant to this study. Food waste is a highly complex phenomenon and no single area of research can rationalize this phenomenon in its entirety, as a result this study draws on several different research areas in order to get as close as possible to exhaust this subject. As a consequence I have researched many different approaches to consumer behaviour; for example motivation, cognition, social aspects and lifestyle. In order to successfully answer the research questions I must first summarize some clarifications of the main concepts.

### Food and food waste

In the literature on food waste there are different views on what food waste includes or excludes. But before I can outline what the term food waste stands for in this thesis I need to explain how food is perceived. Food means different things to different people in different contexts. Food can be seen as medicine, one can focus on food and health, or unhealth i.e. obesity, or it can be understood in the context of its symbolic meanings (see for example Strauss 1963; Lupton 1996; Fürst, 1995; O’Dell, 2002). In this thesis, I examine food consumption as a rich experience that carries multiple cultural, social, psychological, and symbolic meanings. As mentioned, food waste happens at various stages along the entire food chain from initial agricultural production down to final household consumption (Gustavsson et. al, 2011) and I am focusing on the household food waste, i.e. the waste that happens in the personal environment, what gets thrown in the bin on a daily basis. However, I do not solely blame the consumers for their food waste, I recognize that the wastage of food happens due to various processes, at different stages (Jones, 2006). Furthermore, food waste is interconnected to other daily processes; it is not an action that stands alone.

When determining food waste, some theorists include materials such as vegetable peelings, meat trimmings, and spoiled or excess ingredients or prepared food as well as bones, carcasses and organs (Lebersorger & Schneider, 2011). However, when referring to food waste in this study, I refer only to that which could have been eaten – I am not referring to things that Danish households tend not to eat, nor am I referring to things that are discarded in the preparation of food (such as fruit and vegetable peelings). Other than that I do not consider food that has been used in some other way as food waste, for example leftovers that are given to chickens or thrown on a compost.

### Consumers and green consumers

It is important to clarify the general stance toward the concept of ‘the consumer’ in this study:

When economists talk about consumers they talk about people who expend cash. Nutritionists talk of those who ingest food and the like. But when people actually consume food they are not always in the role of being a consumer, they can be caring parents, a loving boyfriend. A lot of consumption is done as the background to other activities such as giving a gift or sharing daily events (Kneafsey et. al, 2009) as for example eating. Consumers are often seen either as the knowledgeable and powerful consumer or the ignorant and manipulated consumer, or either as the individualistic, hedonistic consumer or the altruistic, collective (and perhaps ethical) oriented consumer (Gabriel & Lang, 2006; Clarke et. al, 2007) the latter dichotomy will be focused on later. However, this study regards the consumer as a person with several, ever changing realities, a *“discerning, choosey consumer [which] embeds altruistic, humanitarian, solidaristic, and environmental commitments into the rhythms and routines of everyday life”* (Clarke et al. 2007: 233) thus recognising consumers as people with all their, at times, contradictory attitudes, selves and practices. As defined by archaeologists, consumer behaviour refers to the patterns of individual, household, or group expenditures and, specifically, the acquisition, use, and discard of material items (LeeDecker, 1994). Furthermore, a definition of a household chosen for this study is a group of individuals who share a common residence and are bound together by kinship and economic relations (Netting, 1982; Wilk and Rathje, 1982).

The reason I am including theories on the green consumer is that engaging in anti food waste belong under the realm of green consumer behaviour. There are different names and definitions of these environmentally conscious consumers as for example: ‘environmentally conscious consumers’ (Ottman, 1993) ‘ethical consumers’ (e.g. Black and Cherrier , 2010) or ‘green consumers’ (e.g. Elkington et al., 1990; Tanner and Kast, 2003), the latter is used throughout this study. As green consumer behaviour entails engaging in some form of behaviour that goes beyond fulfilling needs of the self (Harrison et al., 2005; Ottman, 1994) a common feature is often that these individuals are willing to use some of their time and money to express their concern and care for the environment. In other words they share a concern *‘with the effects that a purchasing choice has, not only on themselves, but also on the external world around them’* (Harrison et al., 2005: 2). This has thus been included in this study as anti waste is considered green consumer behaviour.

## Delimitation

I am focusing solely on consumer food waste in the private sphere of the household. I do not include food waste that happens during harvesting, nor the processing or production, or the food waste of retailers. It could have given a more nuanced picture by perhaps including the retailers, but this would expand beyond the scope of this thesis. Moreover the thesis is written from a Western point of view, as the researcher is Danish and the interviewees are all Danish.

# Structure

The thesis continues on with a literature review; methodological reflections; data analysis and discussion of findings; assessment of the research; and conclusion as well as considerations for further studies. After these introductory remarks I am going to outline the theoretical framework for this thesis.

# Theoretical framework

In order to reach a deeper understanding of consumers attitudes towards food waste, this study touches upon many different studies and theories. Thus, as it is a complex study and since there has not been conducted much research on the area it is found necessary to draw on theories from various areas in order to obtain satisfying grounds for the analysis and the interview guide. The overall themes of the theory are mapped out in figure 1.

Figure – Overview of theoretical framework.

Some of the main themes in this study is based on the following areas of theory: *Food and the self*, what we eat, and our food practices in general say something about who we are (e.g. (Lupton, 1996; Giddens, 1991 and Jantzen & Rasmussen, 2007) and thus it is relevant to include when analysing household food waste. Next, I will include theories on *global consumption* in order to contribute to the understanding of how food is consumed. When it comes to *green consumption*, it is important to try and understand whom today’s green consumers are. This section also incorporates the process of environmental attitude formation. In continuation of this how theories on *food waste* will be accounted for. All of these elements will then be discussed and theoretical conclusions will be drawn from it. Consequently, this theory also provides a framework for the interview guides (see appendix 1-4). The guides reflect the themes, which the theory touches upon, and as such attempt to map out the social processes, which affect the interviewees and their actions.

## Food and the self

We cannot understand food waste without trying to get an understanding of peoples relation to food, the meanings consumers attach to food. A key to understanding what food is to people is recognising that food is more than fuel to people; it is used as an indicator of whom we are or whom we want others to see us as (Belk, 1988). Not many things are as inextricable a part of human life than food, we need food to survive and so it inevitably is an ever-returning part of our everyday. When we are not shopping for food or preparing a meal we might be thinking of it or perhaps daydreaming of it, and when we are not doing any of the above mentioned it still seems difficult to escape the world of food as postmodern popular culture seems infused with it (Lupton, 1996; Fürst, 1995; Holm, 2003; O’ Dell, 2002). We see food in magazines, on TV shows and the like. This immense focus on food is not only due to the fact that we need it to survive, food carries many different connotations that all in all make it an area of great interest. Besides from the fact that food can be pleasing to the pallet, it can also be pleasing to the eye. In fact, because food has artistic characteristics, it is used as the subject of creative expression by cooks, artists, photographers and restaurants (Asp, 1999; Smart, 1994; O’Dell, 2002; Fürst, 1995). Another aspect of food is the symbolic connotations it can carry which have been studied by several different theorists (e.g. Lupton, 1996; Lévi-Strauss, 1964, 1966; Douglas, 1978; Fürst, 1995; Gabaccia, 1998; Beardsworth, 1997). Food can be used to express who we are, want to be or want others to see us as (Lupton, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Smart, 1994; Jantzen & Rasmussen, 2007). Food can be used to symbolise relations to others, through for example gift giving (Lupton, 2003), she argues that *“the more preparation involved, the greater the symbolic value of food as gift*” (1996: 48). Food is also used socially to develop friendships, provide hospitality, and as an important part of holidays, celebrations and special family occasions (Douglas, 1978; Asp, 1999). Food can also be used to show status, it can serve to mark boundaries between social classes, cultures, genders and lifecycle stages (Lupton, 1996; Douglas, 1978; Mintz and Du Bois, 2002; Fürst, 1995). So besides from foods function to satisfy hunger and to meet nutritional needs it seems there is a lot more focus on the symbolic, aesthetic and identity creating sides to food in today’s society. So how does this affect our relationship to wasting food, if food serves primarily to fulfil social and psychological needs, what happens when it has fulfilled these needs? What happens with the leftovers when the guests have gone, what happens to the eco fruits and vegetables we bought at the local eco grocers when it is on its last legs?

Accordingly, food and food habits are components of culture, and these are continually changing (Asp, 1999). It is different what people classify as edible food. Humans can consider some items inedible or edible in some cultures but not in others, or some foods can be edible by others in my culture but not by me (Raudenbush, Van Der Klaauw & Frank, 1995; Asp, 1999). Culture thus establishes how people use food and thus affects food intakes, and classification of what is considered food greatly influences individual and family attitudes toward food and what to eat (Lowenberg et al., 1974; Kittler and Sucher, 1995). Is there a difference not only in what people classify as edible but also when? In recent years, lifestyle factors have become important in describing how consumers make food decisions. We can choose food to match our lifestyle; conversely, what we eat can affect our lifestyle (Lupton, 1996; Asp, 1999). However, no matter how much we want to believe all our food choices are calculated and intentional to fit our lifestyle, food is and will always be affected by habit, *“The greatest challenge when attempting to change food choices of individuals is changing their food habits, attitudes and priorities.”* (Asp, 1999: 292). Could it be that food waste is also influenced by patterns of habit? Furthermore, today’s consumer in most parts of the western world is no longer concerned whether there is enough food, food availability is now taken for granted and as a consequence the constant demand for more food is declining as the demand for quality food is growing, food is no longer a necessity and as such we can begin focusing on other elements such as quality (Blisard et. al, 2002; Mclnemey, 2002). And not only is there growing focus on quality but there has even been a movement towards slow food, food made from scratch from local products, where the focus is on the production process. It could be interesting to research whether food waste (or anti waste) is part of a lifestyle, and if there seems to be a movement ‘back to the roots’.

As mentioned, food can be used to acknowledge a relationship i.e. through the use of gift giving, and it can be used to show skills, knowledge and status, all these things belong under the realm of the self. Food can also be used to express who we are, want to be or want others to see us as. If for example you only grocery shop at the local, organic grocer’s who is more expensive than other shops in the area, whether you want to or not you are probably sending a signal to your surroundings that you have money, energy to care for the environment, and perhaps skills to prepare what might be seen by some as special food products. This is even more evident in the case of dining out, in Western societies dining out is an important practice of the self, as Fürst argues, “*The choice of restaurant…the combination of dishes and wine that is chosen, becomes a public demonstration of an individual’s possession of both economic and cultural capital.*” (1995: 98). Here, the social element of food is much more visible than eating practices that take place in the household, and especially the discarding practices. Pierre Bordieu argued in Distinction (1984) that social life is a constant status game and people draw on three types of resources: economic, cultural and social capital to compete for symbolic capital which can be translated to status, while economic capital is ones financial resources, social capital are the relationships and networks etcetera one holds and the cultural capital are the before mentioned skills, knowledge, tastes and the like, which is primarily attained through upbringing, though additional cultural capital can be achieved through education and work (Østergaard, 2004). According to Bordieu, cultural capital is enacted in fields of consumption, these fields make up the social world and these can be politics, education, religion but also things such as food and clothing (Bordieu, 1984). Thus in the field of food individuals can show symbolic capital by serving a meal made from expensive ingredients that requires skills to prepare and perhaps you have selected a wine perfectly fitted to the meal based on your knowledge. Thus, food can be a marker of identity, in some cases more than others. Furthermore, knowledge about fine dining and wine is seen as similar to knowledge about fine art, something that requires good taste and hard work (Fürst, 1995). What are the consequences of the fact that food waste is not socially visible in most cases? Does one discarding practices affect the level of cultural capital?

So all these different expressions through food can be used to back up your sense of self, as Fürst argues: *“Food* *creates the one who eats it. Thus, it is natural that the eater tries to create her or himself by eating.”* (Fürst, 1995: 74). Food becomes a part of who we are, not only in terms of where we choose to shop, what we choose to eat and how we choose to prepare it, but also after it has been ingested, it becomes a part of us as we either gain weight or stay slim due to a particular diet, showing our surroundings how and what we eat, the body becomes a physical symbol of self-control (Fürst, 1995). Accordingly, food habits are central practices of the self through constant nourishment of the body with foods that are culturally accepted, presenting oneself to others. We choose food that reflects how we perceive ourselves or would like to be perceived. *“When food is consumed symbolically, its taste is often of relatively little importance: it is the image around the food product that is most important.”* (Fürst, 1995: 23). How do the interviewees relate to the ‘we are what we eat’ concept, and how does this reflect in their food practices and discarding practices more specifically?

However, domestic food preparation and consumption is as mentioned not “socially visible” to the same extent as dining out or even more obvious, the products we wear for instance. It is more visible when we go out to eat at a restaurant, or when we go grocery shopping where the food products we choose are exposed to curious looks. This dichotomy between visible and “invisible” has been studied by Erving Goffman (1959) who studied social performance and found that the social world is divided into back regions and front regions. Back regions are off limits for audiences, and here social actors prepare their performances. Front regions are where social actors actually perform in front of an audience. So this division of the social world can be compared to that of the theatre where the audience only sees the actual performance on stage and everything back stage, behind the curtain is kept hidden (Goffman, 1959; MacCannell, 1976). As mentioned food wasted is not as socially visible as other food practices and perhaps this backstage activity suffers pressure in a stressed everyday household, and perhaps even more when front stage is packed with guests.

## Global consumption

As we have learned at this point, food does much more than satisfy our nutritional needs, in this section the focus is more specifically on the actual consumption of food. Consumption has come to include many symbolic aspects and not just functional activities because consumers have been found to seek products less for their use value than for what is termed ‘linking value’ (Cova and Cova, 2001). Appadurai (1986) has coined the term ‘the social life of things’ to represent such a point of view. It is in this cultural context that I examine the consumption of food in this paper.

As consumers, our mundane everyday routines of food consumption are influencing and influenced by international food systems (Cook, Crang and Thorpe, 1998). What we incorporate into our body is affected by practices undergone far away from us and vice versa, our food consumption has far reaching consequences well beyond our domestic worlds. *“As such, food consumption brings together the local and the global, leaving food agencies dependent on an understanding of consumers’ private habits”* (Cook, Crang and Thorpe, 1998). The modern global food system is concentrated in fewer and fewer multi- or transnational corporations, where economic efficiency and rationality is key to driving profits (Dowler et. al, 2010). Food produced and sold has to be risk-free and consistent in appearance, taste and handling, and is often presented with no connection to production realities (thus, for instance, fruit may be peeled, meat and fish are gutted and wrapped in plastic). In its more extreme form known as the ready meal. Dowler et. al (2010) paints the picture: *“the purchaser can notionally choose from any number of international or historical cuisines, but need only remove outer packaging and place in a conventional or microwave oven to consume; no further knowledge, skill or engagement is required.”* (202). Furthermore, when one can choose freely between eating Indian on Monday, Thai on Tuesday and perhaps Nordic on Wednesday one could suspect that the waste is larger. Consequently, the food systems people mostly rely on leaves them disconnected, disconnected to where the food is made and where it is from, we know less than ever about the way our food is produced (Nicholson-Lord, 1997). Furthermore, marketing has become more and more elaborate and offers consumers such labels as ‘Raw foods’, ‘Slow food’, ‘True food’, ‘Supernatural food’, ‘Green food’ (Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007). All these examples are a good indication that in contemporary food consumption, a high value is placed not on the physical attributes of meals and the process of eating them but on the symbolic meanings associated with food. Consequently, the symbolic side to food has become perhaps an equally important attribute to food as physical and nutritional attributes, and as a consequence our relation to the production process becomes minimal, we are forgetting what Cook, Crang and Thorpe emphasizes, namely that; *“foods have lives before and after they appear on the supermarket shelves”* (1998: 162). And it is this ‘secret life of foods’ *after* they have left the supermarket shelves that we know so little about – and particularly, there is a total lack of knowledge on how this ‘secret life’ sometimes ends by food being turned into waste - sometimes even in the form of food going straight from the kitchen table, cupboards or refrigerator to the bin. Cook, Crang and Thorpe goes on to question the actual possibility of a consumer knowing the complete food system from farmer to fork: *“The distance food travels to get to our plates, and the sheer complexity of the food system, inevitably means that the biographies of the foods we eat are rather opaque to us.”* (1998: 164). Does the fact that we may not be that aware of the production process of food mean that we are more likely to waste food? Not to mention the distances travelled by food that makes it into our homes, but not to our stomach or perhaps not even to our plates?

## Green consumption

Interest in organic food has grown remarkably as consumers and marketers react to popular media about health and environmental effects of pesticides, genetically modified organisms, and food safety (Gerbens-Leenes & Nonhebel, 2002). To understand green consumerism one must first understand that individuals interpret the term organic in a variety of ways and in a multitude of contexts. Consumer purchase decisions are based on subjective experiences and perceptions of organic foods and there is to this day considerable confusion surrounding the term ‘organic’ (Chryssochoidis, 2000). While many consumers have heard of the term and are aware of its central features, for example, that it is chemical-free, most are unfamiliar with organic farming standards and practices (Davies et al., 1995; Harper and Makatouni, 2002; Hill and Lynchehaun, 2002).

As Moisander argues, “*green consumers are conceptualised as goal-oriented individuals and influential market actors who use their purchasing power to bring about social change by taking into account the public environmental consequences of their private consumption”* (2001: 252). So they take into account the consequences of their household consumption and possibly discarding practices. The green consumer has emerged based on a mix of different processes and development in society. Due to greater transparency we have seen the consequences of our excessive consumption in the Western parts of the world and so we take it in as our responsibility to make it better. In modern consumer society, an ecological and ethical consumer ethos has emerged as a counter-discourse to the current romantic, hedonistic consumer ethos (Campbell, 1987; Moisander, 2001). A counter reaction to our buy and throw away-culture, and perhaps also a movement back to the roots. Green consumer behaviour can be expressed in many different ways in many different contexts, it can be expressed in the public sphere through voting or shopping in certain shops, or boycotting, which is also known as the political consumer (Sørensen, 2004) or you can engage in it in your personal life. One significant element of personal environmental action is that which is undertaken in and around the home, as day-to-day behaviour where you try not to waste food such as throwing out leftovers or throwing out milk because it has passed its date (Barr & Gilg, 2007). Engaging in anti waste is thus an environmental behaviour. Whether one realises it or not, throwing food away in the household has great affects on the environment and society. I ask the interviewees some “green” questions as I believe that you can somewhat form an idea of peoples overall likes and dislikes based on attitudes towards more specific objects (Ostrom, 1989). Consequently, I have included broader questions on green consumerism as for example when I ask whether they buy organic, or compost or the like, they might also reveal some attitude towards their view on food waste and the environment in general.

### Environmental attitude formation

In this section, the role of attitude formation is considered to be able to answer the research question to the fullest. Some situational and attitudinal variables that have been found to influence environmental action are briefly examined focusing mostly on the attitudinal variables. These are then related to the subject of food waste.

Barr & Gilg (2007) found some situational variables that influence environmental action (for example, physical infrastructure, geographical location, socio-economic structure and knowledge) and these relate to the behavioural context specific to each individual (Barr & Gilg, 2007). Hence, transportation networks, where you live and your education are just some of the factors influencing environmental action including anti waste. Additionally, knowledge is one key variable found to affect levels of environmental action (Kallgren and Wood 1986). This was also found by Oskamp *et al.* (1991) who argue that high levels of environmentally relevant knowledge can affect environmental behaviour. Thøgersen (1994) also refer to this in the case of consumers waste handling considering the actor’s ability to carry out his/her intentions towards waste handling. The ability concept is further operationalized in two factors: Task knowledge (Verhallen and Pieters, 1984) and habit (Bagozzi, 1982). Thus, if one possesses knowledge on food products one could potentially waste less. When it comes to habit, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that all human activity is subject to ‘habitualization’ and that any action that is repeated frequently (such as food waste) is cast into a pattern. Accordingly, habitualization frees the individual from having to make a lot of decisions and provides a stable background that enables him/her to undertake everyday activities (such as cooking) with a minimum of effort and decision-making. So if food waste is a habit it is not exposed to much effort or decision-making, it just happens without much thought. Additionally, a set of attitudinal constructs has been found to influence environmental action. Considered first is the role of intrinsic motives towards environmental behaviour, based mainly on De Young’ s (1986, 1996) assertion that there will be some individuals who will take enjoyment in helping the environment is considered in this study. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) considers the importance of response efficacy, which means actuallybelieving that one’s action will have some impact on the environment, be that locally or globally (Samuelson and Biek 1991; Roberts 1996). As they argue, whether the action is desirable is often based on evaluation of the outcome likely to occur (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) thus, for example what the possible costs are or perhaps, rewards. In the case of food waste there are naturally some financial costs when throwing food away that could have been eaten, but what could be the ‘rewards’? Furthermore, Tonglet et al. (2004) suggest that waste minimization behaviour is likely to be influenced by a concern for the environment and the community, but is likely to be inhibited by perceptions of inconvenience and lack of time and knowledge. Last, the perceived threat posed to the self and others by environmental problems can affect whether one chooses to engage in environmental behaviour (Barr & Gilg, 2007), this last subject has been brought into greater focus in recent years by the role of climate change (Baldassare and Katz 1992; Sguin *et al.* 1998). Relating to food waste it might be that the greater the perceived threat is the more motivation to engage in anti waste. As mentioned food waste seems to gain pace in the media and this could possibly heighten the perceived threat to some.

Researchers such as Balderjahn (1988), Schwepker and Cornwell (1991) and Sparks and Shepherd (1992) have argued that perceived behavioural control has a significant impact on commitment across a range of actions, it is considered whether this is the case with attitudes towards food waste. Praktkanis, Breckler, and Greenwald (1989) argue that the desirability of the action and the perceived self-efficacy, that is *“confidence in his or her own ability to carry out the action.”*(226) is important to consider when it comes to environmental behaviour, so not only believing that your action will make a difference but that you can actually engage in it at all a confidence, hence that one has the ability to engage in anti wasting behaviour.

When it comes to environmental behaviours, the impact of social influence and self-presentation also plays a role (Sadalla and Krull, 1995; Lam, 1999) thus, perhaps the greater the perceived gain for the self is, the more engaged one becomes. As Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue, motivation has its roots in values, beliefs about outcomes, attitudes, and norms. An intention to engage in environmental behaviour is the result of the subjective weighing of attitudes and norms concerning the activity. For instance, *“a lukewarm attitude toward source-separating one’s waste may be compensated for by a strong social inducement to do so, and vice versa.”* (Thøgersen, 1994: 151). So if a person has some intention of avoiding wasting food it might be influenced positively if there is a strong social inducement to do so as for example engaging in anti-waste because one’s peers are. In the theory of reasoned action, attitudes and norms are based on how one perceives the outcome to be as well as the opinions of ones peers. These could be family members, friends, authorities, or experts (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Additionally, as Barr & Gilg (2007) argues, the role of friends, relatives and other influential individuals is important in formulating and encouraging environmental behaviours, especially with regard to highly visible activities, such as consumption. However, food waste is not a highly visible activity, so do the importance of one’s peers also count when it comes to food waste? Is there a difference in how the interviewees perceive the outcome, and furthermore, how they perceive the costs and rewards of food waste?

## Waste

As mentioned, food is seen everywhere in the media. And it seems, food waste is beginning to claim its place in the spotlight as well. In recent years we have seen cookbooks focusing on anti food waste as for example “Stop waste of food” (Stop spild af mad) by Selina Juul who has also created the organisation Stop waste of food (see www.stopspildafmad.dk) where there is an overview on what is being done to ameliorate food waste and what can be done, especially in the households. As she says; “*Food waste springs from a ‘use-and-throw-away’ culture and a ‘someone-else’s-problem’ attitude*.” (Juul, 2011: 12). Juul has started several initiatives to ameliorate food waste but still, she says: *“it is unbelievable that there needs to be an organization that has to tell people not to waste perfectly good food.”* (Juul, 2011: 23).

Household food waste has become an increasingly discussed topic in recent years because waste composition studies have indicated significant quantities of food waste are generated and consequently, there is significant potential for waste prevention (e.g. Lebersorger and Salhofer, 2003; Salhofer et al., 2008; WRAP, 2008; Lebersorger and Schneider, 2011). Attempts have been made to quantify global food waste over several decades (Parfitt, Barthel and Macnaughton, 2010) and as much as half of all food grown is lost or wasted before and after it reaches the consumer (Lundqvist et al. 2008). The increasing importance of this topic has been underlined by a number of recent studies (e.g. WRAP, 2008, 2009; Parfitt et al., 2010; Monier et al., 2010), and campaigns such as the ‘‘Love Food Hate Waste’’ campaign launched in Great Britain in November 2007 operating in all four nations of the UK, communicating directly with consumers and also through a wide range of partner organisations – grocery retailers, food manufacturers, local authorities and community groups engaging consumers on the issue of food waste (Quested, Easteal and Swannell , 2011; WRAP, 2008). More and more national and local authorities have realised the problem of food waste and request data on regional level and strategies for prevention (Monier et al., 2010).

Types of food wasted are typically fresh fruit, vegetables and salad account for around one quarter of all avoidable food and drink waste – this equates to an average of 0.8 portions of ‘5-A-DAY’ being thrown away per person per day (Defra, 2010). The reasons for each food type being thrown away vary greatly; the majority of fresh fruit and vegetables are thrown away because they were not used in time (had gone off or had passed a date label), whereas meals and drinks are primarily disposed of after either preparation or serving, the reasons for wasting food will also be considered in this study. In the UK there is a lack of awareness among many in the population of how much food waste is generated in the home (WRAP 2008). Households that stated in a survey that they generated no food waste actually threw away an average of 90 kg per year (WRAP 2008) which again indicates that people are unaware of how much they throw out (unless they are lying) perhaps because it is a habit or perhaps because food availability is taken for granted and it is no longer taking up as great a part of our budget that it once did. Is it the same with the interviewees in this study? The quantity of food waste thrown away is relatively high for all socio-demographic groups of the population, there are only two factors that correlate strongly with the amount of food waste generated: *“on a per capita basis, single-person households waste more food than the national average, and people 65 years or older waste around 25% less food than the national average”* (Quested, Easteal and Swannell, 2011: 464). Additionally, studies in the UK suggest that young people waste more than older people, with pensioner households wasting the least (Osner, 1982). This could be due to the fact that single-person households might have a difficult time using everything they buy and perhaps older people have a more established schedule and eating habits and not much waste is generated. Thus I wanted to include people in these life stages in this study.

Household waste is then a matter of several factors, both internal and external. Food can be wasted due to a family’s working patterns, the available market offerings; the physical and social living environment; and the needs, of the members of the household, the resources and abilities of the household (Dholakia, Dholakia and Firat, 1983; Ellen, Wiener and Cobb-Walgren, 1991; Pieters, 1991; Thøgersen, 1994). Thus, waste production depends on the household's consumption style (Uusitalo, 1986). So for example the waste of an empty nesters’ household with a pretty fixed schedule and a steady income will be different to a single-person household with a student with a very flexible daily schedule and a low income. However the focus of this study is as mentioned on the psychological variables, but it is important to understand these backgrounds to understand that food waste happens in connection with many factors besides attitudes.

Mary Douglas (1984) highlighted how the social world is based on classifications defining what is dirty or clean. For Douglas what is anomalous, ‘sticky’ or ‘viscous’ (Douglas, 1984: 38) is classified as ‘dirt’ or ‘pollutant’ and as such it needs to be removed. Disposal is thus a matter of moving things out of the system in order to re-establish the balance of the system and thus the social structure. All that is dirt is removed and all that is clean is consumed in one way or another. This has been criticised by Munro (1995). In his sociological analysis of food disposal, he underlines that divestment, which consists of multiple conduits of disposal, is part of the consumption process. Disposal is not the last and unconnected stage of the consumption process, but rather *“it has implications for the acquisition, cooking and ingestion stages in the process”* (Munro, 1995: 324). So he extends Douglas’s concept of consumption to include divestment. With this inclusion it is not only through consumption we get included into society, it is also through divestment, in particular the way we choose to divest. Could it be that not only do we sneak-peak at other people’s trolleys in the supermarket (and make assumptions about who they are on the basis hereof) – but that we might also notice more general food practices such as buying organic or having a compost and make assumptions about discarding practices as well? However, not all conduits are successful with the case of food waste as even though we might have got rid of a certain food product it sometimes seem to come back to haunt us. Munro uses the example of an unpleasant fish smell in the fridge. Although the fish has been eaten the day before, the smell is surprisingly still here. Thus, consumers do not simply move objects outside their house, rather they move them along in a process, which can be the charity shops, the recycling bin or the street (Cappellini, 2009) or they might re-use them. These analyses highlight how a divestment practice is not an end point of the consumption process. In relation to this study this can be used to consider if there is a difference in when the interviewees classify food as waste and thus should be binned, furthermore, it will be interesting to see whether they classify binning the food as the end of the consumption process.

Food is not dichotomously defined as either edible or waste but seems to have a life cycle during parts of which a particular food item might have characteristics of both depending on who defines it. Furthermore, what some people classify as rubbish or transient (objects that lose their value over time) may return tomorrow as a valuable (or invaluable) object (Parsons, 2008). Thus rubbish is not the end point of a product process, it can come back not only as unpleasant smell but also may return as a collectable and rare item. Value is for example re-created within the home, through *“finding objects, displaying objects and transforming and re-using objects”* (Parsons, 2008: 392). It will probably be the case of transforming or re-using when it comes to food, one can transform yesterdays leftovers of potatoes and lamb into today’s hash. In this way, the status of the objects is altered in the eyes of the consumer. An example of this outside the home is purchasing an object in a second hand shop or in a car boot sale (Soiffer and Hermann, 1987; Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005) where it is rediscovered and thus moved from rubbish to a valuable status. One can argue that second hand shops and car boot sales are miles from food waste but there are examples when it makes more sense. Dumpster divers or freegans are as mentioned people who practise alternative consumption, namely procuring food from supermarket dumpster bins for individual consumption (Edwards & Mercer, 2007). Through this behaviour, they thus move it from rubbish to food. Consisting mainly of young people, individuals who DD procure their food in accordance with the philosophy of ‘freeganism’. This is a term first coined around the year 2000. It is defined as the belief in “*minimising impact on the environment by consuming food that has literally been thrown away*” (Macmillan English Dictionary Online 2002). So, do any of the interviewees re-create the value for example through leftovers?

## Recapitulation: Food waste

I have now identified the main points and focal concepts of the 4 theoretical areas. This subsection provides the reader with a recapitulation of the major points made in this section, these are outlined in figure 2:

Figure – Recapitulation of major points

As mentioned this theory also guide the research process and the interview guides. Accordingly, the themes Food and the self; Global consumption; Green consumption and Waste will be used throughout the thesis. It should be mentioned that other theories on this subject could have been relevant to include however, these subjects where chosen because they had the most theoretical depth and matched the themes discovered in the exploratory phases the best. The themes will be the basis of the analysis, which will follow after an outline of the methodological approach used. This lays the grounds as to how I will approach the data collection as well as the analysis of the data.

# Methodology

This section outlines the methodology in order to delimit and justify choices made in relation to this study, and also to account for the most suitable approach relevant to this study (Herslund, 2004). The section will be divided into subcategories. In the first sections, the basic beliefs that guide research (i.e. epistemology, ontology and social constructionism) are discussed. Thereafter there is an overview of the research design as well as a more detailed account for the various phases of this study. Next, is an outline of the more exploratory phases of the study followed by the basic beliefs of qualitative research, and finally, considerations pertaining to the analysis close this section. Before turning to these issues, it ought to be mentioned that my research design, in accordance with my paradigmatic stance, reflects my personality and fundamental beliefs as to what methodology ‘is’. Egon G. Guba (1990). He defines a paradigm as: “*a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry*.” (17) Thus, it is fundamental beliefs that guide action, whether it is academic work or everyday practices (e.g. cooking), consequently any research undertaken will to some extent reflect my own worldview. When cooking a meal, some people prefer to follow a recipe to the letter, measuring every ingredient, while others may use the recipe as a guideline but will add or replace some ingredients because they think it will taste better that way. Or one might just have tried a dish or seen a picture of it and attempts to make something similar to that dish, capture the essence, but from a personal interpretation. My fundamental belief is that recipes (whether they suggest how to make a delicious meal or how to ‘do’ research) should act as useful guidelines and inspiration, but *not* as straitjackets or ‘autopilots’ and therefore, in the following sections I treat the methodological literature as a set of guidelines, that have informed and inspired my work, but that are not followed uncritically.

## Epistemology and ontology

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the knowledge on how food waste is thought of in everyday life at a consumer level. It should be stated at this point that the study is exploratory and not a definite report on the subject.

Epistemology asks the question: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)? (Guba, 1990).

My epistemological position is subjectivism, meaning I believe that knowledge is created in the mind, as Daly (2007: 23) puts it: “*all knowledge is constructed through a meaning making process in the mind of the knower.”* As a consequence, it is not possible, nor recommendable, to be objective as the inquirer shapes the direction and outcome of the study, meaning the research will always to some level include the values, preferences and understandings of the inquirer (Bryman, 2008; Levy, 1959). Thus, instead of trying to understand our realities in a set of law-like predictions a subjectivist epistemology “*accepts that knowledge is subject to differing viewpoints and explanations, subject to the interpretations of different value standpoints and subject to revision as a result of changing conditions and circumstances*.” (Daly, 2007: 24). This also means that this study would be an entirely different one if conducted by someone else, accordingly, my personality and my attitudes towards food and food waste are decisive for this research process from the initial interest in the subject to the theories and methods chosen.

Ontology is based on questions about the nature of reality itself (Guba, 1990; Herslund, 2004; Bryman, 2008). The distinction between ontology and epistemology though, is most apparent in the objectivist standpoint as there is a clearer separation between the knower and the known and thus a clearer distinction between external reality and the relationship the inquirer has with that reality (Pettigrew, 1992; Daly, 2007). Furthermore, as social reality is not a steady state but a dynamic process, the analysis of any process always occurs alongside other processes. As Kjærnes (2001) argues, contemporary eating habits as social practices are influenced by the wider societal transformation processes.

Consequently, in this case, context and action intertwine as we are dealing with human beings and their perception of food practices. Thus, it becomes more difficult to uphold a distinction between the two as they are in constant reciprocal action. Additionally, the researcher also co-constructs his or her research (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Morgan 1983; Kvale, 2007). When we gather data we engage in reconstructions as we select and thus exclude certain phenomena, meaning as a researcher I frame my phenomenological reality. Through the process of choosing phenomena of interest, observing, gathering record and analysing my data I reformate the reality at hand (Kvale, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

## Social constructionism

As pointed out, my fundamental belief is that all reality, or more correctly, all realit***ies*** are constructed realities (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Denzin, 1983). A key importance in the social constructionist paradigm is the social aspects as *“interpretive processes are deeply embedded in, and shaped by, the shared meanings that we have about activity, language, and cultural symbols.”* (Daly, 2007: 32). Thus, we create meanings of behaviour on the basis of externally available processes of the social world. For example, as consumers we all have more or less similar mundane everyday routines of food consumption and we may pretty much agree that these activities are undertaken more or less in the same way. We get our groceries from a supermarket and perhaps from our kitchen garden, prepare it, and eat it. And there are limits to how many different ways one can prepare and eat spaghetti Bolognese. Put in a different way, we construct our realities through the social world and these constructions are “borrowed” as we observe meaning-making behaviour and to some extent copy this in order to engage in social acceptable behaviour (Bryman, 2008). As Beaudrillard (2002) argues, individuals communicate through a system where the values assigned to objects refer only to other values; a system made up of "models of a real without origin or reality", understood as a copy without an original. Thus, our individuality is always influenced by others. Not only is it influenced by others, we value the opinion of others very highly and let it, to some extent, guide our behaviour, as Daly points out *“the self is a product of reflected appraisals from others.”* (2007:64). If you experience appraisal from others when behaving a certain way, there is a greater chance you will engage in this behaviour again, trying to achieve the reward of appraisal. As with attitudes towards food waste it will be interesting to investigate whether people feel appraised from others when trying to avoid food waste or not, and if they do not, what other incentives could there be to avoid food waste. I use the term *attitudes* throughout this paper in a broad sense including such terms as cognitions, values, thoughts, beliefs and opinions, as Pratkanis defines attitude: “*a person’s evaluation of an object of thought*.” (1989: 72). Thus, peoples personal evaluations of food waste.

Social constructionism is based on a belief quite similar to that of the interpretive paradigm, that is that we construct meanings in the course of interaction. Consequently, through interviews, knowledge is co-constructed, based on interplay between the meanings of the researcher and the meanings of the participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As a social constructionist I believe that talk is the basis of discerning how participants make sense of their own daily realities such as food waste. Consequently, I chose interviewing as a method for data gathering in order to enhance the analytical overview of existing research by introducing the voices of consumers (McCracken, 1988). It is important to try and understand people’s thoughts, emotions, motivation, identity and the like, within the collective meanings and set of practices of the culture. The interviews help familiarize the researcher both with the people’s ideas, understandings and meanings of food and with the food practices, which take place in the households. This is evident in the constructionism research as understanding a human means you must understand the culture; *“there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture.”* (Geertz, 1973: 49). What is interesting are the ways in which people create meanings within a cultural context, the cultural rules people use to make sense of their worlds (Kral et al, 2002). I am focusing on culture as the outcome of human values, beliefs, and practices. For example, some food items can be classified as inedible by one culture but a delicacy by another (Asp, 1999), culture also establishes how people use food and thus affects food intakes (Lowenberg et al., 1974; Kittler and Sucher, 1995). Just as social reality is a dynamic process (Burr, 1995), culture is usually hidden from the eye but can be seen through what we wear, and how we speak, our beliefs, and what we eat. Formerly, things like food, clothes and shelter was essentially important matters and the consumers thought more in economic ways, focusing on *“the durability of the fabric, the quantity of the food, the sturdiness of the building materials.”* (Levy, 1959: 1) But, as Levy pointed out more than fifty years ago, the marketplace changed, and so did the consumer, she or he is not so much an economic consumer, in fact she can probably vaguely remember what she pays for her goods and sometimes she does not even get to use (or eat) them before she disposes of them. Today we focus on other things as well, as Levy (1959: 2-3) states *“The things people buy are seen to have personal and social meanings in addition to their functions.”* This also goes for food and thus, I focus on food as symbols and since everyone must eat, what we eat becomes a powerful symbol of who we are (Fox, 2009).

I am using constructionist grounded theory where (also summing up) the theoretical assumptions are that the self is a social product that can be understood by taking the perspectives of others (Blumer, 1969). Language is central to understanding how humans apply meaning to their life. We live in a world of shared symbols that provide meaning for interaction. *“All social action is based on the definition of the situation, the interpretation of meanings that arise in interaction, and the emergence of shared meanings in a situation.”* (Daly, 2007: 101) and social reality is complex and ever changing. Consequently, I acknowledge that my research is also ever developing and momentary. It will change as the lives of the intervieweess and the society changes and therefore, although trying to generate knowledge on the subject of consumers’ food waste, the findings presented in this thesis may have as short a life cycle as any food product on the retailers’ shelves.

## Research design

As most constructionists, I have a predisposition towards using qualitative methods (Schwandt, 2007; Pettigrew, 199; Mir and Watson, 2000). However, as I acknowledge the co-existence of multiple realities and the importance of contextuality, I also believe that there is no ‘one’ method that is superior in the quest to gain insight into consumers’ attitudes pertaining to food waste as part of their everyday life of food consumption patterns. Qualitative methods are characterized by being flexible and this is evident in this study as the preliminary interviews are more exploratory and later on they evolve and become more structured and focused. My research process is outlined in a model to provide the reader with an overview of the phases this study developed through. The overall phases is outlined in figure 3:

Figure – Phases of the research process

The different phases naturally overlap but for the sake of overview it is divided into 4 phases: The 13 fall interviews were conducted in connection with the project ‘Students and Food’ at Aalborg University. Next, the explorative research phase of this study included interviews with dumpster divers, and a meeting with Himmelhaven. Hereafter, the preliminary interviews took place where I held a record of the food discarded in 7 households (see appendix 5-7 to see examples of four of them). Lastly, the focused interviews were conducted where the preliminary interviews had been reviewed and adjusted. Accordingly, I have adopted an iterative development process, meaning in my research process I continuously review and adjust my empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Although a wide range of more quantitative studies on food waste already exists, a major contribution of this thesis is the attempt to study the more ‘humanistic’ side to food waste. It is thus a contribution to the knowledge on attitudes towards household food waste. Accordingly, I use qualitative data as I seek to understand beliefs about an everyday situation and so using quantitative data would distance me from the phenomenon. As T. R. Young argued “*One should realise that quantification is a process by which the richness of everyday life is made progressively more barren as it proceeds.”*(1981: 123). Although claiming that the results of quantitative research are ‘barren’ might be a harsh statement, Young (1981) did point to a major problem that arises when a topic (such as food waste) is only subject to quantitative research. Such research would probably result in a lack of knowledge on the *richness* of this topic as part of everyday life consumption. A qualitative, real-life research approach is the appropriate empirical research method when trying to capture the subjective standpoint of the consumer. This assumption is underpinned by the fact that we use our language, our words to give meaning to our reality, and this narrative tradition has long provided us a way to share our experiences (Hooper, 2011). Consequently, qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth, it seeks to acquire in depth and intimate information about a smaller group of persons (Hiller & Diluzi, 2003). Therefore qualitative research is the appropriate method chosen for this study. Furthermore, the aim of qualitative research in this study is to learn about how and why people think, and make meaning as they do (Ambert et al, 1995). Through my interactions with consumers I am trying to arrive at a thick description (Geertz, 1973) containing detail and nuances of the studied phenomena. Additionally, I am interested in understanding the broader patterns of meaning construction that exist within the project sample. Social phenomena are constructed by people and they are not objective facts (Herslund, 2004) and as the study focuses on a social phenomenon I use the narratives of my interviewees to gain insight into this subject.

During the interviews I focused on the way the interviewees construct the meaning of their everyday lives – recognizing that this reality not only changes over time, but also across the various contexts and situations, in which interviewees relate to food waste. Consequently, I acknowledge the contextuality and multiplicity of interviewees’ thoughts on food waste and recognize that even something as simple as food waste might mean something different to my interviewees during weekdays, weekends, and for example, Christmas. Additionally, consumption patterns (including food waste) vary depending on interviewees’ everyday life situations and perhaps especially, on where in their lives they are throughout a life cycle (Wells, W. D., and Gubar, G.1970; Rathje and Schiffer, 1982). For example, the acquisition and discard of some types of goods vary throughout a life cycle, when there is presence of children the structures of food practices probably differ from those of empty nesters, while students and young adults are in a different situation as well. These are people who are at different stages in their lives and thus have different life situations when looking at income, living situations, leisure and the like. Also the researcher influences this process as I created the frames within which participants talk although I define interviews as collaborative meaning-making processes (Hiller & diLuzio, 2003). This study is focused mainly on two different types of life situations, empty nesters and young adults to see if, how and why they differ.I assume they have different food practices as for example cooking, grocery shopping and discarding. This is also why I have employed different interview guides for the different interviews: 4 all in all, however I gathered all the theoretical specifications for the themes in one overall interview guide (see appendix 8).

## A whole new world of food waste

When doing research like this over a longer period of time the process of learning is not a linear one. Quite the contrary the knowledge is obtained by manoeuvring back and forth through the different stages. My learning process has been of an ever-evolving kind taking me through a step-by-step process, taking detours, going back and moving forward again. And during this process meeting a group of inspiring people helped me on the way.

In the fall I was conducting a range of interviews as part of a project on Students and Food at Aalborg University and during these interviews some of the interviewees talked about their relation to food waste. One interviewee in particular mentioned an interesting attitude towards food waste in the quote below where she mentions what her mother says about food waste:

*She usually says God doesn’t like it when you do that, when you waste food. But I also often think that it’s a huge waste of resources. I’m just thinking, here I am, wasting this much food, creating this much food waste, and you read about it in the paper, and there are a lot of people wasting I don’t know how much (…) and somewhere someone would give their right arm to get that piece of something that you have, then I feel guilty. For example I bought 30 eggs on sale (…) but that week I was so busy that I still had these 30 eggs when I flew back home to Copenhagen, and I just thought oh no when I came back and it was 5 or 6 days passed the date, well I am gonna make an egg test (…) so I began cracking the eggs and checking them one by one, smelling them, I’ve heard that those dates aren’t true, they’re just guidelines (…) and my family comes from Pakistan and they had animals and all that so they never thought like well on that date the milk has gone off, they had to use their senses and smell it, and look at it and so I did that too and I used up all 30 eggs.*

[Alicia, 21 years old: 22.38 (as all other quotes (except from Francois), this quote has been translated from Danish to English by the researcher - please see appendix 9 for original quotes) the audio file is on CD 1]

Alicia talks about the guilt she feels when wasting food because she was told that God does not like it and she thus notices it when it is mentioned in the newspaper. This and the other interviews in this process inspired me to research further into the subject of food waste.

In the preliminary and more exploratory phases of the thesis I spent some time trying to acquaint myself with the more alternative approaches to food waste. I did this in order to gain more insight into what topics might be interesting to explore, but also to enhance my understanding of this particular field of research. As a constructionist I argue that the understanding of the more alternative approaches to food waste has made me more qualified to understanding the multiplicity of attitudes surrounding food waste in everyday situations. Also encountering these people improved my dialogue and hereby my interviewing skills by broadening my horizon and enabling me to get a better understanding of interviewees that holds different values and backgrounds than my own. As a result, this phase not only qualifies as knowledge creating in itself, but also acts as an important preparation for the subsequent phases of the research.

In the earlier stages of the thesis process I wanted to gain more insight into the world of food waste. I began with a simple Google search on different combinations of words such as food waste Aarhus, food waste initiatives and the like. Other than that I contacted some friends whom I believed could have contacts to people who engaged in dumpster diving. My searches on Google led me to a couple of different sites such as Himmelhaven (a volunteer association focusing on the environment - www.himmelhaven.dk) and Trøjborg Folkekøkken. Both places mentioned the passionate (their phrasing) Francois who had led a couple of initiatives in and around Aarhus. A few days later I met with Francois, talking about all his do-good projects. He used to go dumpster diving and together with other DD’s they created Trøjborg Folkekøkken which is a non-profit organization cooking together every Sunday and anyone who does not have much money to buy food can come and join (or just anyone who wants some company).



Eating at Trøjborg Folkekøkken.

In this next quote, Francois talks about why he does not dumpster dive anymore but instead has agreements with local farmers to get their excess food:

*Instead of going in the back at night, even if it’s funny because you feel like it’s exciting and it’s like a treasure hunt because you don’t know what you’re gonna get (…) I thought yeah it was fun and so on (…) but sometimes you end up with people who dislike dumpster divers (…) I realised, okay lets eventually invite people in the stores to be kind and think with their heart instead of their pocket…then I decided to invite them and I got very surprised because I decided to be very open about what we were doing (…) so I decided to invite people because I was aware that if we have all this food in dumpsters then somebody must have carried it out there and this person might know more than anybody else how much food is thrown away and they might want to do something about it*.

[Francois, 26 years old: 11.53-15.31]

Instead of dumpster diving as a reaction to retailers’ food waste, Francois now has agreements with several local farmers and he picks up what they cannot sell at a market in Aarhus every Wednesday and Saturday on his Christiania bike and this is used at Trøjborg Folkekøkken. After this conversation and a meeting with Himmelhaven (included in the audio files) I realised there was a whole community of people trying to ameliorate food waste that I never knew of. These were all inspiring people and they led me on in my research. Furthermore, I came into contact with a dumpster diver who was willing to take me along on a dumpster diving adventure. We met one snowy evening at 9 p.m. and went behind the Fakta store (at opening hours!), a place where they did not mind dumpster divers, however, as Henny says, this is not always the case:

*Irma has run what we call a dumpster war, they simply lock up their things to an extend where there is no way of getting to it, and of course there are those who are casual and chooses to go some place else and then there are those that think, this wont do, we will do something about it…so you bring some glue in your pocket or you bring a bolt cutter and then you fill the keyhole with glue cause then they have to cut it themselves.*

[Henny, 25 years old: 24.40]

So she usually dumpster dived at this Fakta store also because it was not as “crowded” as other places. She jumped in the container and I held a plastic bag and this is a picture of some of the ‘haul’ after a longer process of sorting and cleaning.



We found around 3 kilos of mixed vegetables and 4 bags of dark and white bread, chocolate (I got that), juice, cress and other things. It was an eye-opening experience that left me with a much more lasting memory than just the chocolate bunny. This dumpster diving trip was undertaken to see an example of food waste with my own eyes, one a bit more impressive than when looking in your own bin and also to see one alternative reaction to it.

## Qualitative interviews

The in depth interviews were chosen as food waste can be somewhat a delicate subject to people as we were probably all raised with the idea that throwing food in the bin is “bad” and if we did not finish our dinner we might have heard the sentence “think of the starving children in Africa”. However, I also chose to conduct a focus group as the main element of the focus group is the interaction and dynamics between participants (Frey & Fontana 1991; Morgan, 1996) and so this proved very fruitful as the discussion about food waste brought about interesting topics.

Consequently, I chose the semi-structured in-depth interview. The unstructured interview one could say, happens all the time, at home, talking to friends, out on the town while semi-structured interviews are a more scheduled activity (Bryman, 2008; Daly, 2007). A semi-structured interview is open-ended and follows an interview guide containing a list of questions and topics that need to be covered during the interview (Spradley, 1979) and as mentioned my interview technique was somewhat a learning by doing process. As semi-structured interviews require, I have tried to base my interviews on a minimum amount of control, letting the interviewees feel free to talk (Dohrenwend, Richardson and Klein 1965; Spradley 1979), without, though, allowing them to speak about all topics that they may wish to address. Consequently, I began my interviews with open-ended questions that were still attentive to the phenomenon of interest and allowed the interviewees’ experiences of this phenomenon to shape the direction of the research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Fontana and Frey, 2005). This helped develop my research questions that at first were based on some assumptions and research about key issues in food waste. The open questions during the interviews also allowed the interviewees to give their explanation of what they found relevant about a specific topic and, consequently, many diverse answers have been given to the same question, which again reflects the constructivist approach of multiple life views. The aim of the interviews was also try and discover patterns in the data that would be reflected in the analysis.

The interview guide evolved during the process as I began to see the shaping of patterns and accordingly, adding more and differing questions, thus, my interviews are somewhat based on emerging themes and ideas that are modified and remoulded throughout the research process (Strauss et al. 1969). The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes and they took place where it suited the interviewees best at the time. This was most often in their homes but sometimes it took place at a café or in my apartment. The first contact was always done by phone or mail where a short description of the topic was given and a meeting was set up. The interview began with small talk and information about the study before starting the audio recorder, furthermore it was done with the person most responsible for food practices in the household. If other household members were present, they were invited to take part in the interview, which resulted in a group discussion in 7 cases (apart from the focus group). During the interviews I listened to what they had to say and how they said it, and also I tried to gain an understanding of how they made, acquired, used and discarded food in the course of everyday living (Spradley, 1980). After the interviews, the interviewees were asked if they would be willing to write down any food thrown out over the course of two weeks. This question was posed at the end of the interview so to not affect their general answers on food waste practices, i.e. what kind and how much. They were asked to do this in order to see whether what they had said about food waste in fact was true. Not because I believed they would lie, but rather due to the fact that I believed that people simply do not think too much about how much food they are actually throwing away, or what food products it typically is. However, after the initial seven interviews I chose to end this as I experienced this was an inconvenience to them that did not match the outcome, it was simply not worth the trouble. In all cases what they recorded was consistent with their statements. Furthermore, at some point during the interview (usually towards the end) I showed the interviewees two pictures they needed to respond to. I asked them questions such as “describe what you see in this picture?” and “what are your thoughts on that?” or “what is your attitude towards that?”. I believe that these photos did not impose certain attitudes onto the viewer but indeed, the viewer constructs meaning for him/herself. As Schwartz argues, *“The viewing process is a dynamic interaction between the photographer, the spectator, and the image; meaning is actively constructed, not passively received.”* (1989: 120). It does thus not place meaning but simply triggers meaning that is already in the viewer (Hall, 1966). Furthermore, in the first 4 interviews the theme was introduced as food waste but later changed to food practices, as it should not affect their answers to more socially acceptable ones. Consequently, there were conducted 22 interviews and one focus group all in all; 9 with young adults, 9 with empty nesters (where 3 of them had one child still living at home), 4 with dumpster divers and one focus group of five people which was held at V.U.C in Aarhus with a group of teachers (all interviews are enclosed on CD 1 and 2). Some of the interviewees were chosen purposively based on their relevant characteristics and experiences with the phenomenon to be explored (Maxwell, 2009). However, I also chose interviewees I assumed did not consider food waste to a high degree in order to see possible differences. Thus, as mentioned, I have tried to interview people in different life stages and with diversities in food and food waste attitudes. After 15 interviews I reached somewhat a saturation point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where major themes began to recur. I then conducted 7 more until the research questions were judged to be sufficiently covered and no additional information emerged from the interviews (Miles and Huberman, 1994). All the interviews where transcribed (enclosed on CD 3) and a summary was made of each one, outlined in a Meta Matrix, which I will return to.

Qualitative research methods attempt to uncover what people think or how they feel, achieving greater depth and detail of responses, and resulting in close-up descriptions that better realise the subjective nature of the phenomenon studied (Bellenger, Bernhardt, and Goldstrucker 1976; Van Maanen, Dabbs, and Faulkner 1982). And so this is the most suitable approach to this study since attitude formation is an individual affective and cognitive activity, it is best theorized and studied at the individual respondent level (Levy, 1959, Bryman, 2008). The interviews involved as mentioned relatively open-ended, but interviewer guided, discussions of specific topics. However, it sometimes proved difficult to make people speak about their food consumption, especially when it came to discarding, they sometimes found it a bit hard having to give words to everyday practices like grocery shopping, preparing, eating and discarding food. Perhaps this is because people usually see food as something you do not need to talk about but simply a natural part of an everyday life. As Daly (2007: 66) argues: *“Reality as it is lived on a day-to-day basis, is often experiences as mundane and unremarkable.”* Thus a daily process such as food waste might not require much thought. This was overcome by asking more general questions pertaining their food practices before getting to the actual food waste-related questions. Consequently, the study was undertaken to explore attitudes towards household food waste. Moreover, in order to explore the passage of ‘food’ into ‘waste’, I decided to focus on the broader processes, dynamics and relations that accompany this movement. Accordingly, the study explored the ways in which households plan for and shop for food; how they prepare, and consume it; how they store it; and ultimately the ways in which they dispose of the food that they do not eat.

## Getting from A to B

This section has established the academic framework for this study, I have accounted for the qualitative approach, which is the most suitable approach relevant to this study. This framework should then help the reader(s) reach an understanding of the research frames that create the basis for an analysis and also the limitations in this thesis.

It can be difficult showing how I got from an extensive amount of audio taped interviews to my conclusions but I have attempted at transparency. As much of the knowledge is as mentioned created in the mind of the researcher, I run the show, I create the frames and it can be difficult to separate findings from the research process (Greenwood, 2002). So, it is almost a “you had to be there” type situation. However, I tried to illustrate an overview of my research process in the process model. Furthermore, I tried to account for the various phases in this study that reflects the complexity of the subject which will probably also reflect in the analysis. The analysis process begins already with the very first interview where the major themes touched upon are noticed and focused on henceforward. The themes then evolved during the different phases of the process model. Another attempt to analyse the thick and rich data, I structured the summaries into a Meta Matrix (see appendix 10) where the interviews are listed on the vertical axis and themes of the study on the vertical horizontal axis. The themes of the matrix have emerged during the research process and are not definite but they constitute a good basis for further analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994). I made a summary of the themes the interviewees touched upon and so the Meta Matrix forms a presentation of my qualitative data in a condensed form. The matrix is a useful tool to create overview and is used as a basis for the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As mentioned this study draws on a range of different literature studies and as such the diversity of topics is reflected in the multiplicity of data.

# Analysis

As I am a constructionist it is appropriate that we get an understanding of the interviewees, their context and life situation, before analysing their statements. Below are listed a few context related information bits about the interviewees whose statements form basis of the analysis.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mads and Bente:  58 and 57 years old, living together on a farm. Mads is a biologist, Bente is a pedagogue. They have three boys, all moved out.  They believe they throw almost nothing out, what they have leftover is given to their chickens. | Elizabeth:  25 years old, pedagogue. Lives alone in an apartment. Pays great attention to what she eats, buys partly organic. Says she thinks of the starving children in Africa whenever she leaves food on her plate. | Lene:  56 years old, receptionist at a dental clinic. Lives in a house with her husband who is a dentist, has four kids, one still living at home.  Has a compost, buys some things organic. | Peter:  37 years old. Lives in a house with his wife and four kids. Plans their food and believes this leads to less waste. |
| Kristian:  26, Recently dropped out of engineering college. Lives alone in apartment, freegan, tries to eat as little meat as possible. Dumpster dives for two reasons: “There are different reasons, mostly really because we throw too much food away, way too much food and at the same time because it is fairly cheap, you can make ends meet on a S.U.” 22:41. | Lars:  24 years old, studies Nutrition and Health, lives alone in an apartment, cares a great deal about what he eats, and plans his food. Buys organically and loves to cook. Tried vegetarianism for a year and a half. | Birgitte:  57 years old teacher. Married and has two kids, one still living at home. Cannot stand if food is not fresh, her husband is different. Buys milk and sometimes vegetables organic, thinks they might buy more organic when they are just the two. | Sofie:  30 years old, lives alone. Thinks that the supermarket also has some blame in the food waste situation because their package sizes does not match a single household. |
| Trine:  25 years old, pedagogue. Lives in an apartment with a roommate. Is very unstructured with grocery shopping. Likes to cook in her free time but not that much during the weekdays. | Jens:  24, lives in an apartment with a roommate. Studies Master of Business Studies. Loves to cook. Does not think he throws that much food out. Does not buy organic food: ”Eco is good I think, I just don’t want to pay that price.” 36:55. | Johanne:  54 years old, pedagogue, living with her husband, an early retirement pensioner. Has two kids, both moved out. Does not think they throw too much food away, follows use by dates. Does not buy organic. | Maria:  32 years old. Lives with her husband and two kids. Says that her kids are also to blame for their food waste because of their changing food wants. |
| Anne-Mette:  58 years old, secretary, living with her husband, an architect. They have four kids, all have moved out. She does not really follow the use by date but her husband does. They do not really buy organic and they have a compost but they have not used it in a while. | Lise:  25 years old, studies Social Science. Lives in an apartment with to other girls. Likes to cook even though she grew up without much cooking: “I don’t come from a home where, I mean, I wasn’t in the kitchen helping out that much, and, if I have to be mean, my mom wasn’t really that good at cooking so I didn’t grow up with a sense of how much of this and how much of that.” 7:30. | Ole and Karen:  Both 57 years old. Ole is a biologist, Karen is a Socialworker. Has three children, one still living at home.  Buys predominantly organic and hates food waste. | Tanja:  34 years old, lives with her husband. Likes to cook and hates waste. |
| Daniel and Ida:  25 and 24 years old, both studying Medicine, living together in an apartment.  Ida does not think too much about anti waste but Daniel does, also Ida pays more attention to best before dates than he does. Has talked about beginning to buy more organic food. | Lisa:  25 years old, studies medicine and lives alone in an apartment. Likes to cook, buys some things organic. Does not like to waste food:  “I really try to make use of the leftovers I might have, its also something my parents care a great deal about, then we’ll just have to eat leftovers tomorrow so that we don’t just throw everything in the trash.” 17:31. | Troels and Jytte:  55 and 54 years old, living together, has three children, all moved out. Troels has a very unstable schedule because he travels a lot and so food planning is difficult for them. Does not really follow use by date. Buys some organic food and loves quality food. | Katrine:  42 years old. Lives with her husband and two kids. Saves all leftovers, even the ones that might not get eaten. |
| Mette:  23 years old, studies Spanish and Communication. Lives alone in an apartment. Does not buy organic. Likes to cook, particularly baking.  Believes she wastes a lot of food and does not think too much about it: ”what do you think (when you throw out food?) If you think anything?” I don’t think I think that much about it, maybe I think its a kind of a waste of money”. 11:42. | Signe:  25 years old, studies Nutrition and Health, lives with her girlfriend in an apartment. Does not really like to cook but her girlfriend does. Cares a great deal about the best before date. Buys some things organically. | Henriette and Jørgen:  59 and 57 years old. Henriette is an early retirement pensioner, Jørgen is a biologist. They have two children, both moved out. Does not go after use by date. Buys predominantly organic and has a compost. Does not believe they throw very much food out. | Johannes and Eva:  Both 59 years old. Eva is retired and Johannes is a doctor. They have two children, both moved out.  Eva makes all the food and does almost all of the grocery shopping as well. Has a compost, buys a few things organic. |

On the basis of the data from the interviews and the theory it is now possible to investigate and analyse how food waste is thought of in everyday life at a consumer level. It would be too extensive to present all the themes that emerged from the interviews so the relevant and more extensive results and those that had more theoretical contributions will be emphasized in the following. There will be a discussion of the themes observed when analysing the collected data and seeing them in connection with the theory. Furthermore, the following themes will be analysed in order to relate to the research questions. The themes focused on are: Food waste is not (always) intentional, with a subsection on procrastinating food waste; When is it rubbish? With a subsection on the reuse of leftovers; Front stage and back stage; Disconnection from food with subsections on The case of the road kill and Globalisation; Food knowledge; Altruism vs. Hedonism divided into Altruism, Hedonism and altruist and hedonist attitudes; Food waste attitudes followed by an assessment of qualitative data and last, concluding remarks and thoughts on implications and recommendations for further research closes the analysis section.

## Food waste is not (always) intentional

From the analysis it is clear that food waste is not (always) intentional. More so, it is not a behaviour in itself, but results from the interaction of multiple behaviours relating to planning, shopping, storage, preparation and consumption of food (Quested, Parry, Easteal and Swannell, 2011). Besides from not being deliberate, most of the interviewees did not like it when any food was wasted. However, as it is an action that is interconnected with other daily processes they often found it hard to avoid. One theme that emerged from the analysis was that food waste sometimes happens due to bad planning. In this example Katrine, Maria and Jytte talks about why food sometimes gets wasted:

*You don’t always plan your grocery shopping.*

*Its not always planned, no, Monday it’s planned and then at the end of the week you just go shopping.*

*Yeah, it’s a little more unreflective.*

[Katrine, 42 years old, Maria, 32 years old: 3.21]

*When we don’t use up what we have in the fridge because maybe we haven’t planned good enough or we experience a different weekday than we expected (…) it has a lot to do with that unpredictability and the randomness of what comes through the door at five o’clock, what we are having because you (Troels) often bring something back that changes what we had planned, perhaps we shopped for baked vegetables and then you bring something home you can’t have with baked vegetables and then we have to buy something and then all the vegetables won’t get used because then they go off.*

[Jytte, 36 years old: 45.00]

Maria mentions how grocery shopping is planned Monday, where, perhaps because it is the beginning of the week, you have more excess energy and good intentions that slowly drown in the sea of other daily chores during the week. Jytte explains how her husband often brings something home from work (he travels around the country), and this changes what was planned, leading some of the food products to go off before they are used. This shows that even if these interviewees had no intention of wasting food, it can happen anyway due to bad planning or unforeseen events. The WRAP study underpins this as the findings show that lack of planning leads to more food wasted (2007). This could also exemplify how food can be wasted in the search for variety and freshness, which will be returned to later. Thus, most of the interviewees mention how food waste sometimes occur due to lack of food planning skills, not only in the acquisition activity but also during preparation and consumption. In general, the food items mention when asked if there were some food items that got wasted more often than others were cheaper food stuff such as canned goods, bread, rice, pasta and the like. This could possibly be because the cheapness and availability of food weakens the need to build a plan for food. So even if food waste is not directly intentional, it seems cheaper foods got wasted more often while they could always find use for more expensive foods (almost all of the interviewees mention that they would never discard a piece of meat or fish for example). Consequently, the aspect of price also influences how high priority a food product gets when planning. The interviewees seemed to be aware of the fact that there was a risk that food would be discarded if they did not plan their food practices. So why do they not just plan them? The reasons for this also seem to be of a priority matter. When the daily chores take up more time than expected, food practices seems to be the place where one can cut back and save some time whether it be spending time making a shopping list, checking what you already have in your cupboards, freezer, fridge and the like, or perhaps taking the time to put leftovers in containers and put them in the fridge or freezer for later use. Or as the earlier example when unforeseen things happened it can lead to food waste. However, in this example the unforeseen event is food products brought home (probably because they were of a high quality) and as a consequence, the planned dinner got wasted, so this is not only an example of bad planning skills but a prioritising of the outlook to a fresh, exciting dinner. Again, food waste is not directly intentional, however it is not only a matter of errors in planning but also a consequence of prioritising. Consequently, the personal lifestyle of the interviewees thus influences the meal preparation frequency and the time for planning and/or preparing dishes. So when unforeseen things come up or other daily chores get prioritised, food practices is the place where one can cut back to save some time. As Lisa very clearly states:

*It’s an easy place to cut back, I mean on the time saving schedule, on food.*

[Lisa, 25, 32.43]

Thus, Lisa sees food practices as a place where one can cut back. Food practices have to fit in with all the other activities as part of cyclical calendars as well as throughout the day and so this is a place where some of the interviewees choose to deprioritise. Working hours, business opening hours, timetables in school and kindergartens all create a framework for our daily eating practices (Kjærnes 2001) and thus for some of the interviewees food planning sometimes drown in the sea of daily chores, leading to food waste. As Thøgersen (1994) argues, in the current mass consumption societies of the Western world, consumers need to get rid of waste so often that it would take up far too much of our limited time if we had to devote our problem solving attention to the task every time the situation arises. Even though he talks about waste in general I believe the same goes for food waste. If we had to devote attention to the food we are about to waste *every single time* (imagine it) it would probably for the most of us take up an incredible amount of time. Instead, we learn routines or habits, which make us capable of performing the task in a nearly automatic fashion, employing a minimum of conscious attention (Thøgersen, 1994). As Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, this habitualization frees the individual from having to make a lot of decisions and provides a stable background that enables him/her to undertake everyday activities (such as cooking) with a minimum of effort and decision-making. Consequently, planning ones food practices properly is an easy place to “skip” as food has become so inexpensive and always available. So it is one place in the day-to-day activities where we ‘unintentionally’ throw something out because of habit and we do not have the time to try and make use of it.

Consequently, based on the research in this study it can be stated that food waste is not always intentional, but that planning has a great influence on the occurrence of food waste. The planning of meals and shopping and having a shopping list that you stick to have effect on food waste in domestic kitchens however, other daily chores are sometimes prioritised higher. Furthermore, it seems that even though food waste is not intentional, more expensive products are prioritised over cheaper products when planning. Consequently, food waste is not intentional, it is just deprioritised. I have tried to make a simple overview of this prioritising in figure 4:

Priority:

High

Low

Figure 4 – Prioritising leading to food waste.

Consequently, daily chores are prioritised above food planning and when the interviewees does plan their meals, they tend to prioritise fresh food and variety highest, expensive foods next, and cheap foods last.

Another theme the interviewees touched upon that shows that food waste is not always intentional was difficulties in getting an overview over what they had. They were not always able to monitor what food products they had and that perhaps needed to be used, because each food type have a different expiry date and also they are stored in different places. To illustrate, three of the interviewees had two freezers and both of them were located outside of the kitchen (in a cellar). In such cases, people cannot monitor what they have and they do not take purchased food into account during their preparation and consumption decisions. For some reason it is hidden behind other foods or in freezer(s), fridge, cupboards and thus it is randomly discovered some day when it is way passed its best.

*It’s forgotten in the fridge, and then it just stays there too long, like, hidden behind something.*

[Maria, 32 years old: 9.59]

*A thing I need to improve is to check what I have in the freezer, because I have to be honest, not two days ago I was down there looking and I realised this meat should have been eaten, and this fruit…sadly there were a couple of things that had gone off, so I must admit, I’m not very good at that.*

[Anne-Mette, 58 years old: 24.11]

Maria and Anne-Mette both experienced problems with monitoring their food products, and as Anne-Mette says this is a problem she has considered improving on. Consequently, food waste also occurs when one does not have an overview on food. Again this shows how food waste is not always intentional and it happens due to bad planning skills and not being able to monitor all the different food products. The last example that shows how food waste is not always intentional is concerning children. Some of the interviewees mentioned how children eat less food and more often than not leaves more on the plate. Children may influence their parents during shopping (‘pester power’) but are also ‘picky eaters’ that do not always like the food prepared for them (WRAP, 2007). Parents do not want to force children eating everything on the plate and as the WRAP study shows: *“Families with children also tend to be bigger wasters than those without”* (2007: 6). It seemed that the households with young children preferred to over- rather than under-purchase, so they did not run out of provisions, they also did this in order to meet the ever changing demands of their children. Below, Maria and Henriette exemplify the food waste that can happen due to children’s ever changing demands:

*If you bought something for the kids’ fruit but then they don’t want it anyway and then it just stays in the fridge for fourteen days, well, then it gets discarded instead.*

[Maria, 32 years old: 2.50]

*Then there would be a certain kind of baloney that they wanted (…) and they were the only two in the house, actually it was only one of them that wanted it and she never finished it all and then it got binned and in that way there has been several products bought especially for them (…) I think you buy this stuff for your kids because they want it and we don’t necessarily buy this for ourselves just because we want it because we can make do with what’s in the fridge more so than they can.*

[Henriette, 59 years old: 23.45]

Again, food waste is not intentional but happens because their children have expressed a wanting for a certain product and then changed their mind and the product is not one that the parents want to eat so it gets binned. As Henriette says, the parents can easily settle for what is in the fridge but the children cannot. As this study shows it seems that children exert a tremendous power over the family pocketbook, this is underpinned by Calvert who argues, *“To influence youth is to influence the entire family's buying decisions.”* (2008: 207). Consequently, households with children waste more because they “give in” to the children’s food wishes only to discard them later on. Thus, food waste is not always intentional and it happens due to bad planning skills, prioritising daily chores above food planning and not being able to monitor all the different food products.

### Procrastination

As a continuance of the previous section dealing with the notion that food waste is not always intentional, this section is focused on a relating theme that appeared on the basis of the analysis; the act of procrastinating food waste. All of the interviewees claimed that they did not like to waste food, however, it sometimes depended on what ‘kind’ of food waste referred to. Some of the interviewees’ thought of food waste as all foods wasted, independent of level of decomposing while other interviewees’ referred to different levels of severity of waste. These individuals referred to wasting mouldy food as being more innocuous than for example wasting food with aesthetic flaws or the worst, perfectly good food. Mouldy food was talked about as a disgusting thing that needed to get discarded immediately, here there seemed to be no thought process and almost no feeling of guilt. One interviewee did not even really classify discarding mouldy foods as waste:

*With food and stuff I don’t really think I waste anything, it only happens if I did not get to use it and it got mouldy, then I will probably discard it, but then again, you are supposed to do that.*

[Jens, 24 years old: 22.58]

Jens says he might waste food only when it is mouldy but then again he defends this by saying that you are supposed to, indicating it is not really food waste anyway. He was however the only one expressing this attitude but several interviewees expressed that the further along the process of decomposing was, the more ‘legal’ it became to discard food. Consequently, the feeling of disgust overpowers and trumps the feeling of guilt of wasting mouldy food. Because of this process some of the interviewees had come up with a “clever” idea on how to clear their conscience as exemplified here:

*I give it a great amount of thought, not throwing out, so I save all leftovers after which they sit there in the fridge and turn unbelievably sad and spoiled, and then I throw them out.*

*Why is it you do that, I wonder, is it because then you feel better about yourself or what?*

*Yeah, but it’s also because deep down you know that you shouldn’t throw food away but then you forget it or you just don’t find use for it.*

[Katrine, 42 years old, Sofie, 30 years old: 1.52]

*You feel like, well now at least I tried, I made the effort (…) and then when it hits the best before date well then it isn’t my fault, then it’s like, my conscience is eased because now I can’t eat it because now it’s not really food, now you can get sick from eating it.*

[Lars, 24 years old: 27.58]

Katrine says that she stores all leftovers (even the ones that will probably not get eaten) and then she ends up discarding them, after they are spoiled. While Lars talk about waiting for the process of the food to turn from food that could be eaten to rubbish that might be risky to eat thus feeling that now at least you have tried. So he articulates the thought process that might be at play, that is, the procrastination of discarding food until it has actually gone bad. After this, you have no other choice but to bin it. Some of the interviewees mention this situation when they have some leftovers or some food products they know will probably not be used before they go off but they still wait till they have passed their best before they discard them. In these examples it could be a question of ‘feeling better about yourself’, if you wait till the food has gone bad before you throw it in the bin, you do not feel as guilty as you would have felt, discarding it in the first place. It is a way of legitimizing the waste because now it is too late, now it has gone off. As Quested, Parry, Easteal and Swannell (2011) state, guilt is one of the motivators for reducing food waste, and a majority of the interviewees felt just that when wasting food, and especially when wasting fresher food, foods that had not noticeably gone off yet. Furthermore, the interviewees might feel that this action is better than just discarding it to begin with because this way, at least you have tried. The next quote somewhat exemplifies the same pattern, but adds a dimension.

*Sometimes I have something in the fridge for a very long time, you know, its gone off but I’m just thinking, no, not today, I don’t want to throw anything out today (…) also because it’s a longer process, then I have to go down the stairs (…) and this is almost the fifth floor (…) I have to take out the trash today if I throw this milk out, also so that it won’t smell, it won’t smell in the fridge so I can’t just throw it in the bin, it takes more than that and I don’t know if I’m willing to do that today.*

[Lisa, 25 years old, lives alone in an apartment: 36.00]

This example is somewhat different, there are two things to notice here: first of all Lisa says ‘I don’t want to throw anything out today’ which could indicate that there are times when you do not have the energy to throw something out, given that it is a negative act. So she knows the food has gone off and that she is not going to consume it, but still she does not throw it out right at that moment, she puts off the unpleasant act of wasting food. Many researchers have shown that we procrastinate unpleasant tasks that we wish we would do sooner (e.g. O'Donoghue and Rabin, 2001; Milgram, Marshevsky and Sadeh, 1995; Sharma, 1997). Accordingly, some of the interviewees procrastinate wasting food because of the fact that it is an unpleasant task, and sometimes it is not enough to bin the food to get completely rid of it. Accordingly, she also mentions that not only does she need to throw food away (which requires something in itself) she also has to take down the trash from the fifth floor if she bins this food. Thus the process of discarding the food is not enough to get completely rid of it, she needs to move it further along, to the container on the street, which is an action she is not sure she is willing to undertake. Summing up, some of the interviewees procrastinate wasting food until it has gone off, i.e. until it is no longer edible and it then becomes “legal” to discard it. Thus, the further along the process of decomposing, the more they feel excused when binning it.

## When is it rubbish?

It seems there are differences in when the interviewees classify food as rubbish. Some see it as the moment the products hit the best before date and others do not. Throughout the study, interviewees were quite explicit that once food has ‘passed its best’, it is no longer fit for human consumption and as such, should be cast as ‘waste’. However, the processes and practices on how to classify food as waste varied across households and according to foodstuff. For example, some households observe dates and labels stringently, whilst others reject them in favour of ‘trusting their nose’. Some evaluate food according to its aesthetic qualities (‘it looks bad’). Some foodstuffs were positioned as highly risky (meat, poultry, fish and dairy) whilst others were thought to be more ‘forgiving’ with their riskiness limited to the potential for a decline in quality (herbs and spices). Others still were thought to be salvageable in the sense that signs of being past their best could be removed to prevent the rest of the item being contaminated (e.g. cutting mould out off a corner to rescue a block of cheese). The next quotes show two different attitudes to this:

*I have never looked at the best before date, ever.*

*How do you know when it has gone off then?*

*By looking at it, smelling it and tasting it.*

[Jørgen, 57 years old, interviewer: 10.08]

*I just think I’m really like that’s disgusting, you know, by nature, and I’m like I don’t want to get sick and I have this idea that if it says to throw this out I will, or I shouldn’t eat this because it’s too old, it’s the same when I’m cooking I always follow the recipe stringently.*

[Ida, 24 years old, 15:14]

Here are two very differing examples of relating to the best before date. Jørgen, who claims he has never even looked at one and Ida who observes and follows dates with great dedication. Thus, Jørgen would not classify any food as rubbish unless it smells, looks and/or tastes bad. Ida however follows dates stringently and compares it to following recipes when cooking, this could indicate that she does not have much confidence in her own cooking skills or her own senses when it comes to defining whether something is safe to eat. Thus, when the product hits the best before date, she classifies the product as rubbish. Furthermore, Ida says she is scared that she might get sick from eating something that has passed the best before date and this could be an example of a growing tendency in recent years. We see more and more food scares in today’s society that helps diminish trust in food production (Edwards & Mercer, 2007) perhaps people’s increasing knowledge about food processes can produce more anxiety as the individual become more aware of things to be anxious about (Midgley, 1996; Mulgan, 1996). One reason why food and anxiety are intertwined is as Fischler (1988) argues the fact that we incorporate food into our bodies, making it a part of us as we eat, where literally; *“we become what we eat*” (Fischler, 1988: 279). Thus, it is a great risk incorporating something into your body if you believe that the best before date means that the product should not be eaten after this date. However, it does not: *“Labelling a food product ‘best before’ does not mean that the product is expected to become harmful to health after this date. This date is an expression of how long this product has the right quality.”* (www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk). Hence, Ida’s (and other interviewees’) understanding of the best before date is in fact inaccurate. Therefore, it seems to be a safe precaution taken to not get sick (or tasting something foul), furthermore, it could provide one with a sense of control, since we have no control over where and how food is produced, we can control whether or not we incorporate it into our body. Thus, in order to be ‘on the safe side’ you discard the food when it hits the best before date. Next is another example of someone who follows the best before date and even beats it to the punch:

*Do you look at the best before date when throwing out food?*

*With some things, for example eggs I do, cause they are not supposed to be eaten after this…but with other things where you can see, well that doesn’t look (good), it might keep for two more days but if it doesn’t look good I just don’t feel like eating it, or if the milk has been open for a couple of days too long I don’t feel like drinking it even though it might have kept a bit longer.*

[Interviewer, Mette, 23 years old, living alone in an apartment: 13.09]

In this example, Mette follows the dates or even throws the food out before due to aesthetics. Again there is a great trust in the best before date, so much that it is in no way questioned in this example as she says ‘they are not *supposed* to be eaten after this’. From this quote, it can be stated that the visual appearance of food can reduce the desire of consumption. If the food appearance is below somebody’s acceptable level of edibility, then intentional food wastage turns to a tolerable act (even though the person does not like to waste). Furthermore, some interviewees might waste food while seeking quality and freshness in their food choices. In other words, anti food waste is not a high priority of these individuals in their food related decisions. Accordingly, when a food product hits the best before date, or appearance decreases it is labelled rubbish and non-edible. A relating topic touched upon by one of the dumpster divers also shows a difference in classifying something as rubbish:

*If you’re inviting a cute girl and you’re making a delicious meal for her you obviously don’t take what you need in the trashcan, you don’t do that, its kinda, no, in that case you should use fresh ingredients and stuff like that, good wine.*

[Kristian, 26 years old, dumpster diver: 38.16]

Kristian usually procures most of his food from a container but in this example where he talk about inviting a cute girl, he would not get them dinner form the nearest container. Interestingly, he uses the word trashcan in this case, however, otherwise he consistently refers to it as a container, but when we talks about a situation where he would not procure food from there, he calls it a trashcan. Hence, in a situation where he would choose not to eat it he refers to it as rubbish. So, the meaning changes from food to rubbish depending on the context. This might be because he acknowledges that it is probably not seen as acceptable by others to eat something from a container on a date, and so when trying to impress someone important, he conforms to her practices. As mentioned, food practices are components of culture and culture continually changes (Asp, 1999) hence some foods are deemed edible in some cultures and not in others where in this case Kristian first of all classifies something as edible that is not usually deemed edible by others in his culture, i.e. food from a container, but he changes this classification in the case of ‘inviting a cute girl over’ and then it becomes non-edible and the term he uses changes to trashcan which projects a different image than container does (at least to him). So Kristian changes the label and thus the meaning depending on the context. More generally dumpster divers are examples of people who at some point in their lives have changed their socially formulated appetites. Consequently, some interviewees used their senses when classifying food as rubbish while others perceived the best before date as a rubbish-stamp and used this as a safety precaution in a risky society. Furthermore, some interviewees discarded foods due to a decline in aesthetics qualities where food wastage turns to a tolerable act.

### Reuse of leftovers

Consequently, the interviewees have different ideas on what proper food is. Furthermore, the interviewees had different attitudes towards leftovers. Some seemed to eat leftovers so to avoid food waste while others focused more on the fact that it is a money and time saving practice, there were also those who discarded leftovers in the search for variety and freshness. Some interviewees thus described leftovers as thrift practice in terms of saving time and work in the kitchen using adjectives like ‘quick’ and ‘easy’. Lars and Henriette both hold positive attitudes towards leftovers:

*When I’m cooking I always save the rest, then I have something for the next day and I actually think that is quite nice.*

[Lars, 24 years old: 23.45]

*We just make a few changes so it’s a bit different, then you know that tomorrow it will be great, then it’s going to be easy to make dinner.*

[Henriette, 59 years old: 10.45]

Lars and Henriette both eat leftovers regularly and see it as a nice and easy way to get dinner. It was more often the younger adults that mentioned eating leftovers as a way to save money while the empty nesters explained it as an active anti wasting behaviour however also expressing appreciation for the time-saving element. Thus, some interviewees talked about leftovers as an easy way of getting a meal, perhaps adding a few things or serving it a different way so it is not completely the same as the day before, while some interviewees either did not talk about ever eating leftovers or directly mentioned how they were discarded. Perhaps eating leftovers can to these interviewees be seen as a degrading act, if you have an ‘I eat what I want’ attitude, leftovers are probably not a priority. In the eyes of these individuals leftovers is perhaps already seen as rubbish and trying to re-use them is then an act of degradation. While in the other households, using leftovers is perhaps seen as a value-creating act. As mentioned, to recreate value to leftovers can be the case of transforming or re-using it and so this is why some of the interviewees talk about adding a few ingredients or serving it a different way, transforming it, thus re-creating value. In this way, the status of the objects is altered in the eyes of the consumer. As Soderman and Carter (2008) argue, divestment is also a consumption practice wherein goods circulate, can re-become clean and have a ‘second chance’. Consequently, consuming leftovers is a process of transforming old food for new meals. This can be seen as a form of recycling as: *”Recycling basically consists of finding a new function for something that has lost its original function.”* (Verhallen and Pieters, 1984: 60). Which I argue is somewhat the same with food as dinner might consist for example of pasta, minced meat and tomatoes in its original function and now it is spaghetti Bolognese leftovers. Readmitting leftovers to the dinner table, thus seems an active anti waste practice adopted by some interviewees, or a practice for saving time, work and money, not only in cooking but in all the practices surrounding the process of having a meal, from the planning to the washing up.

## Front stage and Back stage

Besides from the food waste that happens during the weekdays, there is also the food waste that happens on weekends or special occasions. The majority of the interviewees mentioned how they experienced a higher amount of food waste on these special occasions as; naturally there is a higher amount of food one has to control. Furthermore, they separated food for themselves (and/or the nearest family, the roommate) and food for guests, where food for themselves was characterized by routine recipes, a smaller amount of money and time spent on the meal and lesser time spent consuming it. While food for guests were considered more exciting to shop for, prepare and consume and more time and money were spent on the latter. As mentioned, food can help to create a sense of self especially when the food practice is more socially visible as for example eating out or cooking for friends. However, food waste is not really socially visible in any context unless your next-door neighbour decides to take a look in your trash. Thus, food waste usually happens back stage, where no one can see it, and it happens as a consequence of what goes on front stage, that is, eating. The majority of the interviewees mentioned how more waste was created on special occasions:

*How come you think more food is wasted at special occasions?*

*Because when you shop for having guests over, there can’t be too little and then you are left with mountains of food afterwards.*

*Yeah that’s right because the worst thing would be if there weren’t enough food.*

*It is a huge part of me, that can’t happen and besides I am bad at assessing portion sizes (laughs).*

[Interviewer, Katrine, 42 years old and living with her husband, Sofie, 30 years old, single: 8.39]

*I think the special feasts are the times where we waste the most because at these times we always buy more than we need to be sure that the people visiting will be full and there is enough (…) I mean, just think if there wasn’t enough food.*

[Anne-Mette, 58 years old: 33.11]

These interviewees talk about how more food is wasted on special occasions due to over-purchasing of food because you cannot run short on food when entertaining guests. They talk about this as if it would be an absolute disaster, and this is probably due to the fact that food is embedded in a sort of gift giving logic (Lupton, 2003) and perhaps because most of us were raised with the idea that being a good host/hostess means serving plenty of food. Furthermore, as mentioned, food can be used to show status and so, running short on food at a social event would perhaps send the wrong signal. Consequently, when it is busy front stage, with an actual audience (different from the usual husband/wife/kids/roommate) this generates more of a mess back stage, thus, creating more food waste. Even the interviewees who claimed that their households engaged in anti-wasting behaviour mentioned that on special occasions it was a different situation. As shown by several researchers, self-control problems arise when preferences are inconsistent across time or context (e.g., Ainslie, 1975; Loewenstein, 1996). For example, you do not like wasting food, and during the week you try to avoid it by eating leftovers but when you arrive at the weekend and the dinner with guests on Saturday night, you decide for yourself that you do not have to eat these leftovers and you bin them, and the next day you regret binning them. Here the case is not whether food waste is right or wrong but that binning it is inconsistent with the decision makers' preferences both before and after the event. One of the causes for the changes in preferences over time is change in the saliency of the costs and benefits of the activity in question (Akerlof, 1991). During the week the action of separating leftovers and putting them in the right container might be a quite fulfilling and easy task but as the dinner party proceeds, the saliency of the costs and benefits changes. Now the action of separating the (larger than usual) leftovers and at the same time perhaps missing out on the dinner party outweighs the feel good of anti wasting. You become increasingly aware of the costs (time consuming, missing the dinner party) while the benefits become increasingly less clear. Thus, more food waste is created as a consequence of the increased focus front stage. As mentioned, some of the interviewees eat leftovers as a thrift practice where they eat leftovers during the weekdays and save time, money and waste, and when they make it to that special occasion they might feel like they have ‘saved up’ so that now they are allowed to waste a bit more and not think about time and money. As Cappellini (2009) argues, people invest in the preparation of the special occasion meal, money, time and effort that they have saved during the week through the practice of eating leftovers. Eating leftovers is thus a part of a wider food organization. Here, you save up money, energy, time and, perhaps, conscience to the special occasions. Hence, it becomes more legal to waste more during the weekend or on special occasions. So during the workday dinners you save time and energy that is invested in extraordinary meals (Cappellini, 2009).

Apart from the more general ‘special occasions’ mentioned above, a majority of the interviewees instantly mentioned Christmas when asked if there were times when they wasted more food than others. As Pollay (1987) argues, Christmas is a time of excessiveness and it is a time where you collect and display. Thus, you collect food to try and show excess and generosity and this could lead to more waste. As Johanne and Lene exemplify it can be difficult not wasting more food around Christmas:

*It’s actually funny you should ask me this because I have tried to pay more attention to that this Christmas because it is a time where you care a great deal about planning and you want it to be, I mean, this person likes this and this person likes that and I wanna make sure there is something that everyone likes, and then I’ve made too big portions, also of food that cant be recycled or freeze or save it, so that is something I’ve given a great amount of thought that I needed to downsize.*

[Johanne, 54 years old, 21:04]

*Yeah, at Christmas we waste a lot more, or in between Christmas and New Years I think (…) like, after all those Christmas lunches and suddenly you didn’t use up all that Christmas food.*

[Lene, 56 years old, 23:10]

Johanne states that she tried to pay more attention to the extra food waste that usually happens at Christmas and has tried to decrease it. Lene exemplifies how one can get enough of the type of foods typically served at Christmas and it can be difficult using it all up. Hence, at Christmas or other special occasions, you are trying to present your self to others front stage through food, and since food is such a big part of representing the self and entangled in a gift giving logic, it will probably be very few portraying the role of the anti waster, instead, we try and show skills by choosing complicated dishes made from special products, while back stage practises get compromised. Thus, front stage you are the attending and generous host, and back stage, the preparations for the front stage performance are made, the leftovers of performances are taken care of here, and most often discarded. As mentioned the majority of the interviewees mention this problematic, so even the ones that usually engaged in active anti waste still found themselves wasting more food at special occasions. Summing up, most of the interviewees mention the problematic of wasting more on special occasions, even the households that usually actively engage in anti wasting. This could be because entertaining guests for dinner happens front stage, thus the majority of your attention and energy is used here, and when entering back stage there is no more energy left to deal with all the leftovers, so instead they get binned. However, this might not be considered to be too awful to some interviewees as they engage in eating leftovers during the weekdays as a thrift act thus making it more legal to waste at special occasions.

## Disconnection from food

*“The next time you arrive home with a car-load of goods from the supermarket, pause for a minute or two before you start packing them away. Subject one or two of the items to some lateral thinking. Treat them not simply as mass-market consumables, but as small cultural artefacts, each with its own background and biography.”* (Cook, Crang and Thorpe, 1998: 162).

In this quote, Cook, Crang and Thorpe addresses the problem of disconnection. They assume that today’s consumer does not think about the production process of the foods he or she buys and they urge us to do so. As mentioned, our relation to the production process of food has become minimal, thus leaving us disconnected from the food we buy on a daily basis. The food we eat has often travelled vast distances before ending up on our dinner plate and it can be difficult for us to even begin to comprehend the journey and the production behind the evening meal. As Kneafsey et al. (2009) argue, people have become disconnected from food as they have less knowledge on where it was grown, how it got here, what it consists of and how to prepare it. As food has become a commodity most of us do not feel a connection to the place of origin and its associated culture. This disconnection has resulted in a loss of traditional knowledge and memories connected to nature (Pretty, 2002). This problematic also appeared several times in this study, some of the interviewees expressed thoughts on how (other) people today are disconnected from food and how some people think that the meat is grown in the refrigerated counter. None of them mentioned directly whether they felt connected or disconnected to food but other statements they made could indicate their relation. Daniel exemplifies why he thinks we suffer from a disconnection from food in today’s society.

*I think one of the reasons there is all this food waste is because it isn’t you out there shooting these animals you’re sitting and eating and discarding, I mean that ham I threw out, or chicken, I didn’t kill it and when you go out and butcher a fish, you stab it in the head, that means something, you think shit, I’m killing another living being, it’s a strange sensation and then when you eat it you think, I am gonna eat it all, no matter what.*

*Why do you think that is, that because you killed that fish or shot that animal, why do you want to eat it all?*

*Because now you have a connection to what you’re eating, if you just see that peace of ham, I mean, it doesn’t look like a pig, it doesn’t look like anything, it’s just a piece of something you bought at a certain price and then you think for yourself, fuck that shit and throw it out.*

[Daniel, 25 years old, Interviewer: 39.58]

Here, Daniel argues that we do not have a connection with what we eat because we are not in anyway part of the process ourselves. We did not spend much time or energy providing this product and so it becomes a question of how much money it has cost before we discard it (as dealt with above in figure 4) and so we ignore the process of how ‘that piece of ham’ was produced and this makes it easier to discard it. He says because it does not look like a chicken we do not make the connection to a live chicken that someone had to feed and evidently kill to feed you. As mentioned, food produced and sold has to be risk-free and consistent in appearance, taste and handling, and is often presented with no connection to production realities so it can be difficult for consumers to make that connection. Thus, as Daniel claims, to us it is the amount of money that determines whether we choose to discard it or not, if we do not have that connection to what we eat.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) provide a psychological explanation in suggesting that we invest ”psychic energy" in an object to which we have directed our efforts, time, and attention. This energy and its products are regarded as a part of self because they have grown or emerged from the self. Katrine exemplifies this:

*We bake a lot of our own bread and I think it’s a shame to throw homemade bread out in some way (…) I don’t think its that bad to throw out some bread bought in a supermarket compared to throwing out something we have baked ourselves.*

*And why do you think that is?*

*Well I don’t know, you’ve devoted time to it and gone the extra mile.*

[Katrine, 42 years old, Interviewer: 11.23]

Katrine says that she thinks it is a shame to waste homemade bread to a greater extent than to waste industrial bread, thus because she has invested psychic energy in making the bread it has become a part of her self making it harder to discard it. Hence, we make things a part of self by creating or altering them. Vice versa, she says she would not feel so bad about wasting industrial bread, as La Branche (1973) observes, when possessions are recognized as inconsistent with our images of self, we gladly neglect or dispose of them. She has not invested psychic energy in the industrial bread; hence it is not seen as a part of self, making it easier to dispose of it. Of course, some time and amount of money has been spend on it so it is probably not a question of gladly disposing of it as much as it is easier to dispose of, thus there more physic energy invested, the harder it becomes to waste it. Consequently, some of the interviewees pointed to today’s consumers’ problematic of being disconnected from food and how this can lead to more food waste. As we have not been a part of producing the food we eat we have a hard time making a connection to the process behind it. It then becomes a question of price when deciding to discard it.

### The case of the road kill

As mentioned, I showed most of the interviewees two photos during the interview, one portraying a dumpster diver and the other portraying a deer hit by a car lying dead by the side of the road. I asked them to respond to these as this could reveal attitudes towards more general issues. The two photos are shown below:





The section picture shows a deer that has been hit by a car and I asked the interviewees whether they would eat this deer of if they had ever eaten road kill. There were very different reactions to this that can roughly be divided into three attitudes: those that would never do it, those that would consider it, and those that would do it. Below some of these attitudes are exemplified:

*I couldn’t do it, I would think it was terrible that it had been run down and then having to eat it (…) no, I couldn’t do that, if I had seen that one I couldn’t eat it (…) I think in general when you see those Bambi’s and deer it’s hard to imagine that they taste good, because they do.*

[Anne-Mette, 58 years old: 40:58]

*If I had run that down myself I would have eaten it, if it were legal.*

*And what about you?*

*I mean, I would probably join you when eating it (laughs) but if I had run it over I wouldn’t have put it in my trunk and taken it home and turned it on a grill, I would probably bury it and be really sad and have a bad conscience about killing an animal, but if I was with Daniel I probably would have ended up eating it.*

[Daniel, interviewer, Ida: 37.15]

In these two examples we see Anne-Mette who would not eat the deer (unless it was served to her in a the form of a steak), Daniel who would and Ida who would consider it. This exemplifies differing opinions towards what is seen as edible. This trichotomy of attitudes towards road kill matched different attitudes towards food waste. The interviewees who engaged more actively in anti waste and generally lived more ‘green’ had more positive reactions towards eating the deer however the interviewees that had negative responses generally did not focus much on food waste and was in general not leading a green way of life. A majority of the empty nesters would eat it, and some of them had already been in that situation, furthermore some of the empty nesters that would not eat it said that it was because they did not know how to prepare it, so not because they did not classify road kill as edible. The majority of the younger people would not eat it, and did not take any time to think about it before dismissing it, it seems road kill is simply not seen as food to them. Thus, for these individuals the boundary of what is acceptable to eat is drawn here, the dead deer is non-edible, unless it has already been prepared and served to them. So they classify it as edible when it has been prepared, this is probably because they are used to buying food that does not look like the animal it came from (exemplified in Daniels earlier statement) thus they cannot imagine eating the deer, but they can eat a steak ‘made’ from a deer. Anne-Mette even calls it a Bambi making it even more obvious that she does not make a connection between the meat that she eats and the deer in the photo, even though as she says ‘they taste good’. In recent years there has been an increase in the anthropomorphized portrayal of animals in printed, film and electronic media (Beardsworth and Bryman, 2001) and this has affected our relation to animals, this has been called Disneyfication which is a Disney approach to indicate a process of infantilization and vulgarization of the original content (Schickel, 1986: 225; Haas, 1995). From Anne-Mette’s statement this seems to be the case as she uses the name of Disney’s character Bambi instead of the actual term of the animal (although there were quite a bit confusion whether it was a roe deer or a fallow deer in the picture). Consequently, she uses this term when she would not eat it.

Furthermore, I showed them the picture of a dumpster diver. I asked them if they knew this phenomenon and how they felt about it, to this Elizabeth answered:

*I actually think it’s okay because that food would have been discarded anyway so why not let someone enjoy it, I think if you want to change it, I mean get less of those (dumpster divers) doing that then the supermarkets has to think okay, how much food do we actually waste?*

[Elizabeth, 25 years old: 29.04]

So Elizabeth were positive towards dumpster divers, as she says their behaviour might make the supermarkets consider how much food they actually waste. Elizabeth and a majority of the interviewees where positive towards dumpster divers, however, not as many would eat something from a container themselves. Then there were the interviewees who found it disgusting. As Mette said when asked why she felt that way:

*I don’t know, probably because, garbage, it just sounds disgusting (…) I just think it’s a prejudice, also towards the garbage man, you just think, fuck, what a sad job, or gross, but they don’t even touch anything so I don’t know why.*

*No, so perhaps it’s that word?*

*Yeah, I think it’s the word that does it, it’s just because you think of garbage, stuff you’ve (thrown out) that are nasty and scrapped and it’s lying there with all the other garbage and it’s been there for three days and it smells.*

[Mette, 23 years old, living alone, Interviewer: 24.15]

Here Mette focuses on the meaning of the word “garbage”, to her this word creates images in the mind of three-day-old miscellaneous food mixed together, smelling and looking bad. Furthermore, she compares this to the garbage man, a job she makes certain connections to in her mind, even though she knows they are only in her mind. Mette would also not eat the deer. Again there was a connection between those leading green lives, those that would eat the deer and those that had positive reactions towards dumpster diving. And vice versa, interviewees with negative attitudes towards eating road kill also had negative reactions towards dumpster diving. This could also be an indication that we do suffer from a disconnection from food, as most of us would probably eat a deer steak served to us but when shown a photo of a live deer we would not eat it. Consequently, we are disconnected from food because we are not a part of the production process and we do not make a connection when we see a ‘live’ animal with what lies on our dinner plate. However it has not always been the case, globalization processes has brought about changes that has affected our food practices, this is focused on in the following subsection.

### Globalization processes

As mentioned, our mundane everyday routines of food consumption are influencing and influenced by international food systems (Cook, Crang and Thorpe, 1998). Thus, global food systems affect the amount of food wasted in the households and globalisation processes has brought about more knowledge on the consequences of our food waste. Additionally, besides from the fact that processes of globalization brought about the knowledge of the global problem of food waste Kneafsey et. al. (2009) argue critiques of processes of industrialization and globalization in food production are gathering momentum, furthermore people are increasingly interested in the origins and ethical and health properties of their food. Because of globalization processes, the food systems have become concentrated in fewer and fewer multi- or transnational corporations and in fixed packages (Kneafsey et. al. 2009) and there are very few places where one can go and buy exactly what one needs, and so people end up buying more than they can consume and thus they are forced to throw food away. The next two quotes exemplify the food systems of today and the food systems of somewhat 50 years ago. Sofie explains how she sometimes has to discard foods because of the package size.

*That easily happens to me because I am only myself, those packages you buy are always big compared to what I can eat in time, for example with carrots, then you have to throw them out at some point.*

[Sofie, 30 years old, lives alone: 1.25]

*Back then my mother would send me to the dairy to buy 50 pennies worth of cheese (…) so he took a large spoonful and you got 50 pennies worth of cheese, and you went to the butchers’ to get one kroner’s worth of liver paté.*

[Anne-Mette, 58 years old: 49.19]

Sofie (and other interviewees) mentioned how it can be difficult finishing a whole package of some food products because of the size. Anne-Mette however, is reminiscing the time where one could go to the dairy or the butchers and buy exactly what one needed. So these two quotes exemplify how there was no such thing as package size somewhat 50 years ago while today it is extremely difficult to get any product in exactly the size you need. This exemplifies how the consumer is not the only one to blame when it comes to household waste, retailers fixed package-sizes and BOGO offers (buy one get one free) makes it difficult for today’s consumer to not waste food.

So perhaps there was a different attitude towards food waste 50 years ago due to food shortages but perhaps also because you could buy what you needed. Furthermore, there was a greater focus on housewife-skills; that the housewife needed to have great cooking skills among other things. This is discussed by some of the women in the focus group:

*I have this idea that they were better at knowing what to do with what, and just better at cooking than we are today.*

*Like, from scratch.*

*They didn’t have that much to choose from as we have so perhaps it was easier to mix together, I mean we get Thai one day and African the next and that is probably a bit harder to mix together.*

*Yeah, global kitchen (…) and I also think you were raised with learning to cook, that was the pride of the housewife, making the food go further.*

*Exactly, I mean we have other things to spend our time on nowadays (laughs) (…) that’s not a status symbol for women today.*

*I don’t know, I mean, there’s a growing movement of pickling and baking and making homemade cakes and stuff.*

[Sofie, 30; Maria, 32; Tanja, 34; Katrine, 42: 16.12]

In this example they are talking about how they believe people were better at cooking before, they also touch upon the amount of ingredients which has been mentioned earlier, namely the fact that the fewer ingredients used the less waste, where today as they say, we have a global kitchen that can make it more difficult to avoid food waste as there are a lot more components that might not go so well together. Lastly, Sofie mentions how cooking is not a status symbol for women today while Katrine begs to differ. And as this study shows, based on several researchers, food is in fact a status symbol, also today. However, what Sofie means is perhaps that the status of the housewife has changed. And perhaps as Katrine points to there is a revival of ‘old’ values, as Wilk (1995) argues revivals of local food consumption patterns are seen when a ‘back to the roots’ eating fashion strikes a society or a community, or as Katrine puts it: pickling and baking. Consequently, globalizing processes has led to a few large retailers but at the same time there is a focus on the local. Hence, there is a lot more household food waste today than 50 years ago perhaps because they experienced food shortages, they had fewer ingredients to mix and match and generally the women had better ‘housewife skills’. Consequently they had more food knowledge (which is analysed next). In those days you probably also invested more psychic energy into food practices, making it harder to discard it. Lastly, people spend a far greater amount of their income on food than we do today so there was also a money incentive to not waste food. Today we lack some of these different points, consequently, today’s global food systems leaves us disconnected from the food we eat.

## Food knowledge

In this section the focus is on the interviewees food knowledge and their habits of discarding food.

We regard our possessions as parts of ourselves “we are what we have” (Rosenbaum, 1972) is as much true as is we are what we eat (Belk, 1988). McClelland (1951) suggested that external objects is viewed as part of self when we are able to exercise power or control over them, just as we might control an arm or a leg. This might be true for food as well. If we can exercise control over it i.e. if we can actually cook, food becomes a part of self, the more closely allied we feel. However, the influence from individual to object is not one-way; ”*We may impose our identities on possessions and possessions may impose their identities on us”* (Belk, 1988: 141) so while Belk did not consider food waste, his line of reasoning can be applied to what the interviewees had to say about food waste. We may prepare a meal, altering it so it best represent our self, or purchasing or preparing certain foods with certain connotations may affect us in return. Control over food could thus mean having the skills and knowledge about what goes together well, how to prepare it and for example what wine goes with it.

So as we are able to control i.e. cook food we are able to impose our identities on the food cooked, we can make a dish we feel matches our self or the self we wish to portray, for example if you want to exude a modern, up-to date self you might not chose to make shrimp cocktail or fondue. Vice versa, the meanings we attach to food can be transferred on to us. When it comes to food waste, the interviewees suggested that the better we are at cooking food and the greater knowledge we have on food the less we tend to throw out. One could also argue that when feeling more closely allied to food it also makes it harder to throw it out. For some of the interviewees encountered in this study, the problem was not one of lacking knowledge about what to do with the food that needed to be used before going bad. To the contrary, they had very clear ideas about how leftover ingredients might be saved from wastage. Ole talks about how they avoid wasting food when it is on its last legs:

*We usually make it work in the way that I just go through the fridge and take the things that needs to be used, usually they go together in some suitable way, no matter if you’re making chilli con carne you can easily put different things in it that doesn’t say in the recipe, so if you have some parsnips or something that really needs to be used you can put them in or bake them in the oven.*

[Ole, 57 years old: 12.42, he goes on to say:]

*If you can only cook by recipe and exactly the amounts it says…there will be more food waste.*

[39.20]

*When I am cooking something and I have something in the fridge for example half a cucumber I often take it and put it in my dish perhaps that would taste good…so I think I am okay good at using the things I have in my fridge.*

[Jens, 24 years old, lives alone: 23.10]

Here are two examples of interviewees who know what to do with their ingredients, As Ole says he can go through the fridge and usually find something that goes together, as well as Jens. Even though some of the young adults had food knowledge, all of the empty nesters claimed to either being great or good at cooking. However, not all interviewees had the same knowledge. Some had more limited knowledge on food and knew certain combinations of food, if they had to cook something else than these combinations they had to rely on recipes. These interviewees exemplify that knowledge may be seen as key variable affecting levels of environmental action such as food waste. In the next example, Karen clearly states that there are some food combinations she does not know:

*If I alone had to relate to all that stuff in the freezer, heart and liver and all that, then it might have been tossed out because I don’t know what to do with it, but you (Ole) know how to make something out of it.*

[Karen, 57 years old: 39.31]

Karen states she thinks she would waste more if she did not live with someone (Ole) who knew how to prepare foods such as heart and liver. This exemplifies how knowledge affects food waste, of course if one did not know how to prepare heart and liver (and did not live with someone who did) one would probably simply avoid purchasing it, however, some knowledge on what goes together will naturally lead to less waste as more food components can be mixed together without having to purchase extra ingredients. Furthermore, as Thøgersen argues, even if a person begins to source separate, in accordance with a conscious intention to do so, it is unlikely that from then on this will be a thoroughly considered act, *“Until the habits of source separation are well ingrained, there is a high risk of sorting failures as a consequence of the force of (old) habit”* (Thøgersen, 1994: 154). Consequently it is not only a question of knowledge according to Thøgersen (when it comes to waste handling) but also whether or not the act is a habit. It should be noted that he talks of source separation, however, the situation will probably look the same with food waste, if anti waste is not a habit it is easier to fall back into old habits of wasting food. As mentioned habitualization means engaging in an action repeated without much conscious attention. Thus if wasting food is a habit it will be difficult to change, or in Ole and others interviewees’ case, active anti waste already seems to be a habitual behaviour. As Ronis, Yates, and Kirscht (1989) argue, more conscious behaviours happen in novel situations or when facing new problems in familiar situations, so the interviewees that do not actively engage in anti wasting behaviour might begin to do so if suddenly faced with problems. Some of the interviewees mention how food waste is seen more and more in the media and this has actually made them think more of their own food and discarding practices. A source of novelty can be interpersonal communications face-to-face or through the media (Ronis, Yates, and Kirscht, 1989) for example news stories about the impact of the food we waste at home could present the individual with a ‘problem’, namely that this new information could lead to feeling guilt next time he/she wastes food. Consequently, these communications might make a person think about these issues for the first time or see them in a different light. And perhaps, if powerful and persuasive enough they may lead to changes in attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, food knowledge can lead to less waste, but it interacts with the force of habit that dictates our actions unless we are faced with a novel situation.

In some situations, even the interviewees that had much food knowledge sometimes failed using up all their ingredients. Throughout the study, some of the interviewees were found to occasionally overprovision food such that they were left with a certain amount of food that they struggled to find a use for. Typically, this situation arose when a particular item of food was purchased for a specified purpose but the volume in which it could be purchased exceeded the volume required.

*Those things that you buy because you need to use it the one time, for example, mustard, we don’t really eat mustard at our place but sometimes we need mustard and then we buy a whole jar and it can sit there for two years and suddenly you spot that its gone bad a year and a half ago.*

[Tanja, 34 years old, lives with her husband: 10.01]

*Sometimes if we’ve bought some special product, I mean something we weren’t quite sure about but it looked interesting and then it just sits in the cupboard ’cause we haven’t really used it, and then its kind of slowly disappeared (laughs) into the cupboard and then it reappears and you think we’re not gonna use it now and its almost passed its best.*

[Ole, biologist, 57 years old, lives with his wife: 24.15]

Tanja and Ole talk about buying a special ingredient that they did not use up. Both cases exemplify the variety seeking behaviour dealt with earlier. Thus, some of the interviewees mentioned this situation where purchasing a certain ingredients for a new dish or a dish made very rarely lead to an increase in wasted food. These reasons are similar to Rathje and Murphy (1992) who reported that products bought frequently are less likely to spoil than specialised ones used for certain dishes. New products are used especially if a new recipe is tried or interest has been raised through advertisements or by friends and relatives. So, naturally one has greater knowledge on the ingredients bought and used frequently than the ones seldom or perhaps never used. As Thøgersen argues *”households that consume more of the same foods from day to day throw out less once- edible food than more experiment-minded households.* ” (1996: 300). The increasing variation in food consumption, and specifically the increasing tendency to become "occasional gourmets", might thus result in more food waste as is the case for some of the interviewees when ‘seduced’ by an exciting looking product or making a special dish it can lead to waste in the end due to lack of knowledge. Thøgersen (1996) claims that households looking for variety in their meal planning will waste more food, as there is a higher risk of disappointment and lower competence when preparing a meal from a new recipe. On the contrary, households that do always buy the same products or are loyal to brands waste less. Hence, those standard ingredients that are re-bough regularly and are easy to incorporate into meals leads to less waste than the special ingredients. Relating to the study, the empty nesters seemed to have greater knowledge on food and had incorporated habits of anti wasting behaviour. Whereas the young adults mentioned situations where they did not know what to do with certain foods more often than the empty nesters and generally seemed to have more a (bad) habit of wasting food. This could be because younger people have more unstable schedules and thus unstable meals, furthermore they did not engage in food practices for a long a time as the empty nesters did, learning what goes together and how to prepare it. Consequently, food waste at home shows whether we are competent in cooking and balancing grocery shopping and actual consumption.

## Altruism versus Hedonism

In this section I am focusing on one of the differences in how the interviewees talked about their relations to food. All of the interviewees talked about the meal as an opportunity to talk and socialize. As Rotenberg (1981) argues, a meal is essentially a social affair, a planned social interaction centred on food. Especially the empty nesters recalled how important it was to them, when their children were still living at home, to sit down around a table at dinnertime and talk. As Lupton points out, *“The family meal is an important site for the construction and reproduction of the contemporary ‘family’ in Western societies and the emotional relationships and power relations within the family.”* (1996: 38) the family meal thus sets the frames for the family to sit down together and be a family, As Iversen and Holm (1991) argue, a meal is an important element in the project of creating a family, here children learn to behave civilized. Where for the younger people, and especially those living alone, there was a lot less structure surrounding meals. It was not only the meal that were discussed differently, but also food waste. All of the interviewees disliked food waste, but some found it difficult to pinpoint why. There seemed to be a dichotomy between interviewees that used phrases such as ‘it is wrong’ or ‘it is a waste of resources’, and interviewees that said something similar to ‘it is a waste of money’. It seems justifiable to classify the reasons offered as either relating to more economic and/or functional arguments on the one hand, and relating more to ethical correct behaviour on the other. As food waste is such an ordinary part of our everyday lives for some of the interviewees it happened without great thought, though it was not that the interviewees wanted to waste food, it just ‘happened’. As the WRAP study shows “*Many of us don’t appreciate the quantity of food we waste. It’s so routine and ordinary to throw food away that we just don’t think about it*” (2007: 7). However, there were also some interviewees that seemed to care a greater deal about food waste and green consumption in general. I will attempt at dividing this section into the interviewees with more altruist attitudes and the ones with more hedonist attitudes and in continuation hereof there will be a recapitulation.

### Altruism

Altruism is in this study defined as follows: “*if an act is or appears to be motivated mainly out of a consideration of another's needs rather than one's own*” (Piliavin & Charng, 1990: 30) it is altruistic. The interviewees that claimed to waste less food gave reason to disliking it such as ‘it’s wrong’ or a ‘waste of resources’. This type of reasoning can be understood as being altruistic as consequences of food waste are usually collective (such as stretching the capacity of the landfills and affecting the environment), household food waste does not appear to have great consequences for the individual him or herself (apart from monetary losses which is dealt with below). The consequences of food waste will in most cases be collective, environmental and not individual and so, giving reasoning for disliking food waste that are not monetary, could be seen as altruistic. Furthermore, as mentioned, green consumers take into account the public environmental consequences of their private consumption, they have a broader ethic of care that includes others than just oneself, and that seems to be the case with these interviewees. They waste less due to collective reasoning, furthermore they seem to have altruistic attitudes more in general as they do not only engage in anti wasting behaviour, but they are recyclers in general as the next quotes shows. Furthermore, they buy predominantly organic as the second quote shows where Mads (who lives on a farm and produces his own meat and crops) is trying to give an example of not buying organic.

*In general we have this attitude that things shouldn’t just get thrown out as long as they are useful, I mean, you can see that clearly when it comes to our furniture we have had for many years, they were passed on to us, and they weren’t discarded until we couldn’t mend them anymore and it actually became more expensive to mend them than to buy new ones, so they were discarded, actually they were sold to someone who could mend them and use them for something, I mean, that’s the attitude we have towards things.*

[Henriette, buys predominantly organic and has a large kitchen garden, 59 years old, (part 2): 0.11]

*One day I had to bake rye bread and I had to buy, they didn’t have any organic rye kernels, dammit! So it happens sometimes.*

[Mads, 58 years old, 17:10]

Interestingly, Henriette uses the phrase ’we’ have this attitude when attitude traditionally is seen as something an individual holds, but in this example she means the household or the two of them having this attitude. Henriette gives a clear example of a more general collective attitude towards their belongings, while Mads exemplifies the hardcore organic consumer. A part from a few exceptions the empty nesters generally seem to buy far more organic produce than the younger interviewees. Interestingly, younger consumers have been found to hold more positive attitudes toward organically grown food (Magnusson et al., 2001), yet older consumers are more likely to be purchasers (Hughner et. al., 2007). Hence, this is somewhat also the case in this study. The young adults tended to have very strong opinions on green consumerism, while the elder are a bit more downplayed in their utterances they clearly buy a far greater amount of organically produced products. There can be different explanations to this. One explanation is that the price premiums on organic food may be more affordable by older people (Hughner et. al. 2007). Another reason could be that younger people tend to focus more on expressing their identity to the surrounding world, and even though buying organic can help you do so, there are other more socially visible ways to do this, for example through the clothes you wear or the phone you have. As mentioned, when it comes to environmental behaviours the impact of social influence and self-presentation also plays a role (Sadalla and Krull, 1995; Lam, 1999), thus if ones peers buy predominantly organic there is a greater chance that you will as well. However, as this is food waste, social influence and self-presentation will probably not play that big a part as food waste is highly socially invisible. Thus, for the altruist interviewees it seems they hold intrinsic motives, as mentioned individuals who simply take enjoyment in helping the environment. Additionally, as some researchers have found, individual characteristics found on organic consumers are personal values such as altruism or internalised moral norms of responsibility-taking (e.g. Arvola et al., 2008; Dreezens et al., 2005; Grunert and Juhl, 1995; Harland et al., 1999). Thus, as is the case of the interviewees dealt with in this section, they are organic consumers, engaging actively in anti waste and recycle more generally. Andersen (2011) discusses this further as she states that this seems to imply a lack of altruism or moral orientation among non-consumers of organic food which is focused on next.

### Hedonism

Focusing on the interviewees who predominantly gave monetary reasoning for disliking food waste, or claiming not to give it much thought a pattern seems to appear. Some studies identify a relative lack of engagement in food practices and ‘green’ living among non-consumers of organic food (e.g. Grankvist and Biel, 2001; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). Thus, following this logic, the interviewees in this study that care less about green living, i.e. buying organic food, could consequently lack involvement in anti food waste. These interviewees also held an “I eat what I feel like” attitude as exemplified below by Anne-Mette who lives with her husband.

*For example on a Wednesday night we can have something left over, well you can re-heat that for lunch tomorrow, but I very rarely do that because then I don’t feel like it, and well, then it usually gets binned.*

[Anne-Mette, 58 years old: 5.35]

*We really make use of the leftover thing ‘cause then you can cook for two days at a time and make it work that way and then you know what you have and that also saves you time the next day, but if something suddenly comes up you hadn’t foreseen it can go off.*

*Or if it is something you don’t really like (laughs).*

*Yeah, or if you feel like something a bit more exciting.*

*Yeah, you just thought that this was such a clever idea to store but then you’re not in the mood to eat it anyways.*

[Tanja, 34; Katrine, 42; Maria, 32; Sofie, 30: 2.17]

In the first example Anne-Mette, even though she says it rarely happens that she re-heats and consumes yesterday’s leftovers, she still saves them. Again this could be an example of procrastination (analysed earlier), but in this example it is perhaps also a question of not wanting to eat the same the next day, of variety, which is another example of why some of the interviewees waste food that could have been eaten. Tanja however, begins by mentioning how they focus very much on consuming their leftovers in their household but when ‘something suddenly comes up you had not foreseen’ this fails. This shows the importance of planning, and that food waste is not intentional which was also analysed earlier. Moreover, through the other interviewees’ responses, this is an example of how we seek variety in food; I want to eat something else than I had yesterday, so rather throw it out than eating something you are not ‘in the mood to eat’. This is underpinned by the findings in the WRAP study that shows the variety in meal planning is important for most households as they do not want to eat the same thing twice in a row or they will only eat something “if they fancy it” (WRAP, 2009). These interviewees seem to be more ‘hedonistic’ and/or ‘pleasure-seeking’ in their everyday food habits and practices. Furthermore, because food today is always available and fairly cheap we can afford being picky and choosing what to eat according to what we feel like. The cheapness and high availability of food may trigger people to engage in a „highest quality and freshest food‟ behaviour that has a negative effect on food waste behaviour, or, they are just highly pleasure seeking. Due to our food system we have access to a range of different exciting new products and, being omnivores, we keep searching for more valuable new food resources (Fischler, 1980; Rozin, 1976; Beardsworth and Keil, 1997). As Cappelini argues, leftovers are sometimes classified as boring *“because they have lost their novelty given that they have already appeared in a previous (at least one) occasion of consumption.”* (2009: 370). Relating to the quotes it is interesting that they seem to know that the sensible would be to eat leftovers but they do not do it as they seek variety. Thus, hedonistic pleasure might ruin the good intentions, thus making actual behavior (i.e. eating something else) not correspond with intentions (i.e. eating leftovers). Leftovers have then lost their original qualities as something fresh and novel and are thus sometimes discarded based on this. Furthermore, these interviewees generally bought very little or no organic produce and did not express other ‘green’ attitudes. They focused on satisfying their own needs (fresh, new foods) and as a consequence, they wasted more food. A product is viewed as the material satisfaction of a need (McCarthy 1981), and as such when it has fulfilled that need (hunger) there is no need for it anymore and when one is capable (money wise) of buying new, fresh food to fulfil the new need for food (as you become hungry again) that is most often the choice.

### Altruist and Hedonist attitudes

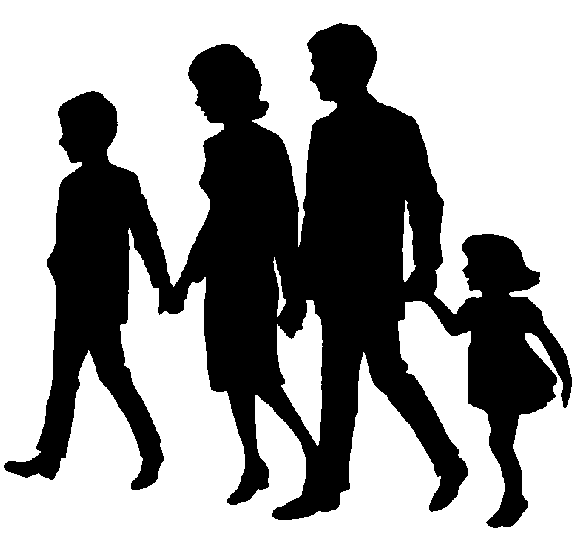
Consequently, based on my analysis I found a connection between those that say they buy predominantly organic and those that actually seem to engage more in anti waste, which seems to be mainly the empty nesters. Thus, organic consumers have been found to hold personal values such as altruism or internalised moral norms of responsibility taking while non-consumers of organic food seem to lack altruism or moral orientation. These findings underpin the conclusions in this section that the empty nesters that claimed to waste less, generally held more altruistic attitudes. As Tonglet et al. (2004) indicates waste management is a social phenomenon in that those who engage in it are likely to be concerned with the impact of their actions on the environment and on other people. Even though Tonglet speaks of waste management seeing it in the light of this study it seems anti waste is also a social phenomenon in the concern for the environment and thus other people. It was found that the hedonist interviewees have a lack of engagement in food practices and ‘green’ living. However, Waterman (1981) has argued that altruism and egoism are not antithetical, and indeed, that altruistic behaviours are really egoistically motivated. As mentioned, guilt is one of the motivators for reducing food waste, so even though some of the interviewees engage more in anti wasting behaviour it could be the result of hedonist motivation, perhaps to shake the feeling of guilt. However, these interviewees seem to have more altruist attitudes, even though they might originate in hedonist motivations since they are feeling guilt in the first place, while the other interviewees have more direct egoistic reasoning for wasting food and does not feel as much guilt. Kugler and Jones (1992) define guilt as ones own acknowledgement of having violated a personal standard. Thus, if a personal standard is anti waste you feel guiltier when wasting food than if it is not. To recap, the young adults and especially the students focused more on price than the empty nesters, which is natural as they typically have a smaller budget, and generally cared less about wasting food perhaps because they prioritise self-work that is more socially visible. The empty nesters seemed to hold more altruistic attitudes in general, buying organic products, recycling and also, wasting less. As Elster argues,*” If an individual attaches very great importance to immediate small rewards at the expense of larger delayed rewards, he may not be motivated by threats and promises concerning the future.”* (1985: 147). Thus, in relevance to this study, the young adults might see making room in your fridge, freezer, cupboards and the like, or binning the leftovers from yesterday so you can eat something else as immediate small rewards and place greater attention to these. Additionally, the empty nesters might feel that the positive impact of their actions on the environment and on other people, the larger, delayed rewards, are more important. Thus, the interviewees that actively engage in anti-waste are motivated by altruistic motives while the ones that do not engage actively in anti waste (despite their good intentions to do so) are more hedonistic and pleasure seeking. For these individuals, other elements (variety and freshness) would take precedence and trump the rewards of anti waste. Next I will attempt at gathering some of the major points made in this thesis in three types of food wasters.

## Food waste attitudes

I will now attempt at outlining some of the major points made based on the analysis and the theory. This is done by use of three fictional types of people with different attitudes towards food waste. These are: The active anti waster, the occasional waster and the food waster, these are elaborated below.

**The active anti waster**

The active anti waster is usually at the life stage end of full nest or empty nest. She has had a close encounter with food shortages or has been close to someone who has. Loves food and hates waste in all forms, including food waste, and tries actively to avoid it. This person buys predominantly organic produce and has a broader ethic of care in general. Consequently, she holds more altruistic attitudes. Furthermore, this person has great food knowledge and skills; she has an understanding of the whole food production process. Therefore, she uses her senses to classify food as edible or not. She is a general recycler and she recreates value to leftovers so to not waste it. Has an understanding of food as part of a wider society and beliefs she can make a difference. She holds internalised moral norms of responsibility and is concerned with impacts of her actions.

**The occasional waster**

The occasional waster is at the life stage of full nest. Does not like waste (predominantly due to monetary reasoning), she sometimes procrastinate food waste to clear her conscience. Thus, she wants to avoid food waste, but it drowns in the other daily activities, chores, and/or priorities and generally believes she wastes less than she does. The occasional waster likes to cook and engages in the occasional gourmet-role, which often leads to more waste. However, this is excused at she eats leftovers as a thrift practice sometimes during the week. She follows the best before label on some products and uses them as guidelines for the rest. This person has some knowledge on food and on the one hand she questions the systems of provision but on the other hand the practices of consumption are not exposed to much thinking nor does she wish to have to because there is no time to commit to it. Consequently, this person wants to make a difference but does not believe that she can. Has positive attitudes towards organic produce but only buys a few chosen products occasionally.



**The food waster**

The food waster is usually younger and living in a single household. He does not give food waste much thought, and wasting it is habit behaviour. He has a highly unstructured schedule, and no food planning, he does not buy organic and is generally sceptical about it. He eats what he feels like and would never dream of eating leftovers. He observes the best before date stringently, and might waste food before this date seeking freshness and variety or due to a decline in aesthetic qualities. He has little knowledge on the production of food, and he does not want to know. He perceives food as pleasure only to self; food availability is taken for granted. He has focus on more socially visible things such as what he wears and he is deeply engaged in the buy-and-throw-away culture. He does not believe he can make a difference for the environment nor does he want to. He has a “someone else’s problem” attitude.

Of course this is a strict division of attitudes and as this study regards the consumer as a person with several, ever changing realities in reality this can change according to context and life stage. People may be egoistic-hedonistic and empathetic-altruistic at the same time (Kalinowski, Lynne and Johnson, 2006) The active anti waster may find herself occasionally wasting food and the food waster might also eat leftovers and so forth. As mentioned, altruism and hedonism might not be antithetical but mutually related so these work together in constant reciprocal action. A person moves through stages in life that have different role requirements and so demand new behavioural responses (Hopson and Adams 1976). Thus, when being a young adult, at that stage in life you might waste more because periods of role transition are often accompanied by the need to employ a variety of products. Or being a student you might waste more because of little knowledge and skills and a focus on identity work while empty nesters have structured schedules, knowledge on food.

## Assessing qualitative data and limitations

In this chapter of the thesis, I will evaluate the findings, which have been developed throughout the previous chapters. This will be done on the basis of Hirschman’s (1986) four evaluation criteria: confirmability, transferability, dependability and credibility.

In order to enhance confirmability, Hirschman (1986) advises that the study ought to be judged by one or more external researchers who are to go through every step taken in the research process. There has not been time to find an appropriate person with the knowledge to judge this thesis. Generalizations are impossible since qualitative phenomena are neither time- nor context-free, however, some transferability of these hypotheses maybe possible from situation to situation, depending on the degree of temporal and contextual similarity (Guba and Lincoln 1982). Furthermore, some degree of transferability is possible if there is enough thick description. Since realities are in the minds of people all I as a researcher can do is attempt at representing their realities appropriately through their narratives, their told realities, as Thompson et al (2002) points to there exists a ”*methodological riddle of distinguishing between a life that is lived and a life that is told*.” (2002: 351). Thus, I can do no more than trust their realities told and analyse this.

The main limitation of the focus group is that the sample has not been very diverse since all of the participants were teachers. Secondly, there was a bias towards females in this study. One of the reasons for these discrepancies may be the sampling technique used. However, having a higher number of women in the sample is rather normal in such studies, since women are generally more responsible than males for food practices. Lastly, some of the meanings of the quotes used might have been lost in the translations from Danish to English.

# Conclusion

In this last part of this master’s thesis, conclusions are made on the basis of the research undertaken. The aim of this thesis was to investigate people’s attitudes towards household food waste. The research question and sub question to be answered was the following:

*How is food waste thought of in everyday life at a consumer level?*

*How do consumers make sense of food and waste and how do they construct classifications pertaining to these phenomena?*

Food is sometimes wasted due to a prioritising order that puts daily chores first and food planning next, furthermore when the interviewees did plan their meals fresh foods and variety was highly prioritised as well as expensive foods while cheap foods were not really prioritised and thus these products got wasted the most. Furthermore, we procrastinate the unpleasant task of wasting food till it moved beyond the level of edibility, hence the further along the process of decomposing, the more legal it became to discard food.

Some interviewees had a high sensitivity to food hygiene (would not take chance with food close to ‘best before’ date) while other used their senses before casting it off as rubbish. Furthermore, some even discarded foods before the best before date due to a decline in aesthetic qualities or in the search for freshness and variety. Additionally, some interviewees recreated value to leftovers by for example adding a few ingredients or serving it a different way, while others did this as a thrift act in order to ease the bad conscience of wasting more during the weekend or at special occasions where there is more focus on front stage and thus more waste is created back stage. Food can be a marker of identity because we can gain cultural capital through food (amongst other things), but this is only relevant to food practices that happen front stage, consequently, food waste will not be affected to a great extent by attempts to gain cultural capital.

Furthermore, the interviewees touched upon the subject of disconnection, the conclusion here was that we are disconnected from food when we do not understand the production process, the story behind our meals. In continuation of this was the case of the road kill and the dumpster diver were interviewees who would not mind eating road kill also had positive reactions towards dumpster diving. The majority of the young adults would not eat the deer and had somewhat positive reactions towards dumpster diving but the majority of them would never eat anything procured from a container.

Attitudes towards food waste are different today than they were 50 years ago, many of the empty nesters recalled their parents or grandparents’ attitudes towards food waste and how they wasted a lot less at the time than we do today, they believed it was mainly due to monetary incentives, but also because they had better “house-wife skills” at the time, i.e. more knowledge on food. However, we might be seeing a movement back to the roots, with the trend of slow food and a ‘making it from scratch’ attitude, however, this does not mean we are getting more connected to the food we eat, nor does it imply that we might waste less, this would be due to a combination of several factors. One is however, that the more knowledge we have on food, the less we waste. Naturally, the empty nesters had more food knowledge than the young adults. Furthermore, the empty nester generally recycled more, bought more organic produce and engaged more actively in anti wasting behaviour, thus more altruist values. The young adults were more pleasure seeking and focusing on more socially visible elements, thus more hedonist values. There is a focus on the socially visible within green living, however food waste is hidden back stage. So socially visible motivation is not really relevant. However, food waste differs depending on the context, the multitude of social roles people must play affects food waste, when one is the host, when one is the mother, and so on. More so it is a question of guilt, whether or not one feels guilt when wasting food, the more guilt you feel the more you will try and avoid it. Consequently, more often than not people’s attitudes towards household food waste differ depending on context and life stage.

## Recommendations for further research

To close off this Master’s Thesis, I will briefly sketch out some reflections about further research. This project was exploratory and was aimed at trying to contribute to the knowledge on attitudes towards household food waste. I have researched many areas however, I recognise that more research needs to be done in order to exhaust this subject to the fullest. Ideally, as this has been a qualitative research, some quantitative studies would be fruitful. Though I tried to achieve an ideal sample of interviewees there was a bias towards empty nesters and young adults and it would be interesting to include people in other life stages, or perhaps concentrate more in depth on for example full nesters. Furthermore, I only included household food waste, while I have pointed out that retailers also have some blame and it would be interesting to see a study that includes these…especially with the rising focus in the media.

Lastly, it would be fruitful to consider this study’s implications for prevention strategies. As mentioned, more studies would need to be done in order to be useful for prevention strategies. Prevention campaigns should target the variety of interconnected reasons for wasting food. A change in attitudes or valuation towards food will be difficult however it could be implemented by consumer education. A first basic step for the raising of people’s awareness is the knowledge about the existence of this type of waste.

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# Appendices

**Appendix 1**

**Interview guide – Dumpster divers**

Hvad foretrækker du det kaldes?

Hvor ofte skralder du?

Hvor skralder du?

Hvorfor skralder du?

Hvilke følelser giver det dig?

Hvad får du oftest med hjem?

Hvad vil du helst finde?

Skralder du med nogen? Hvem? Hvorfor?

Hvad tid skralder i? klokkeslæt, måned, uge?

Hvornår begyndte du at skralde?

Hvorfor begyndte du?

Hvordan begyndte du?

Hvad får du ud af at skralde (personligt)?

Hvordan ved du om det kan spises?

Hvordan reagerer andre når du siger du skralder?

**Appendix 2**

**Interview guide - empty nesters**

Navn, beskæftigelse

Hvor mange børn har i?

Er de flyttet hjemmefra?

Har jeres madinkøb ændret sig efter de er flyttet? Hvordan? Hvorfor?

Var det en ændring i lige skulle vænne jer til, at der var færre at købe ind til og lave mad til?

Smed i mere eller mindre mad ud da jeres børn boede hjemme?

Hvor ofte køber i ind?

Hvor køber i ind? Hvorfor?

Hvordan planlægger i jeres måltider? Har i indkøbslister, kigger i i tilbudsaviser.

Hvem køber mest ind?

Hvilke retter laver i typisk?

Har i et bredt repertoire?

Hvem laver mest mad?

Hvorfor?

Går du efter mad på tilbud?

Falder du nogle gange for de der massetilbud?

Gør tilbud at du nogle gange køber mere end i kan spise?

Smider i mad ud?

Hvor meget om ugen?

Hvad er grundene oftest til at mad bliver smidt ud?

Hvilken slags mad er det oftest?

Har i hørt om emnet er oppe i tiden? Hvad har i hørt?

Er der en af jer der går mere op i genbrug, miljøet osv. End den anden?

Har det påvirket dig/den anden?

Hvad ved i om madspild? Hvad synes i om det?

Hvad gør i for at undgå det?

Hvad kunne i gøre bedre?

Er der forskel på hvornår i smider visse fødevarer ud?

(Front stage/Back stage)

Hvor mange penge bruger i på mad om måneden?

Køber i økologisk?

Har i oplevet en situation hvor i tænkte ”det er spild af mad”? Hvor, hvorfor

Hvordan vælger i hvad i skal have at spise?

Hvor mange gange om ugen laver i aftensmad?

Spiser i normalt aftensmad sammen?

Sidder i ved bordet når i spiser aftensmad?

Får i nogle gange rester?

Hvad er det for eksempel?

Går i meget op i god mad?

Hvad betyder mad for jer?

Er der nogle dage i ugen hvor i gør mere ud af aftensmaden end andre? Hvorfor?

**Appendix 3**

**Interview guide – focus group**

Smider i mad ud?

Er der nogle varer der er mere typiske end andre?

Hvad er grundene til at maden bliver smidt ud?

Smider i maden ud hvis den har nået sin holdbarhedsdato?

Har I nogen sinde gemt noget selv om I måske godt vidste I ikke ville få det brugt?

Tænker i over hvor maden kommer fra, hvordan den er produceret når i køber ind?

Tror i folk generelt tænker over dette? Tror i det påvirker ens madspild?

Er der tidspunkter på året hvor i smider mere ud?

Bliver der smidt mere ud hvis i laver mad til gæster?

Smider i mere ud i weekenden end i hverdagen?

Tror i vi smider mere ud i dag end for 50 år siden?

Hvorfor?

**Appendix 4**

**Interview guide – Young adults**

Hvad læser du?

Hvordan bor du? Hvor længe har du gjort det?

Hvad fik du at spise I går?

Er det en typisk dag?

Hvem spiser du typisk med?

Hvem laver mest mad? Hvorfor?

Hvordan spiser i?

Hvor ofte laver I aftensmad?

Kan du lide at lave mad? Hvorfor?

Får I nogle gange rester?

-Hvorfor?

-Hvad for eksempel?

Føler du dig selvsikker I et køkken?

Hvor ofte køber i ind?

Hvor køber i ind? Hvorfor?

Hvordan planlægger i jeres måltider? Har i indkøbslister, kigger i i tilbudsaviser,

Hvem køber mest ind?

Hvilke retter laver i typisk?

Har i et bredt repertoire?

Smider i mad ud?

Hvor meget om ugen?

Hvad er grundene oftest til at mad bliver smidt ud?

Hvilken slags mad er det oftest?

Er der en af jer der går mere op i genbrug, miljøet osv. End den anden?

Har det påvirket dig/den anden?

Hvad ved i om madspild? Hvad synes i om det?

Hvad gør i for at undgå det?

Hvad kunne i gøre bedre?

Er der forskel på hvornår i smider visse fødevarer ud?

Hvor mange penge bruger i på mad om måneden?

Køber i økologisk?

Hvad betyder mad for dig?

Hvordan var det at flytte hjemmefra madmæssigt?

Gik dine forældre op i at bruge hvad der var?

Hvordan er jeres spisevaner forskellig fra dine forældre?

**Appendix 6**

Lene:

Her er en liste over madvarer, der er røget ud inden for de sidste 14 dage.  
> En rest pastasalat, rest græsk yoghurt, rest nudler, 1/2 pk bacon,  
> et stykke agurk, 1/2 bakke champignon.

**Appendix 7**

Anne-Mette: 

HER HAR DU LISTEN:

1 CLEMENTIN

1 REST RIS

LIDT KARRYSOVS

3 FISKEFRIKADELLER

1 LILLE STK. SPEGEPØLSE

1 REST STUVET ÆRTER OG GULERØDDER

4 HJEMMEBAGTE KANELSNEGLE

SKRÆL EFTER – GULERØDDER – PERSILLERØDDER – KNOLDSELLERI

KOGTE GRISEHALER OG  2 KRAFTBEN

KOGTE SUPPEVISKE AF PORRER + SELELRITOP

1 REST MAKREL I TOMAT

LIDT ICEBERGSALAT

1 REST GULE ÆRTER (SUPPE)

1 LILLE STK. KOGT SALTET FLÆSK

KARTOFFELSKRÆLLER

2 SKORPER OST

2 ENDESKIVER RUGBRØD

1 REST LEVERPOSTEJ

KARTOFFELSKRÆLLER + 1 GRØN KARTOFFEL

SKRÆL FRA 4 BAGTE KARTOFLER

YDERSTE BLADE + STOKKEN FRA 1 HVIDKÅL

**Appendix 8**

**Interview med empty nesters**

Background questions:

Navn, beskæftigelse

Hvor mange børn har i?

Er de flyttet hjemmefra?

Transition theory (e.g. Hopson and Adams 1976):

Har jeres madinkøb ændret sig efter de er flyttet?

-Hvordan?

-Hvorfor?

Var det en ændring i skulle vænne jer til, at der var færre at købe ind til og lave mad til?

Smed i mere eller mindre mad ud da jeres børn boede hjemme?

Hvordan var det at flytte hjemmefra madmæssigt?

Gik dine forældre op i at bruge hvad der var?

Hvordan er dine/jeres spisevaner forskellig fra dine forældre?

Food practices (e.g. Quested, Parry, Easteal and Swannell, 2011, WRAP 2007):

Hvor ofte køber du/i ind?

Hvor køber du/i ind? Hvorfor?

Hvordan planlægger i jeres måltider? Har i indkøbslister, kigger i i tilbudsaviser?

Hvem køber mest ind?

Hvilke retter laver du/i typisk?

Hvem laver mest mad?

Hvorfor?

Går du/i efter mad på tilbud?

Falder du nogle gange for de der massetilbud?

Gør tilbud at du nogle gange køber mere end i kan spise?

Relation to food (e.g. Strauss 1963; Lupton 1996; Fürst, 1995; O’Dell, 2002):

Går i meget op i god mad?

Hvad betyder mad for jer?

Er der nogle dage i ugen hvor i gør mere ud af aftensmaden end andre?

-Hvorfor?

Food waste (e.g. Parfitt, Barthel and Macnaughton, 2010, Quested, Easteal and Swannell , 2011, WRAP, 2008):

Smider i mad ud?

Hvor meget om ugen?

Hvad er grundene oftest til at mad bliver smidt ud?

Hvilken slags mad er det oftest?

Har i hørt om emnet er oppe i tiden? Hvad har i hørt?

Altruism/hedonism (e.g. Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Waterman, 1981; Grunert and Juhl, 1995):

Er der en af jer der går mere op i genbrug, miljøet osv. End den anden?

Har det påvirket dig/den anden?

Køber i økologisk?

Hvad ved i om madspild? Hvad synes i om det?

Hvad gør i for at undgå det?

Hvad kunne i gøre bedre?

Front stage/Back stage (e.g. Goffman, 1959; MacCannell, 1976):

Er der forskel på hvornår du/i smider visse fødevarer ud?

Hvor mange penge bruger i på mad om måneden?

Har i oplevet en situation hvor i tænkte ”det er spild af mad”?

Hvordan vælger i hvad i skal have at spise?

Hvor mange gange om ugen laver i aftensmad?

Spiser i normalt aftensmad sammen?

Sidder i ved bordet når i spiser aftensmad?

Knowlegde/skills (e.g. (Kallgren and Wood 1986; Oskamp *et al.* 1991):

Føler du dig selvsikker I et køkken?

Har i et bredt repertoire?

Bruger i nogle gange opskrift når i laver mad?

-Hvornår?

-Hvorfor?

Går du/i op i holdbarhedsdatoen?

Reuse of leftovers (e.g. Cappellini, 2009, Parsons, 2008):

Får i nogle gange rester?

Hvad er det for eksempel?

**Appendix 9**

**Original quotations**

Methodology

”Gud bliver ikke så glad for at du gør sådan noget, at du smider mad ud. Men jeg tænker også tit at jamen, det er bare ressource spild – virkeligt meget. Jeg tænker bare, at her går jeg og smider så meget mad ud og så meget madspild – eller man læser om det i avisen – og der er rigtig mange der smider jeg ved ikke hvor meget ud – danskerne smider vist mellem 2 og 5 kilo ud hver, hvis ikke mere – og så sidder der nogle, der bare ville give deres halve arm for at få det her lille stykke et eller andet, som du har. Så jeg får dårlig samvittighed. Jeg havde fx købt 30 æg på tilbud, så jeg googlede – jeg skal lave rigtig meget kage – men den uge havde jeg bare så travlt, så jeg havde stadigvæk de her 30 æg og jeg skulle flyve hjem til København. Og jeg tænkte bare ’nej’, da jeg kom hjem igen og der var gået sådan 5-6 dage over tiden, jamen, jeg laver en æggetest på dem her. De her æg – fordi der er noget med, at hvis der er noget, der flyder, så er det vist blevet råddent. Og så var det ellers bare at slå dem ud og at checke dem hver for sig og lugte til det, og jeg har også bare hørt fra mange, at de der datoer, de holder ikke, at de bare er der for at give en retningslinje om, at det nok er her, at det måske er her omkring at man skal lave være med at spise det. Men jeg har bare hørt – vores bedsteforældre, de havde jo ikke altid udløbsdato på tingene. Og min familie der kommer fra Pakistan de har jo haft dyr og alt muligt, så de har jo ikke lige haft det sådan, at dén dag, der bliver din mælk for gammel. Så da skulle de jo bruge sanserne og lugte og se – så det gjorde jeg også, og så fik jeg brugt alle de der 30 æg der.”

Alicia, 21 years old. Fall interviews.

”Irma har kørt det som vi kalder en skraldekrig, at de simpelthen har låst ting af i sådan en grad at man ikke kan komme ind til det, og så er der jo dem der er lidt casual og vælger at finde et andet sted og så er der dem som tænker det går ikke eller det gør vi noget ved…(så) tager man lim med i lommen eller også har man en boltsaks så fylder man lim i hullet på hængelåsen for så bliver de nødt til selv at klippe den.”

Henny, 25 years old, 24:40.

Food waste is not (always) intentional

”Man planlægger ikke altid sine indkøb sådan”

”Man planlægger ikke altid, nej, mandag bliver det planlagt og så sidst på ugen så bliver der bare købt ind”

”Ja, sådan lidt mere ureflekteret”

Katrine, Maria, 3:21.

”Når vi ikke får brugt det vi har i køleskabet fordi vi måske ikke forstår at planlægge eller plus vi har en anden hverdag end vi tror vi skal have…der er meget den der uforudsigelighed og så lidt det der tilfældige, hvad kommer der lige ind af døren kl. 5 hvad er det lige vi skal have fordi du (Troels) så tit får noget når du er ude, der sådan lige rykker i det vi havde planlagt for vi havde måske lige købt ind til bagte grøntsager eller noget og så kommer du med noget hvor man bare ikke kan spise bagte grøntsager til og så er vi nødt til at købe det og så de der bagte grøntsager dem får vi måske brugt alle grøntsagerne af fordi så er de blevet for dårlige”

Jytte, 36:45.

”Det er et helt vildt let sted at skære ned sådan i tidsspareplanen, altså det er jo på mad ikke.”

Lisa, 32.43.

”At det bliver glemt i køleskabet så det ligger alt for længe, sådan inde bagved.”

Maria, 9:59.

”Der hvor jeg skal til at tage mig i nakken nu det er tjek hvad du har i din fryser, fordi der skal jeg ærlig indrømme her for ikke ret lang tid siden jeg var nede og kigge der kom jeg godt nok til at se det her kød det skulle godt nok være spist, og det her frugt, jeg køber somme tider sådan noget hindbær og der var godt nok desværre noget der var blevet for gammel, så der må jeg indrømme, det er jeg ikke så god til.”

Anne-Mette, 24:11.

”Hvis man har købt et eller andet ind til børnenes frugt og de så alligevel ikke gider have det og så ligger det bare i køleskabet i 14 dage, nå, så ryger det ud i stedet for.”

Maria, 2:50.

”så var der en bestem slags pålæg som de måske ville have, en hvad hedder den, en medister, og det var kun dem, det var faktisk kun den ene der ville have den og den nåede hun jo aldrig at få spist helt vel og så blev den smidt ud, og sådan er der jo flere varer som har været købt ind specielt til dem….jeg tror det køber man jo tit til sine børn fordi de gerne vil have det, ja, det køber vi nødvendigvis ikke til os selv bare fordi vi gerne vil have det fordi så kan vi godt så at sige nøjes med det der er i køleskabet i højere grad.”

Henriette 23:45

Procrastination

”med råvarer og sådan noget synes jeg ikke jeg smider noget ud, det er kun hvis jeg ikke har fået det brugt og det er blevet muggent, så kan jeg godt finde på at smide det ud men det skal man jo også.”

Jens, 22.58

”Jeg tænker enormt meget over ikke at smide ud så jeg gemmer alle rester hvorefter de så står inde i køleskabet og bliver enormt kedelige og trælse og så smider jeg dem ud.”

”Hvorfor er det egentlig at man gør det, tænker jeg, er det fordi at så har man det bedre med sig selv eller hvad?”

”Ja, men det er jo fordi at man dybest set godt ved at man jo ikke bør smide mad ud, men så glemmer man det eller også så får man det ikke lige anvendt.”

Katrine, Sofie, 1.52.

”Så har man det sådan lidt jamen nu har jeg i hvert fald forsøgt, nu har jeg gjort forsøget…så når det så er den sidste salgsdato, jamen så kan jeg ikke gøre for det, så er det nærmest sådan at så bliver ens samvittighed sådan lidt fri fordi at så må jeg jo ikke spise det fordi så bliver det ikke mad mere nærmest, så kan man jo blive syg af at spise det.”

Lars, 27.58.

”Nogle gange så har jeg også noget stående i meget lang tid altså som er blevet for gammelt men hvor jeg bare tænker, arh ikke i dag, ej jeg gider ikke smide noget ud i dag, så har der også stået sådan en karton mælk også fordi det er sådan noget, det er en længere process ikke fordi, jeg skal jo så også ned, jeg skal jo så ned oppefra og det her det er næsten femte sal fordi vi har hævet stue jeg skal ned med skraldet så jo, i dag, hvis jeg smider denne her mælk ud i dag sådan så det ikke kommer til at lugte, det lugter jo ikke inde i køleskabet altså så betyder det at jeg kan ikke bare kyle den i skralderen, det kræver noget mere af mig og det ved jeg ikke lige om jeg er villig til i dag.”

Lisa, 36.00.

When is it rubbish?

”Jeg har aldrig nogen sinde kigget på sidste salgsdato, aldrig nogensinde”

”hvordan finder du så ud af om det er dårligt?”

”ved at kigge på det, og lugte til det, og smage på det”

Jørgen, interviewer: 10:08.

”jeg tror bare af natur er jeg sådan meget, du ved ej det er klamt og ej jeg vil ikke blive syg og jeg har sådan lidt en forestilling om at når det står der så skal jeg smide det ud, eller jeg skal ikke spise det for så er det for gammelt lige så vel som når jeg laver mad så følger jeg altid opskriften fra punkt til prikke.”

Ida, 15:14.

”kigger du på holdbarhedsdatoen når du skal smide ting ud?”

”ved nogen ting, altså for eksempel æg gør jeg, fordi de skal jo helst ikke spises efter…men ellers sådan nogle ting hvor man kan se jamen det der ser ikke, så kan det godt være det har kunnet holde sig i to dage mere men hvis det ikke ser godt ud så har jeg bare ikke lyst til at spise det eller hvis mælken måske har været åben nogle dage for meget så har jeg heller ikke lyst til at drikke det, selvom det måske godt kunne holde sig lidt længere.”

Interviewer, Mette, 13.09.

”hvis nu man skal invitere en sød pige på date og lave noget lækkert mad, så tager du selvfølgelig ikke det i skraldespanden, det gør man ikke, det er sådan lidt, arh så må man godt lige bruge friske råvarer og sådan noget, god vin.”

Kristian, 38.16.

Reuse of leftovers

”altså når jeg laver mad jamen så gemmer jeg det så har man jo til dagen efter og det synes jeg jo egentlig faktisk er ret lækkert.”

Lars, 23.45.

”vi ændrer det lige sådan at det bliver lidt anderledes, men man kan jo bare tænke dagen efter at det jo er skønt at det er så let at lave mad.”

Henriette, 10.45.

Front stage and Back stage

”og hvordan kan det være at der ryger mere ud ved særlige lejligheder…?”

”fordi man køber ind, altså når der skal være gæster må der ikke være for lidt og så sidder man der med bjerge af mad bagefter.”

”og så har man ikke lige plads i fryseren til at få frosset det ned så er det lidt, nå, så går det bare til”

”ja, det er rigtig nok, for det værste ville jo være hvis der var for lidt mad ik også.”

”det sidder dybt i mig, det må endelig ikke ske og så er jeg i øvrigt dårlig til at dosere (griner)”

Interviewer, Katrine, Sofie, 8.39.

”jeg tror højtiderne det er der hvor man smider mest ud fordi der køber man altid mere end man skal bruge for man skal være sikker på at folk der kommer de skal blive mætte og man har nok...for tænkt sig nu hvis der ikke var mad nok.”

Anne-Mette, 33.11.

”det er faktisk sjovt du spørger mig om det for det har jeg været rigtig meget opmærksom på denne jul fordi at øh, der går man sådan total op i noget planlægning omkring det jul der og så vil man jo gerne ja, den kan godt lide det og den kan godt lide det og jeg vil jo gerne gøre sådan at der er noget man alle sammen godt kan lide, og der har jeg fået lavet for store portioner, også af ting som ikke sådan kan genbruges eller hvad hedder sådan noget, du kan ikke fryse det ned eller du kan ikke gemme det eller, så det er i hvert fald noget som jeg har tænkt rigtig meget over i år at jeg skulle ned i size.”

Johanne, 21:04.

”ja, til jul, der smider vi rigtig meget mere ud, eller sådan der i mellem jul og nytår vil jeg sige…sådan ovenpå de der julefrokoster så lige pludselig så brugte man bare ikke alt det der julemad.”

Lene, 23:10.

Disconnection from food

”det er en af grundene til at jeg tror at der er det her madspild er blandt andet at man står ikke selv derude og står og skyder de her dyr som man sidder og spiser og smider ud altså den der skinke der som jeg smed ud, eller kylling jeg smed ud den har jeg ikke selv slagtet når man selv går ud bare og slår sådan en fisk ihjel der, at du står og hakker den i hovedet det giver da alligevel lidt man tænker da hold kæft man nu slår jeg alligevel et andet dyr ihjel, det er sådan en underlig fornemmelse og så når man spiser den så tænker man nu skal jeg eddermame spise det hele.”

”hvordan kan det være at du mener at fordi man selv har dræbt den fisk eller skudt det dyr hvorfor er det så at man vil bruge det hele?”

”fordi så har man et forhold til det man spiser hvis du kun ser det der stykke hamburgerryg, det ligner jo ikke en gris det ligner jo ingenting, det er bare et eller andet stykke som du har købt til x antal kroner og så afgør du med dig selv, okay, fuck that shit, okay, ud med det.”

Daniel, Interviewer, 39:58.

”vi bager en del brød og jeg synes det er ærgerligt at smide hjemmebagt brød ud på en eller anden måde…jeg synes ikke det er så slemt at smide sådan noget Kondi Karl agtigt noget ud som hvis det er noget vi selv har bagt.”

”hvordan kan det være?”

”jamen det ved jeg ikke, så har man ofret energi på det og kræset lidt for det.”

Katrine, Interviewer, 11.23.

The case of the road kill

”det kunne jeg ikke, jeg ville jo synes det er forfærdeligt det er blevet kørt ned, og så efterfølgende skulle spise det…nej det kunne jeg ikke, hvis jeg selv havde set den der ville jeg ikke kunne spise den…jeg synes jo i det hele taget når man ser de der bambier og rådyr at det er svært at tænke på at det er noget der smager godt for det gør det.”

Anne-Mette, 40:58.

”hvis jeg lige selv havde kørt den ned så havde jeg spist den, hvis jeg måtte”

”og hvad med dig?”

”altså jeg havde da nok spist med (griner) men hvis jeg selv havde kørt den over så havde jeg altså ikke taget den ind i mit bagagebære og kørt den hjem og så vendt den på en grill så havde jeg nok begravet den og været rigtig ked af det og været rigtig ked af det og haft rigtig dårlig samvittighed over at jeg havde dræbt et dyr, hvis jeg var sammen med Daniel så havde jeg nok endt med at spise den.”

Daniel, interviewer, Ida 37:15.

”jeg synes faktisk det er okay fordi det mad det ville alligevel blive smidt ud så hvorfor ikke lade andre få glæde af det og jeg synes at hvis man skal gøre en forskel altså få mindre af sådan nogen (skraldere) til at gøre det så er det også supermarkederne der må tænke på okay hvor meget smider vi egentlig ud.”

Elizabeth, 29:04

”Det ved jeg ikke, det er nok bare fordi skrald det lyder bare ulækkert, det ved jeg ikke jeg tror bare man har lidt fordomme, også bare med skraldemænd, man tænker også bare fuck et nederen job, eller klamt, men de rører jo ikke ved det så jeg ved ikke, jeg tror are det er en fordom man har.”

”nej, det selvfølgelig måske det ord der.”

”mm, jeg tror det er ordet der gør det også bare fordi man tænker på skrald som, ting man selv har, der er halvklamme og bliver smidt ud og ligger sammen med alt muligt andet og har ligget der i tre dage og lugter.”

Interviewer, Mette, 24:15.

Globalisation

”det synes jeg nemt sker for mig fordi jeg kun er mig selv, de der pakker man køber det er altid stort i forhold til hvad jeg kan nå og spise, nemlig også det der med gulerødder så bliver man nødt til på et eller andet tidspunkt og smide det ud.”

Sofie, 1.25

Dengang sendte min mor mig op på mejeriet og skulle have for 50 øre knapost (…) så tog han en stor skefuld og så fik du for 50 øre knapost, du gik til slagteren for at hente for en krone leverpostej.

Anne-Mette, 49.19

”jeg har sådan en eller anden forestilling om at de ligesom var bedre til at finde ud af hvad de skulle bruge det til og sådan, bare bedre til at lave mad end vi måske er i dag.”

”sådan fra bunden.”

”de havde måske heller ikke så meget forskelligt som vi måske har så det var måske nemmere at sætte det sammen, vi får jo thai den ene dag og noget afrikansk den anden og så er det måske lidt sværere at sætte det sammen.”

”ja, globalt køkken.”

”så tænker jeg også at man var opdraget til at være god til at lave mad, det var jo husmoderens stolthed sådan at få tingene til at strække.”

”det er jo nemlig det, nu har vi jo altså noget andet at bruge vores tid til i dag (griner)…det er ikke sådan det der er status for kvinder i dag”

”det ved jeg da ikke, der er da kommet en bevægelse med at man skal sylte og sådan lave hjemmelavet kager og sådan.”

Sofie, Maria, Tanja, Katrine, 16:12.

”det fungerer faktisk sådan at jeg lige drøner køleskabet igennem og så tager jeg de ting jeg kan se der trænger til at blive brugt, som regel kan det jo altid blandes sammen på en eller anden hensigtsmæssig måde, altså uanset om man laver en chili con carne, der kan man godt putte andre ting i end det der står i opskriften så hvis der lige ligger nogle pastinakker eller et eller andet som man kan se det trænger godt nok lige til at blive brugt så kan de ryge med eller blive bagt i ovnen”

Ole, 12:42.

”hvis man kun kan lave mad efter en opskrift og lige nøjagtig de mængder der står der, og det ene og det andet, så kommer der mere madspild.”

Ole, 39:20.

”jeg gøre meget sådan at hvis jeg laver en eller anden ret og så har et eller andet inde i køleskabet som okay der er meget lidt tilbage for eksempel den halve agurk jamen så tager jeg den og putter i min ret så kunne det godt smage godt…så jeg synes jeg er sådan rimelig god til at få brugt de ting jeg har i mit køleskab”.

Jens, 23:10

”hvis jeg selv havde skullet forholde mig til at det der nede i fryseren, hjerter og lever og alt sådan noget så kan det godt være det var røget ud, fordi jeg ved ikke lige hvad jeg skal gøre med det men det kan du så godt finde ud af at lave et eller andet med.”

Karen, 39:31.

”eller sådan nogle ting man køber fordi man skal bruge det en gang for eksempel noget sennep, det bruger vi ikke særlig meget af hos os men engang i mellem så skal vi bruge sennep og så køber vi et glas og så kan det stå derinde i to år og pludselig opdager man at det er blevet for gammelt for halvandet år siden… så de der ting.”

Tanja, 10.01.

”så har det været nogle gange for eksempel hvis vi har købt et eller andet special produkt, altså sådan et eller andet som vi ikke lige helt har vist, men det så da egentlig interessant ud og så er det kommet til at stå i skabet, vi ikke sådan lige rigtig har fået brugt det, og så er det måske ligeså stille forsvundet (griner) forsvundet ind i skabet og så dukker det frem og så sidder man der og tænker arh det der bruger vi ikke og nu, altså nu er det også ved at være for gammel.”

Ole, 24:15.

Altruism

”Generelt så har vi egentlig den der holdning til at ting generelt ikke bare skal smides væk så længe de kan bruges, altså vi har også haft det endnu mere tydeligt i de møbler vi har haft, der har vi jo haft arvemøbler i rigtig rigtig mange år som egentlig først blev kasseret da de ikke kunne repareres og det egentlig var dyrere at reparere dem end at købe nye ting, så blev de smidt ud, eller de blev faktisk solgt til nogen der så kunne reparere dem og få noget ud af dem, altså hele den holdning har vi til tingene”

Henriette, (del 2) 0:11.

”En dag jeg skulle bage rugbrød og jeg blev nødt til at købe…de havde ingen økologiske rugkerner, satans! Så det sniger sig jo ind.”

Mads, 17:10.

Hedonism

”for eksempel onsdag aften der kan være en rest, jamen det kan du også varme til frokost til i morgen, det får jeg meget sjældent gjort, for så har man ikke lyst til det, ja og så ryger det som regel ud.”

Anne-Mette, 5.35.

”vi gør nu ellers meget det der med rester fordi så kan man lave mad til to dage af gangen og så passer det sådan nogenlunde så ved man hvad man har og så sparer man tid dagen efter, men hvis der så pludselig kommer et eller andet man ikke havde forudset så kan det godt komme til at stå.”

”eller hvis det er noget man ikke så godt kan lide (griner)”

”ja, eller man får lyst til et eller andet der er mere spændende”

”ja, man har tænkt at det her det var smart lige at gemme men så gider man ikke spise det alligevel.”

Tanja, Katrine, Maria, Sofie, 2:17.