

CREATIVE
PARTICIPATION
Responsibility-Taking
in the Political World

Edited by
Michele Micheletti
and Andrew S. McFarland



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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>v</i>
Chapter 1 The Global Justice Movement: An Introduction, <i>Michele Micheletti</i>	1
Chapter 2 Why Creative Participation Today? <i>Andrew S. McFarland</i>	15
Chapter 3 Swarming: Imagining Creative Participation, <i>Alexandra Segerberg</i>	34
Chapter 4 Two Faces of Political Participation: Conventional and Creative Participation Among American Clergy, <i>James L. Guth</i>	48
Chapter 5 Grammars of Political Action Among Urban Muslim Youth, <i>Therese O'Toole and Richard Gale</i>	65
Chapter 6 Capitalist Housing Developers as Green Activists, <i>John S. Watson</i>	80
Chapter 7 Everyday Shopping to Fight the Mafia in Italy, <i>Francesca Forno and Carina Gunnarson</i>	101
Chapter 8 Vegetarianism—A Lifestyle Politics? <i>Michele Micheletti and Dielind Stolle</i>	125
Chapter 9 Is Creative Participation Good for Democracy? <i>Jan W. van Deth</i>	146

iv * Contents

Chapter 10	Creative Participation: Concluding Thoughts from the Land of the Boston Tea Party, <i>Kay Lehman Schlozman</i>	171
	<i>References</i>	186
	<i>Index</i>	205
	<i>About the Contributors</i>	000

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Chapter Eight

Vegetarianism—A Lifestyle Politics?

Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle

Politicizing Eating Habits

More and more people are concerned about the use of animals in human consumption. They worry about the consequences of industrialized milk, egg, and meat production for personal health, the environment, and the treatment of farm animals. Some citizens become so outraged about farm animal treatment that they violently attack fast-food restaurants, fur farms, and furriers. Violent crimes related to animal rights, for example, increased more than 60 percent in Sweden between 2000 and 2003 and, along with right-wing extremism, have been considered a threat to civil order (Säkerhetspolisen 2004). Citizens also choose legal means to take responsibility for farm animal treatment. They join and support humane societies, animal rights groups, vegetarian networks, and environmental organizations. They lobby government and work to get the issue on ballots, as in California in 2008, where a majority of voters (63.5 percent) supported Proposition 2, an initiative to improve standards for confining farm animals (SOS 2008). Citizens also ask what they can do in their private lives. Some turn to vegetarianism. Today about 4 percent of Americans and roughly 5 percent of Europeans are vegetarians (see Micheletti and Stolle 2009).

This chapter asks whether vegetarianism can be regarded as a form of creative participation called lifestyle politics. Lifestyle politics emphasizes an important theme taken up in all chapters of this book, namely, how societal roles

125

other than the primary political role of the citizen play a central role in politics. Yet, oddly given the attention the concept has received in scholarly circles, it has not been properly theorized. Thus the first task of this chapter is to formally define the concept of *lifestyle politics* and develop conceptual indicators to investigate it empirically. Then the theoretical indicators are used to study the role of welfare and animal rights associations in the advocacy for and mobilization of individuals into vegetarianism. The choice of these organizations over others is based on their particular qualifications as civic associations focusing on vegetarian advocacy. The empirical analysis of vegetarianism and veganism at the individual level provides insights into the different motivations for these acts, which indicate various forms of commitment to a plant-based diet. The results from this analysis are then used to answer the question whether all forms of vegetarianism can be regarded as lifestyle politics.

Conceptualizing Lifestyle Politics

Scholars have increasingly over the past few decades called into question the “public private divide” that has traditionally been used to conceptualize politics and political action as only occurring in the public sphere (Phillips 1993; Young 1990). They argue theoretically and show empirically how private life has political meaning and is an example of forms of citizen engagement that mesh public matters with private action and private matters with public action. Among the concepts coined to reflect this development are “the personal is political” (cf. Carroll 1989), “the politics of the self” or “life politics” (Giddens 1991), “subpolitics” (Beck 1997), and “personalized politics” (Lichterman 1996). The concept “lifestyle politics” was introduced into political science to focus attention on creative forms of political action occurring outside the realms of conventional politics and through alternative and more individualized modes of expression. Examples of lifestyle politics discussed at the time were fashion, music, eating, professional identity, and ways of living (Bennett 1998). The concept attracted attention because it challenged the conventional wisdom of declining levels of citizen participation in Western politics (for a discussion see Bennett 1998; Stolle and Hooghe 2005).

We formally define lifestyle politics as an individual’s choice to use his or her private life sphere to take responsibility for the allocation of common values and resources, in other words, for politics (cf. Easton 1965; Mitchell 1961). It is present when there is conscious and consistent choice of values, attitudes, and actions in both the public and private spheres. People engaging in lifestyle politics are goal oriented and view their personal life as a political statement, project, and form of action. In its fullest form, lifestyle politics requires a state of private and public harmony on the part of an

individual because she must consciously and deliberately reject reckless freedom of choice, wantonness, and enticements (no matter how tempting) that result in a straying from the path of action demanded by her commitment to chosen principles as expressed in values and attitudes (Cox et al. 2005; Kateb 1992, Ch. 3; May 1991). Lifestyle politics is, therefore, a political commitment to live consistently, according to certain principles within and across societal roles. A practitioner of lifestyle politics does all she can to change her routines and habits that elicit attitudes, actions, and consequences contrary to these principles. If she does not do so, she “feels pangs of guilt” for betraying them (cf. May 1991, 101).

A person making this kind of commitment must assess how the choices she makes in her various societal roles (as a consumer, parent, employee, business leader, and so on) affect the allocation of values and resources in society at large. Two chapters included in this book, one by Francesca Forno and Carina Gunnarson and one by John S. Watson, illustrate how choices made in the private sphere—in their cases, everyday shopping and place of residence, respectively—can affect intentionally or unintentionally democratic development and the allocation of natural resources in society. They also explain why individual decisions in the private realm are increasingly tied with public matters, in their cases, the Sicilian Mafia and U.S. urban sprawl, respectively. Noteworthy to remember is that lifestyle politics, like all forms of conventional and creative participation, does not necessarily promote democracy. As illustrated by religious fanaticism, ecoterrorism, which has played a role in animal rights political action, and Ku Klux Klan communities, a commitment to lifestyle politics can involve the use violence, illegalities, and the violation of human rights.

Yet whether democratic or undemocratic in nature, a series of structural opportunity conditions and individual factors must be in place for the enactment of lifestyle politics. To begin, there must be *freedom of choice* in the public and private spheres so that the individual has the possibility to choose among alternatives about living in accordance with her values (cf. Young 2006; May 1991). Without this general context of voluntary choice alternatives, an individual will not be able to be consistent (or attempt to be consistent) in her values, attitudes, and actions across the public/private divide. Other structural conditions must also be in place for an individual to be able to consciously and rationally calibrate her private lifestyle—consumer habits, friendship circles, hobbies, and home life—with her political beliefs, interests, and commitment to public causes. A second basic one is *information on choices*. There must be available information for individuals to retrieve in order to be able to inform themselves on choice alternatives and on their general effects on other human beings and nature. Frequently they also need ethical guidance to help them understand and evaluate the information. *Ethical guidance* is, thus, the third important more structural

or contextual condition for individuals to engage in lifestyle politics. This guidance might be provided by government, political parties and civic associations, academic scholarship, businesses, market-based labeling schemes, friendship, family circles, and role models.

Aside from these structural factors, two sets of individual ones are important in order to practice consistency in thinking and acting. Individuals must first be able to create a personal *ethical compass* that situates their values, attitudes, and choice actions in a larger ethical field. This framework offers contextual sensitivity that associates the impact of individual choice with the allocation of societal value and natural resources. A person has an ethical compass if she is aware of and sensitive to the effects of her individual choices—whether they are in the form of electoral voting, eating preferences, clothes shopping, or choice of school for her children—on others and nature. For some people seeing the connections between their choices (including their associated values and attitudes) and others (including distant people, the environment, and nature) comes easy. For most others it is learned. These people must, in the words of moral philosophers, be taught to feel “pangs of guilt” (May 1991, 101) that trigger reflection, new thinking, new values, new attitudes, and new actions. This teaching can be viewed as a “political wake-up call” about the hidden political effects of choices made by the individual—for instance the corporate power relations, environmental impact, and human rights violations associated with consumer choice. Revelation about the more general effects of personal choice for private matters might come in the form of shocking events or from friends, family, political activists, film celebrities, testimonials in authentic voices from situations of oppression, and documentaries. Social capital—friendship networks and relationships with civic networks and associations—is frequently an important contextual prerequisite for the creation of an ethical compass that fits an individual’s capabilities. In these social contexts and illustrated in the Forno and Gunnarson chapter in this book, the individual can learn about the hidden politics of choice and develop a predisposition for individualized responsibility-taking for the allocation of societal values and natural resources.

Once this predisposition has developed, other personal attributes are important for the enactment of lifestyle politics. The second set of individual factors is the ability or *empowerment* to use one’s ethical compass in choice situations. Empowerment can be broken down into two separate factors: necessary *socioeconomic resources* to make ethically informed (or contextually sensitized) choices and the *decisiveness* (motivation, commitment, civil courage) to do so. Social scientists agree that important socioeconomic resources that explain political action are level of education, level of income, type of occupation, civic skills, and time. These resources as well as political efficacy, engagement, and the participation in social networks facilitate political ac-

tion (cf. Verba et al. 1995). They also provide a supportive foundation for the decisiveness necessary to stand up against injustices even when one's stance—one's values, attitudes, and actions—might imply breaking with social conventions embedded in ordinary public and private life.

Reasons for Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism has a long history. Proponents of a nonmeat and plant-based diet can be found in Ancient Greece and Asia. In the 1700s, Christian groups in Europe and North America promoted vegetarianism as part of a religious lifestyle that also included pacifism, slavery abolitionism, and abstinence from alcohol. They maintained that “[a]nimals are God’s creatures, not human property, nor utilities, nor resources, nor commodities, but precious beings in God’s sight” (Linzey as quoted in CVA, n.d.). Contemporary vegetarian Christians believe that a plant diet is “responsible Christian stewardship for all God’s Creation” (CVA 2005a). In other religious cultures, such as in India today, around 40 percent are vegetarians for religious reasons (European Vegetarian Union 2007). Over the years people have also turned to vegetarianism for personal health reasons; doctors and dieticians increasingly encourage people to lower their meat and egg consumption. People also become vegetarians because they are concerned about the impact of current practices in the raising of farm animals for human consumption. This concern grew in significance after the publication of Ruth Harrison’s (1964) *Animal Machines: The New Factory Farming Industry*, which led to a public debate and an important official British inquiry. In 1975 Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation*, a book attributed with the same moral and political force as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) on the use of pesticides in industrialized agriculture. In sum, contemporary advocacy for vegetarianism involves religious values, personal health benefits, as well as concern over farm animal treatment, the impact of raising animals for meat consumption for local environments and global climate change, and the consequences of Western meat-eating for world poverty (EVU, n.d.; CVA 2005b).

Animal Welfare and Animal Rights Vegetarianism

Animal welfare and animal rights organizations use a variety of forms of conventional and creative participation to promote their cause. They play a forceful public role in vegetarian advocacy and appeal to wide groups of citizens. Because of their breadth, they are used in this chapter to investigate whether or not vegetarianism can be regarded as lifestyle politics. There are also considerable similarities between animal welfare and animal rights or-

ganizations. Both want “caring people” to adopt “increasingly compassionate lifestyles that give evidence of their personal, ethically driven commitment not to abuse those who have the capacity to suffer” (Kullberg 2002). Both believe that farm animals are sentient creatures, as does EU law (EU 1997). Both employ the societal role of the consumer in their advocacy and mobilization strategies. Their framing of individualized responsibility with the terms *caring* and *compassion* suggests that conventional political action needs to be complemented by creative participation to deal with the current treatment of farm animals in industrialized agriculture, which these groups characterize as “factory farms,” “animal factories,” and “animal machines.” Both sets of organizations exert considerable effort in providing consumers with information and in crafting sensitizing campaigns about farm animal treatment. Their main objective is to mobilize individuals to take a stance against the cruel treatment of animals for food and clothing and in the testing for medicines, household chemicals, and cosmetics. However, the character or depth of this personal commitment differs between the two sets of organizations.

For animal welfare organizations, it is not in principle unethical or immoral to eat meat, eggs, fish, and poultry if, as explained in what follows, farm animals are treated well. However, they believe that it is unethical to do so when humans allow farm animals to suffer unnecessarily and to eat so-called animal food when there is an abundance of other good food supplies (Gamlund 2006; Singer 1975). Key representatives of animal welfare are humane societies and societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals (SPCAs). They are strong organizations, as illustrated by The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Britain (RSPCA established in 1824) and the Humane Society in the United States (established in 1954). Animal rights groups, which emerged from the 1970s and onwards, take a more adamant stance. They claim that it is unethical not only to kill but also to use animals in any way or form in human consumption. That is, humans have no right to wear leather, pick eggs, milk animals for dairy products, eat meat, catch fish, or use animals in other ways for human consumption. This point of view is based on the moral principle or value that animals are “experiencing subjects of a life with an inherent moral status value” and “have a moral right not to be caused unavoidable harm” (Gamlund 2006, 123; see also Regan 1983). As illustrated by 1.6 million internationally strong People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA, from 1980) whose headquarters is in Virginia, these groups adopt the language of civil, women’s, and human rights (Libby 1991, Ch. 3) to advocate their cause. Parenthetically and given this strategy, it is noteworthy that they currently use female nudity to mobilize support for their cause.¹

Their divergent value portraits imply different claims on individual free choice and action. Animal welfare organizations believe that individual purchasing choices can and should “be significantly influenced by an ethical

concern for animals” (HSUS 2009). This means that they want individuals to accept personal responsibility for the treatment of farm animals by taking time to learn about the issues, understanding why and how farm animals should be treated humanely, and making better food choices—that is, developing an ethical compass to help them with “consumer editing” (SDC and NCC 2006). They seek to give consumers contextual sensitivity for making choices by providing different kinds of information about the effects of factory farming on animals and the environment, discussing animal feelings (the idea that they are sentient creatures), showing documentary videos and pictures of factory and alternative farming on their Web site, and suggesting tools for individualized political involvement and action. They also take great pains to show how easy, healthy, and tasty it is to cook and eat vegetarian food and offer “switching” advice (HSUS 2007; EVU 2007) or the “three Rs”: *reducing* animal food consumption, *refining* it by choosing organic or animal welfare labeled products, and *replacing* as much as individually possible animal food with a vegetarian diet. This implies that vegetarianism can be a partial or a process-oriented commitment that the individual may decide to ratchet up or down over time.

Animal rights organizations advocate vegetarianism and veganism more aggressively in the moral frame of “cruelty-free” consumption. They assume that their supporters are (or want to be) vegetarians and preferably vegans and want others to do so as well. A few examples of their efforts to shock and mobilize people include so-called cruelty investigations and promotion of the award-winning and youth-oriented animated film *The Meatrix* about the horrors of factory farming. The organizations offer information on cruelty-free living, shopping, and investments as well as a scale of involvement ideas—from thin and thick participation—that use both the public and private sphere to mobilize others into the cause.

Showing astute awareness about the contemporary problems with the thresholds of collective action, PETA offers its supporters a menu of levels for individualized involvement that aims at raising consciousness about factory farming, changing values, and getting other people involved. The first level, “help animals in five minutes flat,” includes ideas about sending letters to media and entertainment actors, adding PETA material on and in postal letters (particularly those including checks for paying bills), marketing products not tested on animals in everyday settings (a kind of traveling salesmanship), asking for vegan options in restaurants and stores (to create market demand), adding animal rights messages in personal videos and e-mails, donating animal rights books to public libraries, wearing clothes with animal rights statements, taking vegan meals and recipes to social functions, and explaining in contextually sensitizing language reasons for involvement in the cause. The second level, “you can make a difference in 15 minutes flat!” also allows for a combination of indoor/outdoor and private/public

activities. It includes writing letters in support of animal rights to businesses and media corporations, targeting politicians, calling radio talk shows about vegetarian options, recording animal rights messages on voice mail, putting up PETA posters in public places, donating money to animal rights groups and using a PETA Visa card that gives 1 percent of all purchases to the organization, making cruelty-free investments, procuring cruelty-free supplies for one's own business, using coffee mugs with an animal rights message, offering workmates vegetarian food, and passing out vegetarian starter kit cards. The highest level is "make a commitment" by volunteering time and energy to spread the word about animal rights publicly. Ideas here include cooking vegan meals for local soup kitchens, holding weekly volunteer work parties to make public material for demonstrations, showing animal rights videos in public places, and putting up an information table at community events (PETAb). These involvement levels allow for both creative and more conventional political participation and show how political engagement meshes with private lifestyle and how private lifestyle can become politics. PETA suggests action tools that target such conventional public arenas as government, business, civil society, media, and the workplace, as well as the more traditional private spheres of friendship, family, and food.

Creating an Opportunity Structure for Vegetarianism

Animal welfare and animal rights organizations offer ethical guidance about animal food consumption in the form of labeling schemes, shopping opportunities, food recipes, and identity community-building. The aim is to help caring and compassionate individuals more easily align their consumer choices with their (newly found) values. Both sets of organizations develop opportunity structures for vegetarianism. Animal welfare organizations support and sponsor animal-welfare labeling, give awards for good animal welfare to companies producing consumer goods, and promote community sponsored agriculture (CSA). Today several animal-welfare labeling schemes are in place internationally, and others are being developed. They include the organic food labeling in place in most countries, and that in varying degrees includes farm animal welfare as part of its certification criteria as well as the labeling schemes specifically established for animal welfare. Certified Humane Specific (USA), Freedom Food (UK), Free Farmed Certified (USA), the Canadian SPCA certified labeling as well as those for "free range eggs" in Great Britain, Germany, France, New Zealand, Canada, Austria, Australia, and the United States (SPCA British Columbia 2004) are prominent examples.

Animal rights organizations develop "non-violently produced" and "cruelty-free" ethical shopping guidelines for food, apparel, and household products and offer individuals the opportunity to use socially responsible

investing (SRI) to promote cruelty-free companies and nonprofit organizations that work for animal rights. They also market products carrying the label “cruelty-free.” These labels include anthropomorphic messages² (e.g., the cute pink rabbit with big ears that is PETA’s cruelty-free logo on fashion, cosmetics, and household cleansers) or appear more scientific as the registered trademark Vegan logo on thousands of animal-free products registered with U.K. The Vegan Society (established in 1944). Although vegan labels do not certify goods in the same transparent, accountable, and mainstreaming way as the more official animal welfare labeling schemes discussed previously and now available in large supermarket chains, they provide ethical guidance and opportunities for cruelty-free shopping on- and off-line. Comparable use of such “boycotting” strategies that exist outside of the institutionalized labeling schemes are found in other policy areas as well, as illustrated by Forno and Gunnarson in the case of anti-Mafia shopping.

Do Civic Organizations Promote Vegetarian Lifestyle Politics?

Table 8.1 summarizes the findings on how animal welfare and animal rights organizations advocate the need for moral values to affect consumer choice. It shows that both sets of organizations provide normative (moral) arguments for concern regarding farm animal treatment. They provide scientific facts, statistics, information in the form of events, links, and videos on farm animal treatment in industrialized agriculture. They formulate more emotionally charged visual and verbal sensitizing messages as “political wake-up calls” to convince consumers to reconsider their personal food choices. Their factual information and sensitizing campaigns dramatize the role of the individual as a responsible agent in industrialized agriculture. The goal is to create “pangs of guilt” that lead to the modification of values and attitudes about eating meat and eggs and, for animal rights organizations, the use of animals for human consumption in general. They hope that this sensitizing mobilization will lead individuals to craft their own personal ethical compass and use the ethical guidance that they provide to put their values and attitudes into motion. This is how they attempt to create consistency of values, attitudes, and actions at the individual level.

But do animal welfare and animal rights organizations also maintain that an individual’s decision to become a vegetarian is political choice? Do they, in other words, argue that vegetarianism is related to the allocation of common values and resources in global society? Or do the different organizations and networks involved with farm animal treatment view vegetarianism as a self-oriented project that only concerns personal and private choices? In other words, is vegetarianism lifestyle politics or is it a personal choice project disconnected from global environmental and human rights

Table 8.1 Civil Society's Arguments, Resources, and Ethical Guidance for Vegetarianism

<i>Organizational Type</i>	<i>Stance on Farm Animal Treatment</i>	<i>Role of Vegetarianism in the Cause</i>	<i>Examples of Information on Farm Animal Treatment</i>
Animal Welfare	<p>Farm animals are sentient creatures and should be treated as such.</p> <p>They have five freedoms that must be protected—from (1) hunger, thirst, and malnutrition, (2) pain, injury, and disease, (3) from physical and thermal discomfort, (4) fear and distress discomfort, and to (5) express normal behaviors that promote well-being.</p> <p>Today farm animal freedoms are not adequately protected. For instance, in the United States there are no federal laws to protect them from cruelty, and most states exempt agricultural practices from the scope of their animal cruelty statutes.</p>	<p>Each individual can make a significant difference in the lives of farm animals by cutting down their animal consumption.</p> <p>By eating differently, consumers can save many farm animals from cruel treatment and support mechanisms that promote their five freedoms.</p>	<p>Facts about meat, chicken, and egg purchasing practices of brand fast-food chains.</p> <p>Facts about farm animal sentience, complexity, and uniqueness.</p> <p>Statistics on farm animal treatment.</p> <p>Information on the impact of factory farming on human health and the environment.</p> <p>Scientific comparisons between, e.g., welfare of hens in battery cages and alternative systems.</p>

Table 8.1 continued

<i>Sensitizing Messages on Consumer Responsibility</i>	<i>Some Involvement Tools</i>	<i>Ethical Guidance</i>
<p>"In the United States alone, 10 billion domesticated animals are reared and slaughtered for food each year—most of them raised in harsh, sunless, intensive confinement ... the decisions we make two or three times a day ... have vast implications for animals. We are deciding, in effect, whether or not we will add our own weight to the immense burdens placed upon factory-farmed animals." (HSUS)</p> <p>Examples of online video films: <i>Living a Nightmare: Animal Factories in Michigan</i> (Sierra Club), <i>Confinement by Crate</i>, <i>Fast Growth</i>, <i>Electric Stunning</i>, and <i>Traumatic Catching</i> (HSUS).</p>	<p>Customer request card for certified food (available as .pdf file on Web sites).</p> <p>Petition signing for governmental action.</p> <p>Postcard sending.</p> <p>Letter writing to government, corporations, fast-food chains, etc.</p> <p>Donations to organizations.</p> <p>Volunteering service to organizations.</p>	<p>Information on tasty vegetarian alternatives, labeling schemes, Corporate Codes of Practice.</p> <p>Online function to find certified stockists and retailers.</p> <p>Information on Humane eating: Three "Rs": Reduce (eat fewer animal products), Refine (choose organic or cage- and crate-free animal products), Replace (become vegetarian).</p>

Table 8.1 continued

<i>Organizational Type</i>	<i>Stance on Farm Animal Treatment</i>	<i>Role of Vegetarianism in the Cause</i>	<i>Examples of Information on Farm Animal Treatment</i>
Animal Rights	<p>Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any way.</p> <p>We must “End Factory Farming Before It Ends Us.”</p> <p>“Eating meat causes environmental destruction, damages human health, contributes to global hunger, and inflicts immense suffering on billions of animals across the world.”</p>	<p>One of the easiest and most important ways to help farm animals is by altering our everyday lifestyle, including the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the products we buy.</p> <p>Individuals have the solution to the problems created by factory farming in their own hands: “The best way to stop the destruction and the cruelty is to stop eating animals now.”</p>	<p>Guides to vegetarian/vegan issues.</p> <p>Educational resources for schools.</p>

Table 8.1 continued

<i>Sensitizing Messages on Consumer Responsibility</i>	<i>Some Involvement Tools</i>	<i>Ethical Guidance</i>
<p>Reports with emotional titles such as "Battered Lives: An Animal Aid Investigation," "Cruelty to Animals: Mechanized Madness," "Pig in Hell," "Sentenced to Death," "Painful Reality," and "Hidden Harvest."</p> <p>"Huge, stinking sheds are crammed full of miserable animals who are deprived of everything that makes life worth living. They can hardly stretch their wings or legs and will never be able to roam. Millions will never even lie down comfortably." (Animal Aid)</p> <p>"650 million animals are slaughtered for food every year in Canada ... the slaughter experience is horrific, with many animals being skinned and dismembered alive." (Global Action Network)</p>	<p>Pledges to try vegetarianism for thirty days.</p> <p>"E-protests" of corporations for their animal food procurement policies.</p> <p>Letters to local newspapers, governments, corporations.</p> <p>Persuading someone you know personally to "go vegetarian."</p> <p>Actions in campaign against Kentucky Fried Chicken's procurement policy, Burberry's use of farmed fur in its fashions.</p> <p>Donations to organizations.</p>	<p>Aids to living a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle (shopping, menu, and restaurant hints, low-cost vegan/vegetarian living), community-building resources (dating, pen pals, and friendship locally to globally, advice about raising children vegetarian), mainstreaming vegetarianism with the help of role models (celebrity vegetarians), college vegetarianism, evolvement of vegetarian lifestyle over time. Vegetarian starters' kit and shopping guidance, e.g., "Tips for a Cruelty-Free Christmas."</p> <p>Promote "veggie-friendly businesses."</p>

Sources: spca.bc.ca/farminfo/default.asp, [Animals in Agriculture http://www.awionline.org/Default.htm](http://Animals in Agriculture Default.htm), <http://www.hsus.org/farm/humaneeating/rrr.html>, <http://worldanimal.net/>, <http://www.ciwf.org.uk>, animalconcerns.org, Viva! Vegetarians International Voice for Animals viva.org/uk, <http://www.advocatesforanimals.org/lifestyle/index.html>, <http://www.goveg.com/theissues.asp>, <http://www.natural-family.com/3veg-index.htm>, http://vegetarian.about.com/od/vegetarianlifestyle/Vegetarian_Lifestyle.htm, http://vegetarian.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=vegetarian&cdn=food&tm=256&gps=90_5_999_609&f=00&su=p774.1.140.ip_p284.8.150.ip_&tt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//www.veganstreet.com/veganliving/timeschangin.html, <http://www.veganlifestyle.net/>, <http://www.european-vegetarian.org/lang/en/info/kit/starter02.php>, http://www.goveg.com/celebs_famous.asp

problems and an assessment of the present-day workings of government in the field of agriculture?

To answer these questions, this section presents results from an analysis of the organizations' arguments for vegetarianism. The next section examines them for individuals. The civic associations advocating vegetarianism use five basic reasons for a plant-based diet: personal health, environmental impact of factory farming, world hunger, farm animal treatment, and the freedom and rights of animals as sentient creatures. Our study also finds that the investigated organizations and networks might use several of these arguments simultaneously, a result pointing to the need for further research to establish (if possible) which argument is the most important for animal welfare and animal rights organizations, respectively. Another interesting area of investigation is whether the organizations change their advocacy framing to enhance their ability to mobilize individuals into choice editing. Such tactical reasons for advocacy frame change have occurred in the past. For instance, organizers of the Californian grape boycott in the 1960s found that they mobilized more support for their cause when they changed the campaign's frame from protecting migrant farm labor health (an other-regarding value) to the personal health risks associated with consumers buying grapes sprayed with pesticides for their families (a self-regarding value) (Micheletti 2003, 53f; Benford and Valadez 1998). A similar shift seems also to be occurring in vegetarian advocacy. Both sets of organizations now integrate more messages about the importance of vegetarianism for one's general health and fitness in their advocacy strategies and framing of their cause (Smart 2004). The interesting question is whether this reframing poses a problem for the more political ideological and original goals of these organizations.

What is evident from the analysis is that vegetarianism based on the decision that meat-eating—no matter which form of animal food production—harms personal health does not create values, attitudes, and actions that concern the allocation of societal values and natural resources. It is self-regarding vegetarianism. Advocating a plant-based diet because medical science and alternative medicine find meat-eating risky for personal health might create a vegetarian lifestyle, but it is not vegetarian lifestyle *politics*. This is the case because the scientific correlation between animal consumption and diseases (including cancers, heart diseases, allergies, and bovine disorders) is a self-regarding health nutritional reason, though as suggested previously, it might be a successful mobilizing frame employed for choice editing to reach organizational goals. Some groups advocate vegetarian eating for another health reason, as part of private food safety management and “responsibilization” to deal with health risks in a more privatized way (cf. Shamir 2008). They point to the numerous health risks and problems associated with the risks involved in industrialized animal

food production, including E. coli contaminations, mad cow and foot-and-mouth disease, avian flu in poultry, PCB and mercury in fish, high dioxin concentrations, and use of antibiotics, artificial growth hormones, and chemical additives.

However, the main and original focus of animal welfare and animal rights organizations is farm animal treatment and efforts that help consumers develop a consistency between values, attitudes, and consumer choice action. Both sets of organizations believe that human beings have the responsibility to use their power over sentient creatures in a humane way. Animal welfare organizations believe that vegetarianism, given factory farming and the scarcity of “animal friendly” choices, is the *best* choice. For animal right organizations, it is the *only right* choice. Both employ other other-regarding reasons in their advocacy for vegetarianism and even take up environmental organizations’ arguments about the negative environmental impact of meat production. Factory farming is, for example, one of the Sierra Club’s four national priority campaigns. This oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization in the United States (founded in 1892) has established local “vegetarian outreach committees” to inform about “the link between the adoption by humans of a plant-based diet and protection of habitat for wildlife,” the importance of vegetarian eating as an action against global warming, and the connection between “animal agriculture,” land clearing, and the pollution of fresh and ocean water (Sierra Club n.d.). The large international World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, founded in 1961) informs its supporters and others who visit its Web site “One planet living principles” about the ecological footprint of beef production (WWF n.d.). National branches of Greenpeace (founded in 1972) do the same. Greenpeace Sweden promotes vegetarianism and veganism as part of its anti-GMO “green food” campaign; Greenpeace USA (n.d.) has a “go vegetarian” Web page that states that “[c]hances are that as someone who cares about the environment, you are always searching for things you can do to help protect it. But did you know that you can help protect the environment by simply making some changes to your diet? Concerned individuals can lower their impact on the planet by cutting down on the animal products they eat each week.” Interestingly, environmental and animal rights but not the investigated animal welfare associations offer a series of online facts about “the more meat we eat, the fewer people we can feed” (Go Vege a. n.d.). They point to the resource-intensiveness of animal food, the inefficiency in using animal food to feed humans globally, and the effects on Third World investments in livestock rearing for Western meat consumption rather than on plant-based agriculture to end their own people’s hunger and improve their health. Three quotes from animal rights groups illustrate this stance: “If we stopped intensively breeding farmed animals and grew crops to feed humans instead, we would easily be able to feed every human on the planet

with healthy and affordable vegetarian foods” (Animal Concerns n.d.). “If this trend continues, the developing world will never be able to produce enough food to feed itself, and global hunger will continue to plague hundreds of millions of people around the globe” (Go Vege b. n.d.). “Even while maintaining the first world citizens high caloric intake, slightly modifying this population’s diet away from meats towards more vegetables, fruits, and grains could result in more available calories which may then be used to help the less fortunate people of this earth (The Animal Spirit n.d.). These organizations advocate vegetarianism or downsizing meat consumption as a small individual contribution to redistribute global resources in a more just way.

For animal welfare, animal rights, and environmental organizations, vegetarianism is a commitment to use one’s private life for public matters and to allow common causes to influence private lifestyle. This clearly fits the category of politics as defined as allocation of common values and resources in society. These organizations call on individuals to use their desires and choices—their private lives—to affect politics and promote vegetarianism as a political lifestyle. For animal rights organizations, the commitment goes further because “the best way to help animals is to stop eating them” (Caring Consumer n.d.).

Is Living a Vegetarian Lifestyle Creative Political Participation?

How widely spread is the concern about farm animal products and more specifically vegetarianism in Western democracies? Do the motivations behind vegetarianism indicate whether it should be seen as a form of lifestyle politics? These questions will be answered in this last section of the chapter. But first, it is important to understand how much citizens care about animal welfare and animal rights and how widely accepted vegetarianism has become. Then a closer look at vegetarians is in order. Research in the United States suggests that there is a perception at least among vegetarians that vegetarianism is increasingly accepted as socially “mainstream” (Jabs et al. 1998a, cited in Smart 2004). Vegetarian food items are also everywhere more readily available, and vegetarian meals are offered as attractive alternatives in many restaurants. Overall then, vegetarianism has become tolerated as part of everyday society and to a degree a well-accepted lifestyle.

What do individual citizens think about animal welfare and animal rights? One way to answer this question is by analyzing opinion data from surveys and polls. They show that the majority of people in Western democracies support animal welfare and to some degree animal rights. In a special Eurobarometer survey that includes citizens from all twenty-five states that were European Union members in 2005, the vast majority of respondents

(more than 82 percent) agree that animals—like human beings—can feel pain. A Gallup poll from 2003 found that 25 percent of Americans even say that animals deserve “the exact same rights as people to be free from harm and exploitation” and 71 percent believe that animals need some sort of protection. Also, within the spirit of animal welfare and animal rights, a majority of Americans support passing strict laws concerning the treatment of farm animals (62 percent) (Gallup 2003). As mentioned in the introduction, Californians in 2008 showed that this viewpoint has current saliency. Concern for animal welfare is also apparent across Europe, with about 43 percent stating that they consider animal welfare most or some of the time when purchasing meat and 4 percent claiming that they never purchase any meat products (Eurobarometer 2005). Furthermore, there is a widespread perception in EU countries that certain farm animals do not receive proper treatment, and nearly half (44 percent) of the surveyed EU citizens express the view that egg laying hens are in most need of better welfare, followed by chickens raised for meat production (42 percent) (Eurobarometer 2005). Most widespread are the concerns in Scandinavia, and least widespread in the Baltic countries. Another group of opinion data shows, however, that attitudes on animal welfare and rights is a complex set of issues. In the United States a majority of Americans oppose the banning of hunting, medical research and testing on laboratory animals (Gallup 2003), and a majority of Europeans agrees that it is acceptable to kill farm animals for food (Eurobarometer 2005). Yet overall it seems that citizens in Western democracies are concerned about issues of animal welfare, but animal rights are on the minds of a minority of citizens.

When it comes to exact estimates of the levels of vegetarianism across countries, that is, people who never eat red meat, poultry, or fish, data is fairly scarce and, unfortunately, not completely reliable. The newest results show a wide fluctuation within Western democracies from an approximate low of 0.5 percent of vegetarians in Portugal to about 3 percent in the United States, 6 percent in the UK, 9 percent in Germany, and even 10 percent in Italy (European Vegetarian Union 2007). Whereas only few people indicate that they are vegetarians, a higher number say that they are “almost vegetarian,” and nearly a quarter of Americans are “vegetarian inclined” and intentionally reduce meat in their diet (Vegetarian Resource Group 1998). The same survey also indicates some developments over time. Over the last ten years, the number of people rejecting or “boycotting” red meat in the United States has been steady at around 6 percent. But what is interesting is that those “boycotting” fish have climbed from 4 to 15 percent; and those “boycotting” eggs changed from 4 to 9 percent. Taking a longer timeframe perspective, research in the UK finds that the number of vegetarians has increased substantially during the last half century (Phillips 2005). Overall then, this data estimate a growing spread of vegetarianism in Western

countries, and most importantly, there seems to be a growing category of specialized vegetarians who reject certain animal products but not others. Even the number of occasional (non-rigid) vegetarians is increasing, as they try to follow a vegetarian lifestyle whenever possible. It seems, therefore, that the “three Rs” are catching on. There is an overall rising interest in a vegetarian lifestyle and diet, a development also reflected in the increase of US-based vegetarian food sales, which doubled since 1998, hitting \$1.6 billion in 2003, and with steady increases since then. Similar trends are noticeable in Europe as well.

What is less certain is if it can be concluded that these attitudes and the spread of vegetarianism reflect lifestyle politics and whether the surveyed individuals exhibit consistency between their values and actions in the public and private sphere. What is clear is that, even though there is a widespread concern about animal welfare, relatively few people seem to change their entire lifestyle to accommodate a vegetarian agenda. Still, the important question for this chapter is whether those who have committed to this lifestyle change are indeed acting on motivations that can be called political and other-regarding (that is, nonpersonal), and whether vegetarians show a consistency in attitudes, values, and actions in the public and private spheres, as advocated by the animal welfare and right organizations. There are only two main surveys that explore the motivations for choosing a plant-based diet. They are the survey of the *Vegetarian Journal* from 1998 and the CNN/Time poll conducted by Harris-Interactive in 2002. In the first case only seven hundred readers of the *Vegetarian Journal* were interviewed, and the second survey used a random sample of ten thousand online participants in the United States (of which 4 percent turned out to be vegetarians, who were interviewed separately). These surveys found that the most dominant motivations for vegetarianism are health related. Other personal concerns, such as hormones and antibiotics in the meat or a dislike for the taste of meat, range on top of the motivation list. When asked to choose multiple answers, 75 percent of the surveyed readers of the Vegetarian Resource Group’s *Vegetarian Journal* indicated that they are interested in vegetarianism because of ethics, the environment, and animal rights (these are nearly as many as those mentioning health reasons in the same survey). When respondents had to choose only their main motivation, 26 percent of the answers could be labeled as other-regarding and included reasons such as love for animals, animal rights, concern for the planet, and world hunger. This analysis simply suggests that personal and other-regarding concerns for vegetarians are both important as sources of motivation, but other-regarding concerns certainly do not present the majority of motivations for choosing a plant-based diet.

However, the real question in determining whether vegetarianism can be considered an example of lifestyle politics (and thus creative participa-

tion) is whether personal concerns such as health, hormone intake, weight loss, and even taste dominate the attitudes of vegetarians and, most importantly, represent the *exclusive* reasons for choosing a more plant-based diet. Unfortunately, current studies do not allow for a detailed analysis here, but the survey in the vegetarian journal seems to suggest that both types of motivations (personal and nonpersonal) coexist for a majority of vegetarians. When forced to make a choice for the main motivation, most vegetarians opt for personal reasons, however. Also Kimberly Powell (2002) finds evidence that health-related arguments dominate the justifications for vegetarianism, topping other concerns such as animal compassion, coexistence of different species, and animal rights. In fact, UK-based sociologist Andrew Smart (2004) argues that health-related motives of vegetarians have risen over the last decade, which perhaps explains the reframing strategies of the animal rights and animal welfare discussed earlier.

An important counter perspective is veganism, which as discussed previously is advocated as a deeper commitment by animal rights organizations. Vegans accuse vegetarians for failing to follow through on their stance about animal consumption, because they sanction animal consumption in the form of dairy produce and eggs and the use of animal by-products that include leather (Povey et al. 2001; Smart 2004). Vegans, who are estimated at 5 percent of all vegetarians in the United States (Time/CNN 2002), reject all animal consumption. They conform more vigorously to the criteria of lifestyle politics, because they are more frequently motivated by ethical/moral and less by personal and health concerns—90 percent of UK vegans and 77 percent of U.S. vegans cited moral and ethical reasons as their main motivations for following a vegan lifestyle way above any kind of health concerns (Vegan Research Panel 2003; see also Larsson et al. 2003; Povey et al. 2001). For vegans then the analysis indicates that they are (or attempt to be) extremely consistent in their attitudes, values, and actions in their public and private spheres.

Conclusion: Typifying Vegetarians

Civic associations having as their mission the advocacy of vegetarianism offer ample information to consumers about the politics of animal food. Their goal is to encourage people to edit their dietary lifestyle. The associations show how eating habits can be adjusted or changed and how people can make food choices at the supermarket. They also provide individuals with ideas about preparing vegetarian food and have developed an opportunity structure to make it easier for them to practice vegetarianism. In short, they provide reasons, a plan, a platform, and a market for individuals to follow a path of personal development that leads to lifestyle self-transformation.

They are, therefore, active in making vegetarianism an everyday lifestyle activity. However, not all forms of organizational activity and not all forms of vegetarianism can be regarded as lifestyle politics. This chapter finds that vegetarian advocacy focusing exclusively on personal health risk management as the reason for a plant-based diet is not lifestyle politics. This is because it is solely self-regarding.

In order to answer the question about the extent to which individual vegetarians can be said to engage in lifestyle politics, we need to consider the motivations for why people choose a more plant-based diet. Our analysis shows that some vegetarians and most vegans can be seen as participating in lifestyle politics because they seem to have developed a consistency between values, attitudes, and consumer action. Admittedly, it is not always easy to determine the motivations of vegetarians, and scholars have yet to develop operational definitions and measures of lifestyle politics. Indeed, there is a need for a scientific discussion about how best to distinguish the different values and motivations that underlie vegetarianism. The research problem is complex. Whereas health-related values are often seen as personal and private, there is certainly a spillover effect from health-related concerns to other-regarding values and to the political repercussions of food choices. Religiously motivated vegetarianism can, for instance, also be an example of privately held and self-focused concerns that easily connect to public and political values about common stewardship of the earth. Still, overall, we believe that the distinction between self-oriented and other-regarding vegetarianism is a good starting point for developing scholarship that attempts to distinguish various forms of lifestyle actions and also demonstrates the importance for politics of such societal roles as consumers, parents, cooks, and others. In order to better understand the phenomenon of lifestyle politics, there is clearly a need for more nuanced research and for empirical materials that combine areas previously studied separate from each other.

Yet although we are able to demonstrate that some vegetarians and most vegans are clearly guided by other-regarding values, it still remains unclear how vegetarianism relates to political orientations, interest in politics, and knowledge of political issues. We also need to investigate if it, as well as other forms of creative participation, promotes democratic values, attitudes, and norms. A central question for political science is whether individuals—vegetarians, consumers, parents, other societal roles, and the “sans frontiers” groups of doctors, teachers, lawyers, and so on—assume responsibility on a voluntary basis because they believe that problems are neglected by government. At least some of the civic organizations investigated previously (see Table 8.1) give governmental inaction and neglect as a reason for individuals to take action by both lowering their consumption of meat and purchasing products labeled as animal-friendly. Our analysis also shows that advocacy for health-oriented vegetarianism should in the future be studied as a form

of self-regarding active subpolitics (cf. Holzer and Sørensen 2001). This would entail a study of whether “responsibilization” processes that involve informed actions on the part of individuals to manage their personal health risk situations are, as hypothesized in the literature, triggered by distrust in governmental and agro-business policies and practices regarding farm animal treatment and environmentally friendly food. These suggested analyses would complete the picture of vegetarianism (and other forms of individualized actions) as a potential form of creative participation as suggested by Jan van Deth in his chapter and would more directly speak to the theories of subpolitics and the collapse of governmental responsibility for the well-being of citizens. Future surveys, focus group interviews, and case studies should, therefore, more explicitly include all aspects of the phenomenon studied here: political orientations, actions, food choices, and their motivations.

Notes

1. PETA increasingly involves women as objects in its campaigns. It shows their nude bodies and focuses on the relationship between eating vegetables, beauty, and sexy lifestyles, and, thus, attempts to make vegetarianism more appealing to a broader group of the population, including men, who have been underrepresented as vegetarians. The PETA Web site features videos and clips that use the female body, has for over five years run the “World’s Sexiest Vegetarian” contest and now includes a less-celebrity oriented contest for the “sexiest vegetarian next door.” Several actresses take off their clothes for the PETA campaign “I’d rather be naked than put fur on my skin,” and one of its celebrity endorsers, Pamela Anderson, is depicted in a PETA poster, reminiscent of early *Playboy* photographs, under the caption “Pamela Anderson for PETA—Give Fur the Cold Shoulder” (see PETA Web site). It was stated in a popular article that this tactic has proven effective in boosting the hits on the organizations’ Web sites (George 2008). PETA has also started to focus on the images of healthy athletes. The common belief is that such campaigns help reframe or rebrand vegetarianism to change its image from a “hippie-fringe movement” to an activity that is “cool,” fashionable, and suitable for men. Feminist groups criticize how women are exploited as a trade-off to promote better treatment of farm animals.

2. Both sets of organizations strive to minimize the moral distance between humans and animals. They stress that animals are individuals and have different personality characteristics. For instance, the Humane Society of the United State’s information “About Farm Animals” includes personality information on common farm animals. It states that chickens are “[n]urturing, highly social, brave, and smart,” that it has “long been underestimated ... how complex, intelligent, and interesting they are.” (www.hsus.org/farm/resources/animals/).