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Chapter 10

Dogs, whales and kangaroos; Transnational activism and food taboos

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In May 2002, a couple of weeks before the World Cup Football Championships in South Korea, a demonstration was scheduled in front of the South Korean Consulate in Sydney to protest against what was referred to as the ‘illegal dog-meat and cat juice trade that flourishes today in South Korea’. Similar demonstrations were launched by animal activist organisations in South Africa, Britain and the United States in attempts to use this global sports event to increase pressure on South Korea to put an end to what was seen by some as a ‘barbaric culinary practice’.

Shortly afterwards, as news media reported Norway’s plans to resume the export of minke whale meat to Japan, Greenpeace launched a campaign to convince major international airlines to refuse to carry Norwegian whale exports, with an aim of securing a blockade of international trade. The power of such campaigns should not be underestimated. In Britain, an increased demand for Australian kangaroo as a safe alternative to beef after the outbreak of BSE was effectively curbed in 1998 as Viva! (Vegetarians International Voice for Animals) stepped up their campaigns against what they saw as a massive wildlife massacre. After extensive negative publicity, major British supermarket chains stopped supplying kangaroo meat, while the Australians increased their markets elsewhere.

These campaigns represent three different examples of transnational political activism that seeks to prevent certain animals from entering the commodity chain, i.e. from being killed and consumed as meat. In other words, commonplace transformations from animal to edible were

challenged on a transnational level. Classifications of food and edibility are intimately connected to cultural distinctions between society and nature, or between humans and animals, and linked to questions about what it means to be a morally responsible human being. In this chapter, I argue that these three campaigns all endorse a Euro-American view of human-animal relations on a global scale. I argue that such transnational activism implicitly promotes a universal morality which leaves little room for cultural variation.

My argument also concerns the emergence of what we may refer to as global food taboos, and their political enforcement at a transnational level. Why is it that certain ideas about what to eat and what to avoid travel so easily across the world? Why is it that some people's cultural notions that certain animals should be singled out and treated as inedible gain such a momentum and suddenly become important to others?

The international campaigns against the consumption of dogs, whales and kangaroos are three ethnographic cases that could have been analysed in their own right. In this chapter, I will primarily draw attention to certain common dimensions: the globalisation of particular classifications of nature and the human-animal relation, and the moral implications of this process for the distinction between animals that are edible and animals that are not. In this way I hope to enhance our understanding of what makes such campaigns so powerful.

In this analysis I use internet material and the media as my primary sources of data, while I rely on published ethnographic studies for contextual detail. I am particularly indebted to Walraven (2002) for his analysis of the Korean consumption of dogs, to Kalland (2001, 2002) and Einarsson (1993) for their analyses of anti whaling campaigns, and to Morton (1990) for an analysis of the role of the kangaroo in Australian popular culture.

Food taboos

Food taboos have been a central topic in the anthropology of food, and a source of theoretical controversy (Leach 1964, Douglas 1975, Harris 1974). The term *food taboo* has been used by anthropologists and nutritionists alike to classify the wide range of instances in which substances that could potentially be consumed (and are of potential nutritional value) are avoided or classified as inedible. Typically, practices described as food taboos are those in which the avoidance of certain substances is deliberate and involves some degree of reflection by those involved. Sometimes, such reflections are triggered simply by the presence of an outsider, or by the awareness that things could have been otherwise. It is therefore useful to make a distinction between the terms *food avoidance* and *food taboo*: while *avoidance* denotes all acts of not eating something that could have been digested, the term *taboo* denotes those cases in which there is a conscious or premeditated act of avoidance ¹.

Because food is such a powerful medium for expressing group identity and social differentiation, the explicit avoidance of particular foods is an effective means to establish boundaries between self and others. Furthermore, food avoidance is sometimes associated with social rejection, and the act of refusing to eat something that others enjoy has the potential of disrupting social relations, even when that is *not* the intention.

Food avoidance is symbolically meaningful only in so far as it becomes the object of reflection. The fact that guinea pigs rarely appear on European dinner tables does not reflect any strong sense of social community, rather it is a culinary option that is simply not considered. Thus avoidance of certain foods may be practiced without ever becoming a food taboo. However, as Europeans are confronted with the Ecuadorian specialty '*el cuy*' (guinea pig) the edibility of guinea pigs may be considered, and if one chooses not to take part, what was previously a food avoidance becomes a food taboo.

Most people are surrounded by a wide range of technically edible substances that are never transformed into food, most of which never even enter the realm of substances classified as

food. We are all selective eaters, but we are selective in culturally different ways. With intensified experiences of travel, migration and cross-cultural integration, one might expect that substances that are not classified as food may either become edible or become the object of deliberate reflection and thus enter the realm of food taboos. Such transformations are the topic of this chapter.

In the three campaigns that are analysed below, the term *food taboo* is generally not used by the campaigners themselves. Rather, the campaigns focus on animal suffering² and animal rights, marine resources (whales), and environmental sustainability (kangaroos and whales). Yet, in spite of these overt concerns, the conflicts are for a large part played out in relation to the transformation of animal flesh to meat, a transformation which invariably implies a process of commoditisation (Kopytoff 1986). As they seek to disrupt the production-consumption chain by challenging the use of animal-flesh as meat, the construction or dissemination of a de facto food taboo becomes either a focus of the campaign, or – if the campaign is successful – one of its results. By analysing these cases as transformations from local cases of food avoidance to transnational food taboos, I wish to illuminate aspects of hegemony and power that are rarely addressed in research on transnational activism.

The world as a political arena; Nature as a political object

The main players in the campaigns against the commoditisation and consumption of dogs, whales and kangaroos belong to the broad category of largely transnational activist networks operating relatively independently of the nation state (Appadurai 2001). Often referred to as ‘globalisation-from-below’, such networks are characterised by organisational structures that transcend the immediate locations of their members (Edelman 2001). According to UN estimates, the number of such associations was around 50.000 in the mid-1990’s (Beck 1996).

Many networks make extensive use of the internet. However, the internet is more than a technological tool: it provides a space for political mobilisation which is simultaneously a prerequisite for the activist network itself. Through the use of e-mail petitions and the production and maintenance of websites that are both informative and emotionally evocative, activists are able to draw upon and mobilise what we may describe as a transnational 'civil society'. Following Miller and Slater (2000) I suggest that we approach these networks as embedded in other social spaces, and thus inseparable from localised activities. Such activities may involve multi-sited demonstrations, TV-performances, consumer boycotts or lobbying. I suggest that it is precisely the capacity of web-based technology to constitute a reality that is continuous with, yet slightly different from localised experiences, that accounts for the political significance of transnational activist networks.

Transnational activism is particularly important in environmental politics as a response to a growing understanding that environmental problems tend to operate on a global scale and require global solutions. As Kay Milton has argued, the identification of the human environment with the entire globe is closely linked to the idea of humanity as a single moral community (Milton 1996:176). This implies that the experience of 'nature' under threat is, in most cases, a mediated experience, facilitated by images, statistics and text, and – not least – by the visual icon of the planet earth, itself a symbol of global unity and shared vulnerability (Franklin et. al. 2000). Through the use of global media (including the internet) we are invited to identify with environmental problems and animal suffering manifested *elsewhere*, usually far beyond the immediate surroundings of the people who actively campaign. The idea that humans are collectively responsible for what is increasingly perceived as a single eco-system is crucial, as it provides the justification for sanctioning environmental practices of other people living in other places. As Macnaghten and Urry (1998) note, such transnational activist networks may therefore represent a '*new space for collective agency*' and may

eventually imply a '*transformed governance of global nature*' (1998:274-275, see also Sassen 2000).

Tactics used in the campaigns described below include both the participation in formal international fora (e.g. at public hearings and international meetings) and more informal strategies, such as demonstrations, boycotts, petitions, the enrolment of celebrities' testimonies and other strategies that may mobilise individuals or put corporations and political institutions under pressure. Most activists refrain from the use of violence, but some apply physical force as part of their media tactics (cf. Sea Shepherd's direct interference in whaling activities).

Global sports events represent prime arenas for transnational activist networks seeking global attention and support. South Korea's hosting of the Summer Olympics in 1988, and of the World Cup Football Championships in 2002 were highlights in this regard. As we shall see, such events represent golden opportunities for activists to exploit the desire of sponsors, transnational sports organisations and national leaders to 'look good' and to appear to act responsibly vis-à-vis a global audience. In this context, the process of shaming is particularly important. This is salient in the campaign against dog-meat in South Korea, and demonstrates how the evocation of emotions such as disgust or revulsion may serve as powerful tools in negotiating shame in international relations.

Rhetoric of shame; Dog meat in South Korea

In the South Korean case⁴, campaigns against the consumption of dogs are for a large part structured as an attack by 'the Civilised World' on a 'barbarian culture'. This is particularly evident in the web-material by international activists, which typically includes statements such as '*Koreans are barbarians who eat dog meat*' (www.peta-online.org cited by Anti Dogmeat Movement Headquarters, www.admh.org), '*Korea – the sadistic country*'

(www.animals-hope.org), 'Korea is to cats & dogs what Hitler was to Jews' (www.animals-hope.org), and *The Civilized World is disgusted at the thought of people eating 'Man's Best Friend'* (www.dogbiz.com). To a considerable extent, the attacks on Korean consumption of dog-meat may be read (and are read) as attacks on Korean national culture, in spite of the fact that the consumption of dogs is not a very common activity in South Korea. According to a recent South Korean national survey, a majority of the respondents had never eaten dog-meat, or had tasted it only once or twice (Walraven 2002). When dog-meat is consumed, it is in part for medicinal purposes, prepared as a soup or invigorating tonic, and ceremonially associated with particular seasons (Walraven 2002:102). However, within the discourse of the anti-dog-meat movement, the horror is hardly alleviated by reference to frequencies. Rather, the consumption of dogs evokes a very strong adversary reaction. Rhetorically, all South Koreans are made collectively responsible for the occasional practices of some.

The South Korean response to the anti dog-meat campaigns took the shape of two opposing positions. On the one hand, there are the Korean animal activists, such as the KAPS (Korea Animal Protection Society) who are currently working to implement a new law to protect companion animals (dogs and cats) from being butchered⁵. This organisation generally supports the view promoted by transnational animal activists. Like them they describe the eating of dogs as '*atrocious acts*' – comparable to slavery and cannibalism - and argue that there is '*no place [for it] in modern society*' (www.dogbiz.com/korean-dog-news.html). On the other hand there are those who feel that such critical remarks by foreigners result from their lack of understanding of Korean history and Korea's '*unique culinary custom*', and interpret the criticism as an insult to all Koreans. In this category, we find both South Korean politicians⁶ and groups organizing on-line petitions through the web (e.g. www.noorung.org⁷) arguing that the '*national and cultural integrity has been violated by [campaigners'] remarks*'. Their key arguments is first that dog-meat does not necessarily involve animal

abuse (ethical slaughtering methods exist), and secondly that the killing of dogs is not essentially less morally justifiable than e.g. the killing of cows in France. The web-site makes a plea for a rational discussion, and even more for the acceptance of cultural diversity. In other words, attacks are countered by reference to a universal ethics of cultural tolerance.

Between these two positions, there is an interesting middle-ground which tries to uphold South Korea's honour as a modern nation by establishing a distinction between the shameful practices of the past, and a globalised modern South Korea. A typical example is the letter issued by the South Korean Embassy in the U.S. and signed by Onhan Shin, the Counsellor of Health and Welfare, as a response to the criticism that the embassy receives. In the letter, emphasis is placed upon the marginal role of dog-meat in Korean daily life. According to the letter it is consumed very rarely, by very few people, and has been '*a marginal culinary tradition for generations*'. The letter points out how South Korean society is changing fast as people experience tastes and influences from around the world, and argues that the '*Korean interest in the consumption of dog-meat, already marginal and exotic, will diminish further*' (www.koreananimals.org/embassy.htm). Implicitly, the understanding of dog-meat as an old custom that has no place in the modern nations of the world is thus accepted. Rather than defending Korean cultural practice, the letter is a plea to be patient with South Korea, a country still in the process of becoming a morally accountable modern state. In other words, the process of shaming Korea has been successful, and the unsuitability of dog as meat is accepted.

Dog-meat is tabooed precisely because dogs have been domesticated in Europe and North America as a companion animal, pet or friend. Whale and kangaroo, on the other hand, are part of a charismatic mega fauna, previously hunted, but recently singled out as representations of a wilderness worthy of our protection. While dog-meat represents the violation of a deeply rooted and *already existing* food taboo among Euro-Americans, whale-

meat and kangaroo-meat are rather *food taboos in the making*⁸. This could account for the emotional strength of the attacks against the Koreans, and for the partial submission of the official South Korean institutions to criticism from the West.

Located at opposite ends of the continuum between the domesticated and the wild, campaigns against dog meat on the one hand and whale- and kangaroo meat on the other might appear as entirely different phenomena. In the following, I shall argue that it is not that simple. In fact, a closer look at the campaigns against kangaroos and whales show that all campaigns enforce a sense of moral responsibility by playing upon, as well as enforcing an image of dogs, whales and kangaroos as having human-like characteristics. Most importantly, all three campaigns appeal to our responsibility as ‘global citizens’ to act in accordance with certain allegedly universal distinctions between right and wrong. Let us first turn to the case of whales.

Our brethren of the sea; Anti-whaling campaigns

When the International Whaling Commission (IWC) voted to stop commercial whaling in 1982, it was claimed that a temporary moratorium was needed until they had more information about the conditions of whale stocks, and until a new management scheme had been adopted (Kalland 2002:207). Since then, there has been a general agreement that the stocks of minke whale are large enough to be sustainably harvested in the North Atlantic and in the Antarctic. In the meantime, a so-called revised management procedure has been developed, and has been recommended by IWC’s scientific committee. In spite of this, the moratorium has not been lifted by the IWC, and the IWC does not follow the advice of its own scientific committee to implement the revised management procedure. This is part of the reason why Norwegian whalers resumed commercial whaling in 1993. In 2001, Norwegian

whalers caught about 550 minke whales, and in 2002 attempts were made to resume export of whale meat to Iceland and to Japan.

For the transnational anti-whaling activists, - of which Greenpeace is probably the most prominent - the aim is however not *only* to protect the whales from extinction, but also to stop whaling altogether, through the establishment of what Greenpeace calls a 'global whale sanctuary' (www.whales.greenpeace.org). This is the result of what Kalland (2001) has described as a significant shift in the anti-whaling discourse from a concern with ecology and sustainability to a concern with morality and animal rights.

In the early 1970's, when whales became a key issue in the environmental movement, the problem was defined in terms of environmental sustainability, and the initial solutions were sought within the realm of what was seen as scientifically informed knowledge. In the late 1980's, as more scientific evidence became available, a limited and carefully controlled whaling of certain species (e.g. the minke whale) became- at least in theory - a sustainable option. However, at the same time the focus of the debate changed, as scientifically based arguments gradually gave way to arguments based on moral or ethical concerns (Kalland 2001, 2002). Thus as Kalland points out, it was not difficult for the president of the Cetacean Society International to admit (around 1990) that science provided meagre support for the argument of extinction. '*Our arguments*' he claimed '*now focus on ethical, aesthetic, and moral reasons for the protection of the individual whale, not the population or the species*' (Shields 1992). A similar shift was evident about the same time in other organisations (e.g. the WWF and the US Marine Mammal Commission, cf. Kalland 2001), and even within the IWC (Einarsson 1993, Kalland 2001). In other words, there was a shift from what appeared as a scientifically informed effort to protect selected species, to an ethically informed effort to protect individual whales. Current web-sites of major anti-whaling campaigns provide numerous examples of the latter, and offer regular updates of the lives of individual whales,

such as *Springer*, an ‘orphaned orca transported from the waters of Washington State to be reunited with her family off Vancouver island’ and her adoption by a whale known as Spike, who is the daughter of Sharky, who died in 1997 (www.wdcs.org).

So what is going on? Firstly, as many authors have pointed out, this is an example of the strategic use of anthropomorphism⁹. Kalland describes how the anti-whaling rhetoric has created an image of a ‘super-whale’ by lumping together traits found in a number of different species, masking the great variety that exists among the 75 species of cetaceans (Kalland 2002:209). In this way, all traits that we would like to see in our fellow humans (playfulness, caring, kindness, having a family) and other traits that may call for special treatment (being the largest animal on earth, having the largest brain, being endangered) are combined to create an image of whales in general as morally and intellectually superior beings.

Secondly, the whale itself has become a symbol of the environmentalist movement (Kalland 2001, Einarsson 1993). As a prominent figure in the anti-whaling movement pointed out: ‘*If we can’t save the whale we can’t save anything*’ (quoted in Einarsson 1993:80). At the same time, the whale *as a symbol* has become a commodity within the environmental movement, and a basis for fund-raising activities. ‘Adopt-a-whale’ and other programs offer sponsorships to businesses that want to display a ‘green image’ (Kalland 2002). For transnational corporations, such sponsorships are ways of demonstrating environmental concerns at a low cost, as the burden of a total stop of whaling practices will only be felt by very few and politically marginal groups of people.

To summarize, the campaigns against the commoditisation of whales are *not* only about saving threatened whales from extinction. If that was the case, the revised management procedure would probably have been adopted several years ago. Instead, the recent and ongoing debate indicates that the rhetoric used in anti-whaling campaigns is just as much an effort to present an alternative perspective on the position of whales in nature, an effort to

singularize the whales as different from other species, and to reconfigure the relationship between humans and whales. In other words, anti-whaling campaigns – like anti-dog-meat campaigns - are critically engaged reflections on the human-animal relation. As such they are culturally based reflections upon Nature.

Hunting the ‘friend ever true’; the case of Australian kangaroos

Kangaroos¹⁰ have been a source of food in Australia for thousands of years, and the European invasion did not significantly change that. In spite of the fact that they became the totemic emblem of the Australian nation, kangaroos were still prey to hunters and kangaroo meat is still part of the Australian menu.

For Europeans whose knowledge of kangaroos was influenced by the children’s’ TV-series about ‘Skippy’ - the animal companion of a freckled Australian boy – the presence of kangaroo on Australian dinner tables may seem a bit odd. In the TV-series, ‘Skippy’, the ‘bush kangaroo’, is not only a great playmate for a kid on a remote Australian outpost, he is also intelligent and caring, undoubtedly ‘a friend ever true’. This image as a child’s companion is also a recurrent theme in several Australian children’s stories, including the famous *Dot and the Kangaroo* by Ethel Pedley published in 1899 (Morton 1990). The physical appearance of kangaroos serves to strengthen their resemblance with humans: Kangaroos place their weight on their two hind legs, which gives them an upright position. The pouch of a female kangaroo, which is vital for its offspring’s survival, strengthens the image of the adult kangaroos as a protective and caring species, and evokes a certain resemblance with human nursing practices.

In the Australian bush land, kangaroos are neither pets nor friends, but part of the Australian native wildlife often referred to as ‘charismatic mega fauna’. As native wildlife they have been hunted, shot and eaten by the Europeans since the days of Captain Cook¹¹. But

during the same period, they have also been counted, managed and legally protected. In fact, fears that kangaroos may become extinct were expressed as early as in 1822 (Low 2001), and comprehensive management programs are now established in order to '*ensure conservation ... by promoting harvesting which is ecologically sustainable*' (www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity). Such management plans represent efforts to deal with what is increasingly seen as a problem in the Australian bush: namely the high density of kangaroos in certain areas. Having proliferated as a result of the transformation of bush to pasture, kangaroos now represent a major threat to grazing and farming properties. In and around national parks, their easy access to water and protection from human and non-human predators has allowed kangaroos to increase their numbers. As a result, kangaroos are now seen to represent a major threat to several native plants, and thus a threat to biodiversity (Low 2001). This is the background for the Australian management plan which sets an annual harvest quota of 4-6 million kangaroo per year. This, in turn, provides the legal framework for an export-oriented kangaroo industry promoting both meat and leather to countries overseas.

The BSE-crisis in Great Britain in 1996, followed by the European ban on British beef, may have appeared as a golden opportunity for Australian exporters struggling to promote kangaroo on the European market. British consumption of beef fell dramatically and for a while, game that had been raised in remote surroundings was in high demand (Lien 1997). However, the success of kangaroo-meat in Britain turned out to be brief, as Viva! soon launched a massive campaign to stop the sales of kangaroo meat from supermarkets in the UK. The campaign involved demonstrations and extensive use of the internet, and was very successful: By 1999 all major supermarkets had withdrawn kangaroo from their shelves, and Australian export of kangaroo meat to the UK fell from a million dollar industry to nearly nothing¹². Since then, the Viva! campaigns have shifted the attention from the use of meat to the use of kangaroo skin by suppliers of footballs and football boots. Adidas has now become

a main target, along with their sponsored world champion player, David Beckham, while major world football championships have become triggers for transnational political events.

Viva's campaign focuses primarily on the cruelty involved in the hunting of kangaroos. Calling attention to the *'largest massacre of wild land animals the world has ever known'* the Viva! home page turns directly to a vivid description of the death of a kangaroo and her joey. The introduction reads:

'Imagine this. A mother kangaroo with her beautiful joey at night in the vast outback. It's a scene millions of years old. What's new is the roar of a four-wheel drive. She turns towards the noise and is transfixed by a searchlight. A rifle cracks and a bullet tears a hole in her neck. She falls, in pain and unable to save her joey, who retreats into her pouch for safety. The first thing the hunter does is to search the pouch and, feeling a joey inside, pulls him out. The hunter tosses him to the ground and stamps on his head. The joey writhes in agony. The mother struggles as her leg is slit open and a hook inserted through it. She is hauled up on to the truck and slowly dies. The scene is repeated all night long. Older joeys frantically hop away when their mother's are shot - to die a slow and lonely death from cold or starvation. This is the reality of kangaroo killing. But the killing continues.' www.savethekangaroo.com

Viva! also questions the validity of the scientific evidence underpinning the Australian management plans, but this is not their main focus. Rather than discussing sustainable management of Australian wildlife, the campaigns use the case of the kangaroos to expose one of the most fundamental ethical dilemmas involved in the consumption of meat; i.e. the need to kill in order to consume. In this way, the campaign against the consumption of kangaroos is simultaneously an invitation to consider the suffering of animals. The killing of mother and joey represents, as it were, the killing of all animals, and serves to mobilise a

sentiment against the consumption of meat, which is the main foundation of the organisation Viva!.

The most important strategy applied by Viva! appears to have been the mobilisation of British consumers against supermarket chains in the UK. Following a series of demonstrations outside supermarkets, Tesco, Sainsbury and Safeway gave in to Viva!'s requirements. The effectiveness of this strategy must be seen in light of the fact that kangaroo was a peripheral product in the British meat counters in the first place. Thus, removing kangaroo from the shelves could be done without a significant loss to the supermarket chain.

Unlike the campaign against dog-meat in South Korea, the Viva! campaign did not primarily blame Australians. To the extent that Australian parties were blamed, the criticism was directed at the industry, and at the Australian government, while the Australian public was mostly called upon simply for support. Furthermore, unlike the Korean case, it was the potential expansion of markets overseas that was the primary concern, while domestic consumption received less attention.

The Viva! campaign hits Australia on a sore spot. Hunting a national emblem is clearly problematic, and the legal commercial culling of kangaroos is fraught with ambivalence (Morton 1990). In Australia, the conservationist movement is divided. While many environmental organisations support a regulated commercial harvesting of kangaroos¹⁴, the animal rights organisation Animal Liberation oppose the culling on ethical grounds, and the Australian Wildlife Protection Council questions the sustainability of culling from a scientific perspective. However, the Australian web-sites are generally less evocative than Viva!. Rather than focusing primarily on the kangaroo hunt as a cruel act, they point for example to the disadvantages of kangaroo meat from a cost-benefit perspective, the uncertainty of scientific guidelines and the effects of selective killing of large animals on the kangaroo population (cf. <http://www.animalliberation.org.au/commuseum.html>,

<http://www.awpc.org.au>). Thus, while the Viva! position reflects an unconditional ethical principle against the killing of kangaroo, the Australian debate is more nuanced. In this way, the harvesting of kangaroo in Australia differs from whaling by Norwegians and Japanese, which seem to a greater extent to escape the public attention in the respective home countries, and seldom trigger massive protests at a local or national level. Nevertheless, the campaign against the commoditization of kangaroos is yet another case in which a local classification of an animal as food is challenged and politicised on a transnational level. Thus, the case is also a battle over the proper ways of perceiving and engaging with nature.

Transnational politics and global food taboos

The campaigns against the consumption of dogs, whales and kangaroos are all part of the broad category of transnational activist networks often referred to as ‘grassroots globalisation’ or ‘globalisation-from-below’¹⁵ (Falk 1993, Appadurai 2001). In contemporary literature on globalisation, such transnational networks are seen as a significant form of civil resistance against more institutionalised forms of global power such as world capitalism. Appadurai maintains, for instance, that successful transnational activist networks are seen by many as having the potential to offset the effects of runaway capital (Appadurai 2001:17). This view concurs with the general image of transnational activist networks as democratic, non-hierarchical and anti-elite. Thus, transnational activist networks may be seen as filling a gap with regard to global corporate accountability, as they serve to impede forces of economic globalisation that are beyond the reach, politically, of any single nation state. However, a closer analysis of the three cases (campaigns against use of meat from dogs, whales and kangaroos) reveals that what appears as a ‘bottom-up’ battle of transnational civil society against transnational economic forces, is, in fact, much more complicated. In order to evaluate the counter political power of such campaigns we need to unpack targets, tactics and

alliances, and we need to make a distinction between campaign tactics and long-term objectives.

All three cases involve protests against the practice of killing and consuming certain animals. Yet their respective long term objectives differed: While the anti- dog meat campaigns focused simply on preventing the killing of consumption of dogs, the anti-whaling campaign served in addition as a flagship of the environmental movement. The campaign against the killing of kangaroos, in turn, had vegetarianism as an overarching objective. In spite of these differences, the focus on the need to protect certain animals from entering the commodity chain remains a shared explicit aim. In order to achieve this, arguments were underpinned by rhetorical strategies which tended to expose instances of cruelty and animal suffering, while at the same time highlighting resemblances between the animals involved and human beings. In this way, species that are generally associated with the wild (whales, kangaroos), were symbolically transformed into pets, companions or close kin - what Leach (1964) would refer to as the creatures of the house. Bypassing the realm of domestication which most clearly implies edibility, whales and kangaroos are thus reclassified from being wild game or prey to human-like creatures in need of protection.

Such processes of reclassification are aptly captured by the term ‘ontological politics’ (Mol 1999). If ‘ontology’ defines what belongs to the real, or the conditions of possibility we live with, then ‘ontological politics’ suggests that the conditions of possibility are not given, or, as Mol writes: *‘That reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped within these practices’* (Mol 1999:74-75). Defining an animal as unfit for human consumption is a particularly powerful way of redefining reality, precisely as it contests the classification of food: Intimately linked to the body and the self, food is an effective medium for expressing identity and social differentiation, and for mobilising strong emotions (Lupton 1996). In a sense then, the symbolic transformations of kangaroo and

whales from (edible) game to (inedible) companions may be seen as a way of fueling environmentalist arguments with evocative concerns that are more intimately linked with notions of morality than the far more sober scientifically based argument about sustainability. The transnational enforcement of food taboos may thus be analysed as a strategy which has the effect of mobilising even stronger support for key environmental issues.

How are these transformations achieved? In order to mobilise public support on a transnational level, issues must be presented in a way that emphasises a clear enemy and a sense of urgency (Kalland 2002). This is not always easy. Dogs have been consumed in Korea for generations, and hardly represent an ecologically threatened species. Certain species of whales, by contrast, *are* threatened and this provides the sense of urgency. But who is the enemy? In the case of kangaroos, the question of sustainable management is contested, and may thus substantiate claims for urgency. However, as the issue is highly controversial, the question is who is to blame?

Those who actually perform transformations of dogs, whales and kangaroos into meat are neither transnational nor particularly powerful. In the case of Viva!'s crusade against the commoditization of kangaroo, one of the enemies is 'Lenah Game Meats', a relatively small Tasmanian meat producer that tries to make a living through the export of wallabies within a state with high unemployment. Similarly, when Greenpeace's anti-whaling campaigns try to obstruct Norwegian whaling, the implications are most strongly felt among a small network of fishermen in a remote part of Northern Norway. South Korean suppliers of dog-meat are hardly more powerful, struggling to make profit on what is a by now a fairly peripheral commodity. Yet, with the exception of Sea Shepherd's confrontations with whalers at sea, the campaigns rarely mobilise directly against these parties. Instead, they enroll, as we have seen, far more powerful transnational and national corporations and organisations as 'co-conspirators' on the enemy's side. By shaming, blaming or boycotting FIFA, Lufthansa or

Tesco, campaigns seek to hold these corporations indirectly responsible for activities that are, in fact, only marginally connected to their business activities. Yet, precisely because these activities *are* marginal, a corporate decision to comply with the campaigners' demands can be made at a low cost, or even represent an opportunity for boosting the company's image. Thus by enrolling transnational companies in the battle, the activists not only enroll actors that evoke bottom-up, anti-elite feelings among the general public, they enroll actors that are acutely aware of the importance of a good public image, and also large enough to make decisions that could make a difference.

To the extent that consumer boycotts are involved, such transnational activism could be seen as the victory of the consumer as a political agent, and thus as a partial alleviation of what is often referred to as a 'democratic deficit' in world politics and global capitalism (cf. Miller 1995). However, as we have seen, the relation between victory and defeat (or between accuser and accused) is far more complex. What was essentially a conflict between certain activists and a range of small or medium-sized local meat-suppliers is transformed, through campaign tactics, into a conflict between consumers and transnational corporations. Sensitive to world opinion, such organisations cannot afford to ignore the implications of 'loosing face'. Thus, what appears as a victory of transnational activists against 'global capital' may, in fact, turn out to be the victory of a hegemonic Euro-American view of the human-animal relation at the expense of more marginal local views.

The emergence of transnational campaigns contesting the routes of certain animals through the commodity chain represents another turn in the globalisation of food politics, as they target actors at a cultural and geographic distance. Yet, there is hardly any space for foreign diplomacy. Instead, the conflict is played out in relation to a public of largely Euro-American consumers, often without the presence of the accused. Thus, the cultural context of the accused remains blurred, and the cultural significance involved in the acts exposed as bad

practice are rarely allowed to surface. Consequently, what may appear on the television screen as British consumers' victory over large national corporations like Tesco, of air-travelers' fight against European airlines, or of a global civil society fighting transnational companies like Adidas are, in fact, examples of deep cross-cultural conflicts masquerading as protests against 'world capitalism'.

Mononaturalism and multiculturalism

Recent theories of nature and society remind us that nature is socially and culturally constructed. There is no singular nature as such, only natures, - and such natures are historically, geographically and socially constituted (Macnaghten and Urry 1998:15). Through its historical emergence on the North-Atlantic rim two key characteristics of the idea of nature may be singled out: First, the concept of nature emerged in opposition to the concept of society. According to Macnaghten and Urry, the juxtaposition of society and nature was most fully developed in the 19th century, and formed the basis for the idea of wilderness in England, North America and Australia, where wilderness presupposes a minimum of human interference. It was also the basis for modern natural sciences: The study of nature became the study of a reality set apart, the laws of nature became the laws of physics and biology (Macnaghten and Urry 1998:10-11, see also Latour 1993, 2002).

The second characteristic of the cultural construction of Nature on the North Atlantic rim is that Nature, once it was set apart from society, was attributed with a range of fundamental values, and became the object of worship. Following the romantic movement and the industrial revolution, the term 'unnatural' became a way of describing all the ill-effects of urbanisation, markets and immoral behaviour. Nature became, and is still regarded as a guide and a source of beauty and truth, as exemplified through the anti-whaling campaigns. Lately,

this perception of Nature has been associated with vulnerability, and has given rise to sentiments of responsibility (Macnaghten and Urry 1998:12-15).

Our perception of Nature is continuously maintained, re-enacted and negotiated through our relationship with – and classification of - animals. Thus, the presence of food avoidance practices or of food taboos are based upon culturally defined classifications within the overarching order through which we perceive and interpret Nature and our place in relation to it. As I have tried to emphasize, these are not universal perceptions of nature, but specific cultural perceptions that have emerged at a specific time and place, i.e. on the North Atlantic rim during the last few centuries. Why then, is it that this view appears to gain such momentum just now, and from where does it derive its power to affect of shame nations and people who do not necessarily subscribe to such views in the first place?

One of the unique achievements of modernity, according to Latour (2002) is that it bestows us with the belief that *we* are people with privileged access to reality. While other people see natures through their various cultural representations, *we* are able to grasp Nature objectively. Boosted with scientific achievements, we believe our perceptions of Nature to be valid way beyond our immediately experienced surroundings. We not only believe to know how to sustainably manage whales in the Antarctic oceans or kangaroos in vast Australian bush lands, we even know when Koreans are trespassing a moral boundary, that they themselves don't even see.

According to Latour this notion of a privileged access to Nature, in the singular, is part of the reason why multiculturalism has gained some ground as an ideology in the West. He writes, slightly ironically:

Different cultures existed, with their many idiosyncrasies, but at least there was only one nature with its necessary laws...Differences of opinion, disagreements and violent conflicts remained, but they all had their source in the subjectivity of the human mind

without ever engaging the world, its material reality, its cosmology or its ontology, which by construction ... remained intangible (Latour 2002:6).

As the examples above show, this truce - this relatively peaceful tolerance of other peoples' natures - is now dramatically threatened (if it ever existed). And the contemporary quests are no longer some sort of objective scientific truth against some prescientific symbolic belief. Rather the conflicts are between cultural representations of nature, including on the one hand those who present themselves *as if* having some privileged access to universal truths about Nature in the singular, and on the other hand those whose practices and rhetoric in relation to nature are forever locked in the 'cultural'. The former includes transnational activist networks, but also social science research to the extent that it ignores the cultural foundation of transnational environmental discourse. The latter includes, among many others, Norwegian whalers, Australian farmers and hunters, and Koreans who like to eat dog-meat. As the environment is increasingly interpreted as a single ecosystem, conflicts involving the power to define Nature are bound to intensify. Through such controversies, food and edibility enter the sphere of politics.

I suggest that it is precisely the symbolic significance attributed to Nature that makes it compelling for transnational activists to engage morally in issues involving planet earth, even if it implies direct interference in the daily practices and livelihood of people living very far away. As long as mononaturalism prevails, an ideology of multiculturalism and cultural tolerance can only be sustained up to a point. When people who live their lives elsewhere interfere with animals and ecosystems that are increasingly interpreted as part of 'our common future', cultural tolerance may yield as a result. The result could be a global order based on a new form of eco-imperialism.

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1. Food taboos may be permanent, or they may be temporary, applying only to certain stages of the life cycle. They can apply to all members of a community, or they can apply only to some. In some cases, the avoidance of certain foods is conditional: some vegetarians will argue that if animals were treated better they would resume eating meat. Others claim an absolute ethical principle with regard to the killing of animals, in which case the avoidance is unconditional (Frey 1983).
2. All campaigns criticise the use of slaughtering methods, many of which are seen as very painful, and many campaigns offer photos and videos to support their claims. I will not elaborate on this theme, as the campaigns are not primarily about improving the methods of hunting or slaughtering (in which case they would be a case of conditional avoidance), but rather aim to put an end to killing as such.
3. Anti-whaling campaigners include: *Greenpeace*, *the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)*, *the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS)*, *the Cetacean Society International (CSI)*, *Sea Shepherd*, *the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)*, and *Save the Planet*. Campaigns against Kangaroo-meat were launched by *VIVA! (Vegetarians International Voice for Animals)* and *the World League for the Protection of Animals* and are supported by *the Australian Wildlife Protection Council (AWPC)* and *Animal Liberation*. Anti dog-meat campaigners include *In Defence of Animals (IDA)*, *the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSP)*, *People for the*

Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), People Against Companion Animal Slaughter (PACAS), International Aid for Korean Animals (IAKA), Advocates for Animals and Animals Hope Organisation.

4. Information was gathered on the Internet in May and July 2002 by searching the terms 'dog', 'eat' and 'Korea'. In addition to web based information from the organisations mentioned, I rely on internet versions of newspaper articles, petitions and material accessible via the web-pages www.dogbiz.com, and *Anti Dogmeat Movement Headquarters*. Similar information gathering strategies were used for the cases of whales and kangaroos, although in these cases my presentation relies more on the use of published secondary sources.
5. Although the base of supporters of KAPS is relatively small, only 1800 in a country of more than 46 million people (source: www.koreananimals.org/history.htm), they have overseas support through the international sister organisation IAKA (International Aid for Korean Animals). The leader of IAKA, Kyenan Kum, is the sister of the founder and current director of KAPS, Sunnan Kum, who also runs a shelter for stray dogs and cats (www.dogbiz.com/korean-dog-news.html).
6. A prominent figure in this camp is congressman Kin Hong-Shin of the Grand National Party.
7. The term *noorung* is the common Korean term for dogs that are used for foods, as distinguished from dogs used as pets, who have singular names, (source: www.noorung.com).
8. Note, however that the avoidance of dogs and cats as food in Europe is a relatively recent historical phenomenon. I am grateful to Inger Johanne Lyngø for drawing my attention to recent archeological excavations in Bergen which indicate that dogs and cats were consumed in a Hanseatic town in the Middle Ages.

9. Such strategic use of anthropomorphism should not be interpreted too literally, as an indication of blurred boundaries between human and animals. Rather I see it as a rhetorical effort to evoke empathy and moral engagement through the use of human metaphors. In other words, the attribution of what is commonly thought of as human characteristics to mammals may simply reflect an effort to allow a certain degree of subjectivity to species that are not human. I am grateful to María Guzman for bringing my attention to this distinction (cf. Guzman 2003).
10. Kangaroos are also referred to as macropods, of which there are 48 different species, including wallabies, wallaroo and pademelon. In accordance with the terminology used in public debate, I will refer to the macropods in general as kangaroos.
11. According to public surveys in Australia referred to by the industry, more than 50% of all Australians have tried kangaroo meat, while about 75% agree that kangaroos are a valuable source of meat (www.kangaroo-industry.asn.au).
12. Sources: www.savethekangaroo.com/Report/, *The Guardian* March 6th 1999.
13. These include the Australian Wildlife Management Society, the Ecological Society of Australia, and the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia
14. The term was introduced by Falk to refer to a global civil society linking ‘transnational social forces animated by environmental concerns, human rights, hostility to patriarchy, and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking an end to poverty, oppression, humiliation, and collective violence’ (Falk 1993:39).