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Making Sense of Cattle: A Story From Farm to Food

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Master’s thesis in Global Environmental History
Abstract


This thesis explores how those involved in a mobile-slaughtering mode of beef production engage with, and experience cattle bodies throughout the beef producing process. These experiences are examined in relation to historical accounts of how people have experienced cattle bodies in both pre-industrialized and post industrialized modes of beef production. Furthermore, an ethnographic study of a Swedish mobile-slaughtering company was conducted, followed by analysis using hermeneutic phenomenology and the concepts of liminality and Ellis’ boundary labour (2014). This thesis has shown that cattle bodies are experienced differently depending on the context of interaction, and that these experiences are both similar and different from those in pre-industrial and industrial beef production. This research contributes to a larger body of research exploring human-animal interactions, and contributes to understanding the experiences of those who are engaged in beef production.

Keywords: Cattle, ethnography, mobile slaughter, hermeneutic phenomenology, liminality, boundary labour, beef, animal welfare.

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1. Introduction

The past century has seen extensive changes in the way beef is produced in Sweden, resulting in changes in the ways cattle bodies have been engaged with by those working in beef production. Advances in technology and centralization of production have resulted in meat production looking very different today than prior to the industrial revolution. Where before, beef production was localized with only one or a few people involved in the process (Myrdal and Morell, 2011), today we see large-scale and centralized production located far from urban centres and involving many different people. However, in recent years, mobile slaughtering has been introduced to Sweden, through the initiative of one Swedish mobile slaughtering company. Mobile slaughtering occurs on the farm, and involves fewer people than does industrialized slaughtering. In this thesis I explore how those engaged in mobile slaughtering experience and engage with cattle bodies throughout beef production within the context of mobile slaughter. Additionally, I relate these experiences to accounts of experiences from industrialized beef production, as well as to historical descriptions of pre-industrialized slaughter. I begin the thesis by looking at the historical contexts, which have caused changes within the Swedish slaughtering industry. In the second part of the thesis I look in detail at how those engaged in the Swedish mobile slaughtering industry experience cattle bodies throughout the production of beef.

Changes to Slaughter

As will be discussed further in Chapter 2 the production of beef prior to the industrial revolution was something mainly done in local communities, with only one or a few people involved in the process. In the 18th century, animals were raised on family farms and then slaughtered and consumed by the same family who cared for the animals during their lifetime (see Chapter 4). Thus, those responsible for raising cattle were also responsible for killing them, processing the bodies, and also consumed the resulting meat. In this context, the bodies of cattle were continuously engaged with by a small group of people throughout the process of beef production.

In contrast, the industrialized mode of beef production prevalent in Sweden today involves a division between the tasks involved in beef production. For example those who care for animals are not the same people that slaughter them or process their bodies. This division of labour within the industrialized context of beef production reflects boundaries between various contexts of experiencing animal bodies. Furthermore, the centralization of slaughterhouses in remote locations has functioned to further distance both farmers and consumers from experiencing animal bodies during the process of slaughter (Vialles, 1994). Vialles, in her 1994 ethnography of French slaughterhouses describes the modern slaughterhouse as “a place that is no-place”, allowing for consumers and farmers to become disassociated from the animal bodies as the animals are killed. The difference between farmers and consumers of meat however, with regards to the ambiguity caused by industrialized slaughterhouses, is that farmers are actively engaged in production prior to the slaughter of their animals. Ellis (2014) describes the involvement of farmers in beef production, saying: “While agriculture’s physical geography is important, it does not eliminate interaction with animals raised as commodities. Producers must still work with these animals.” Thus, despite the fact that farmers are not actively engaged in the actual act of slaughtering in the context of industrialised slaughtering, farmers are still a part of engaging with cattle as commodities and thus need to come to terms with their deaths. This engagement entails an
experience where cattle must be both cared for and yet also disassociated from (Ellis, 2014; Wilkie, 2010). Thus, farmers’ engagement with cattle often reflects a degree of disconnection.

If we look inside the industrialized slaughterhouse itself, the disconnection from cattle bodies becomes further apparent. Where before, the slaughtering was done by one person from start to finish, in the industrialized slaughterhouse, each worker maintains a specific role and engages in a small part of the entire process of slaughter (Purcell, 2011). Vialles, in her 1994 ethnographic work on French slaughterhouses found that the division of labour in industrialized slaughterhouses resulted in disjointed engagements with animal bodies, where those working in the slaughterhouse simply make one cut, or one tear, and do not experience the act of slaughter as a whole. This experience replaces the pre-industrial experience of engaging with one body through the whole process of slaughter. Similarly, Pachirat, in his 2011 study of American slaughterhouses, noted that the geography inside industrialized American slaughterhouses results in disjointed experiences of the animal body. Like Vialles, Pachirat noted that the division of labour resulted in a mosaic of engagements with animal bodies, rather than one coherent experience of an animal from start to finish. Further, Pachirat noted that the layout of the slaughterhouse limits the interaction with the body of the animal. In particular Pachirat noticed that the way the slaughterhouse are laid out makes it hard for workers inside to even view the bodies at all times, resulting in tunnel vision focussed only on the task at hand. Thus, those working in the industrial slaughterhouse experience many animal bodies only for a short time period. The geographies and divisions of labour present in the modern day slaughterhouse have thus been found to lead to disconnection from the act of killing animal bodies.

Beyond resulting in changes in how humans experience and engage with cattle bodies and the act of slaughter, the changes in beef production have also undoubtedly impacted the lives of living cattle. The industrial mode of meat production common today involves the movement of cattle bodies between many hands and to many different locations. In many instances, cattle are raised and cared for not by one farmer, but by many different people in different locations, depending on the expertise of the people caring for the cattle. Prior to their death, cattle usually travel many kilometres and spend many hours being transported to the slaughterhouse. In Sweden in particular, the transport trucks usually visit several farms in one trip resulting in cattle spending long hours on transport vehicles and being placed in close proximity with unfamiliar animals. In terms of animal welfare, this is not an ideal situation for the cattle (Carlsson et al., 2004). First, it is important to realize that cattle are prey species, and as such, become stressed by changes in their surroundings (Doyle and Moran, 2015, pg. 37). Changes to the external environment including sounds, smells, and new individuals may cause stress to cattle (Doyle and Moran, 2015 pg. 37). Thus, cattle require a stable and static environment in order to feel calm and safe. The first step in the industrialized slaughtering process is for cattle to be collected at the farms or feedlots where they have been raised. At this point the animals will be loaded into a new truck with new cattle that they don’t know. Because 90% of cattle in Sweden are slaughtered in only 16 abattoirs, cattle spend a long time in the trucks travelling to the slaughterhouses (Hultgren et al., 2014). Once cattle arrive at the slaughterhouse, they have to wait again until they are slaughtered. A study looking at a commercial abattoir in France found that the average time spent travelling to the slaughterhouse by cattle was approximately 30 hours, and the average time spent waiting for slaughter at the slaughterhouse was approximately 20 hours (Bourget et al., 2011). Throughout this time, cattle may experience fear and stress, which in turn can lead to weight loss and an increase in stress hormones, which ultimately reduces animal welfare, meat quality, and thus payment to the farmer (Atkinson, 2000; Schwartzkopf-Genswein et al., 2012).

Apart from disrupting cattle’s preferred habitat during transport, it has been found that industrialized slaughterhouses may lead to poor treatment of animals within the slaughterhouses themselves (Pachirat, 2011; Coleman et al., 2003). Firstly, the output pressures placed on the industrial slaughterhouses mean that workers do not have time to take much care when they are slaughtering animals. For example, the title of Pachirat’s 2011 work ‘Every Twelve Seconds’ refers to the frequency of cattle being processed, which doesn’t leave a lot of room for mistakes. This
time stress results in the actual slaughtering process sometimes being done incorrectly. For example, there have been reports of animals being improperly stunned resulting in them being skinned whilst still alive and conscious (Warrick, 2001). Furthermore, it has been found that the fast-paced and routinized act of killing found in the industrialized slaughterhouse may lead to a loss of empathy in slaughterhouse workers and consequently result in poor animal treatment (Barnard and Viktor, 2016).

The issues described above have contributed to meat production and consumption becoming hotly debated topics (Smil, 2013). With a simple Internet search of questions such as “whould we eat meat” or “how is meat produced”, one will be confronted with many different perspectives on the topic of contemporary meat production and consumption. The widespread concerns focus on issues of sustainability, animal welfare, consumer behaviour, and the wellbeing of those working in the meat production industry, just to name a few (Smil, 2013). In particular, the increasing concerns over animal welfare associated with the industrialized mode of beef production inspired one Swedish company to begin employing mobile slaughtering methods. Mobile slaughtering involves the use of a slaughtering truck that visits farms and slaughters animals on site. Within the mobile slaughterhouse, approximately six people work to slaughter the animal and process its body, significantly lower than some of the large industrialized slaughterhouses typical of Sweden today, with the largest company citing 850 employees (though some of these are not working to slaughter the animal) (KLS Ugglarps AB, n.d.). In industrialized modes of beef production, the caregivers of living cattle send the animals away somewhere else to die, and they are not confronted with the experience of slaughter or the death of the animal directly. However in mobile slaughtering, since the slaughtering is done on the farm, those who have worked with the living animals are also present for their death. Further, the number of individuals working in a mobile slaughterhouse is lower than in industrialized slaughter which means that those working in the mobile slaughterhouse spend longer time periods with animal bodies and engage in more complicated tasks than in industrialized slaughter.

Defining the question

In terms of distance and handling, mobile slaughtering seems to sit in between pre-industrial and industrial beef production in terms of how cattle and cattle bodies are engaged with by those involved in beef production. Like in pre-industrial slaughter, the cow is killed in proximity to those who have raised it, however the killing and processing of the animal body is still done by hired slaughturers and not the farmers themselves. Secondly, although the meat is produced in close proximity to where it lived, it is not necessarily consumed there. The meat produced by the mobile slaughtering process is sent to a distribution plant from which it is sent to grocery stores around Sweden, and thus it is still a commodity. Given the accounts of disjointed experiences of cattle found in the industrialized mode of beef production reviewed above, and given the practical differences that mobile slaughtering provides in contrast, I pose the question: How do those engaged in a mobile slaughtering mode of beef production engage with and experience cattle bodies throughout the process of producing beef? Further, how do these experiences relate to accounts of experiences of cattle bodies in industrialized and pre-industrialized beef production, as is depicted by other literature? I explore these questions by engaging in an ethnographic study of a Swedish mobile slaughterhouse, as well as by engaging in a historical discussion of the changes to the Swedish slaughtering industry. I argue that these are important research questions to ask today because of widespread and growing concern over the consumption and production of meat in industrialized nations (Smil, 2013).
The layout of the thesis

I begin this thesis by engaging in a historical discussion of how the Swedish slaughtering industry has changed from pre-industrial times with the introduction of industrialization. The last 30 years has seen changes to consumer behaviour and an increasing consumer awareness and concern for animal welfare. It is in this context that the demand for mobile slaughterhouses has emerged, and I review this in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 and 4 outline the theories, background literature, and methodological approaches to the ethnographic research, including how I utilize hermeneutic phenomenology, the concept of liminality, and the concept of boundary labour as frameworks for understanding ethnographic data.

In the following chapter 5-7 I have used liminality as a way to structure the empirical analyses on the experience of slaughter in a mobile slaughterhouse. The chapters are divided based on different contexts of experiencing cattle, namely experiencing cattle as living animals on the farm, experiencing cattle as they are slaughtered, and experiencing cattle as meat products. I end the thesis with a conclusion chapter to summarize final findings and suggest future research.
2. The History of Cattle Slaughter in Sweden

This historical overview will focus on understanding the changes that took place in Sweden from 18th century to present day in order to understand the implications that industrialization and changing lifestyles had on the slaughtering industry in Sweden, and in order to situate the mobile slaughterhouse in relation to other modes of slaughter.

Preindustrial slaughter

During the 18th century, Sweden was an agrarian country (Myrdal and Morell, 2011; Lagerqvist, 2001). Most Swedes lived rural lives, with only 10% of the population living in towns or city centres (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). Those people who lived rural lives were largely self-sufficient and engaged in a type of farming labelled as “European Mixed Farming” (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). In this mode of farming, a family as well as hired help would work together to produce nearly everything that they needed to survive. The farmers at this time relied on the use of animals to pull machinery, fertilize fields, and to provide transportation. The animals could also be used for meat, dairy, wool, and skins (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). Thus, animals played an important role on farms in the 18th century. The meat that was consumed by farmers came from animals that had a multitude of purposes on the farm. In the case of cattle specifically, they had much more of a purpose on the farm than simply to provide meat. Cattle specifically provided much needed muscle used to till fields as well as provided fertilizer for crops, as chemical fertilizers had not yet been invented. Thus, when cattle were slaughtered, while it provided meat, it also reflected a loss of workforce on the farm, so this was not something done very often. The diversified aspect of European Mixed Farming allowed for farmers to be largely self-sufficient, and thus did not need to produce extra meat in order to trade for other products. Even with an incentive to produce a surplus of a particular product, meat was not a good choice as refrigeration had not yet been invented, so meat could not be transported long ways before spoiling. When it came time to slaughter the animals, farmers would be in charge of slaughtering the animals in a private location in a manner they saw fit, for example in places such as backyards (Fitzgerald, 2010).

Thus, in the 18th century Sweden slaughter was a small-scale operation undertaken to provide meat primarily for personal consumption. The job of slaughtering was the responsibility of farmers who also had the responsibility of caring for living animals. The slaughtering process was undertaken in private locations without regulations. The ‘European Mixed Farming’ mode of production in combination with a lack of technology prevented excess slaughtering of animals, including cattle.

Sweden saw a lot of changes from the beginning of the 18th century to the mid 19th century. One of the biggest influences to change was a rising population. Between 1700 and 1870, the population of Sweden rose by 200%, from 1.4 million people to 4.2 million people (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). This increase in population was associated with “Peace, the [smallpox] vaccine, and potatoes” (Esia Tegnér, as quoted by Lagerqvist, 2001). In other words, people were no longer going off to war, they weren’t getting as sick, and they had a new staple, the potato, to ward off starvation and ultimately contribute to the growing population. In 1860 75% of the Swedish population was still dependent on agriculture for generating an income, and by the year 1870 Sweden had begun to export agricultural products to other countries (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). Thus, there was a shift from the mode of self-sustaining agriculture to agriculture that
generated an income for farmers. During the period of 1800 to 1860 agricultural production increased by 130%, however the population only increased by somewhere between 40-60%, representing an increase in productivity per capita in the agricultural sector (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). This increase in productivity can be attributed largely to the influx of new machinery and technology as Sweden began its process of industrialization. By the year 1880 the agrarian population (those living in rural areas and engaged in agricultural tasks) had peaked, and the percentage of the agrarian population in relation to the urban population began to decrease (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). The shifting agrarian to industrialized population meant that the modes and goals of slaughtering and keeping animals were changing. There were still small-scale farms focused on self-sustenance who would have slaughtered for personal consumption, however there were also those farmers who had the goals of generating income and feeding the growing urban populations.

**Industrial slaughter**

By the turn of the 20th century, Sweden was fully into the process of industrialization, and the population was in the process of moving to city centres. To put it into perspective, the population of Stockholm, for example, increased from 170,000 people in the year 1880 to 300,000 people in the year 1900 (Rämme, et al., 2012). The shift from a predominantly agrarian population to an urban population seen in the late 19th and early 20th century was largely triggered by increasing industrial job opportunities (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). The mechanization of agricultural labour provided by the technological innovations of the industrial revolution impacted greatly the modes of agricultural production seen in Sweden in the late 19th and early 20th century. Less people working on farms and more people living urban lifestyles meant that each farmer needed to produce more food with a smaller workforce (Myrdel and Morell, 2011). The mechanization of labour facilitated this transition, and food production intensified during this time. The changes to meat production additionally allowed for changes to the pattern of meat consumption. Namely, the increasing market for food and the decrease in the number of self-catering units caused an increase in meat consumption, and by 1930 meat was a common part of every meal (Jansson, 1992). Additionally, the consumption of meat within cities was associated with a higher social standing in the early 20th century, so those who could afford to eat meat did so on a high scale (Jansson, 1992).

With respect to slaughterhouses, the late 19th century and early 20th century was an important time for development in Sweden. Growing awareness of hygiene and public health became more important to the Swedish government, largely to do with the goal of creating a strong and healthy industrial workforce (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). In the late 19th century a widespread movement around Western Europe, which was focused on cleaning up city centres, both in terms of hygiene as well as in terms of public morality (Rämme et al., 2012; Otter, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2010). There were concerns over the slaughtering of animals being conducted in open places without regulations and often, within view of the public. It was for example common practice in cities such as London to slaughter animals in the back of the butcher shop and then sell the meat free from packaging (Otter, 2006). This was seen in Gamla Stan in Stockholm, where meat would be sold in intermittent food stalls, with little concern for hygiene (Rämme et al., 2012). In 1912, the ‘Slaughterhouse Reform’ was introduced in the city of Stockholm, which regulated the act of slaughtering in many ways. First, slaughtering was moved outside of city centres and began to be conducted in official public slaughterhouses (Rämme et al., 2012). Fitzgerald (2010) notes how slaughterhouses at this time were made ‘public’ in terms of regulation and governance, however they were also at the same time removed from the public gaze, thus in effect distancing people from the production of animal food products. Secondly, the 1912 Slaughterhouse Reform made it mandatory for animals to be inspected by official veterinarians before they could be slaughtered. The inspection of the animals prior to death was followed by an inspection of the meat by the
Health Inspection Bureau (Rämme et al., 2012). Another important effect of the introduction of the public slaughterhouse was the introduction of the idea of ‘slaughterers’; people who had the responsibility of slaughtering alone. Prior to the 1912 Slaughterhouse Reform, the act of slaughter had little regulations, and could be carried out by almost anyone. However, with the introduction of designated slaughterhouses, slaughtering became an activity done by particular people in particular places. The introduction of slaughterhouses therefore also resulted in the separation between those who cared for animals and those who killed animals. Thus, by the early 20th century, slaughtering in Sweden began to look a lot more like the industrialized slaughtering we see today. Slaughtering began to be conducted in regulated facilities located away from where people lived, and conducted by people specifically responsible for slaughtering. This shift represented important changes to the ways in which people interacted with the animals they consumed. Ultimately, domestic animals raised for human consumption or products were no longer part of people’s daily lives as they had been in the 18th century.

The mid and latter part of the 20th century saw increasing industrialization of slaughterhouses and division of labour in meat production. By the 1960’s Swedish agricultural production had grown, however there were fewer farmers than ever, but these farms were also responsible for larger areas of land than ever before (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). The trend for the 20th century was that the large urban centres such as Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö dictated the work of the farmers. Whereas prior to the industrial revolution farmers were largely in control of how much and what they wanted to farm, in the 20th century the demand from the city centres began to dictate the actions of farmers if they wanted to survive economically (Myrdal and Morell, 2011). For the slaughtering industry, this meant a focus on increasing output, which was achieved through higher division of labour and mechanization. Thus, by the latter half of the 20th century, slaughtering had become a highly regulated and industrialized activity occurring on a large scale, and located far from city centres.

The biggest change to the slaughtering industry during the 20th century came in 1995 when Sweden joined the EU. At this time, Swedish grocery stores were bombarded with cheap foreign foods (Nilsson and Lind, 2015). Swedish meat producers had assumed that consumers would stay loyal to Swedish brands, however the reality was that Swedish consumers took advantage of foreign foods with lower prices, which resulted in a fall in the price of Swedish beef in the following years (Nilsson and Lind, 2015). The issue of low-priced competitors was exacerbated by the dismantlement of Swedish agricultural policies, which had been in place since the 1930’s and had the aim of providing subsidies to Swedish farmers. Thus, on top of facing new competition, Swedish meat producers no longer had assurance from the government that their businesses would stay afloat. In order to try to combat the economic losses faced by meat production companies, four of the five main meat production companies in Sweden amalgamated into one large corporation known as ‘Swedish Meats’ in the year 2001 (Nilsson and Lind, 2015). Part of the amalgamation of companies involved the shutting down of four of the seven meat-processing plants previously used by the four companies in an effort to reduce operation costs (Nilsson and Lind, 2015). Despite efforts to lower production costs and remain profitable, the Swedish Meats Corporation continued to lose money, and was finally bought by an international food company in 2007 (Nilsson and Line, 2015).

Today, most of the beef that Swedes consume is produced outside of Sweden. This meat comes in packages, which have very little information about how the meat contained inside was produced, beyond a corporation name and a country of origin. Swedes have the 3rd highest consumption of beef per capita in Europe, and this amount has increased by 40% since 1990 (Bord Bia, 2014). It is assumed that this increase in consumption has come as a result of lower prices of foreign meat. But, despite the fact that most meat consumed in Sweden comes from foreign countries, there are still 450, 000 cattle slaughtered in Sweden per year (Wiberg, 2012). However, it is important to note that most of cattle slaughtered in Sweden are dairy cows, with only a small percentage of farmers raising cattle breeds specifically suited to beef production (Jorbruksverket, 2009). Of these cattle, 93% are slaughtered in only 16 abattoirs (Wiberg, 2012).
Thus, the situation for cattle slaughter today is one with a high level of centralized production with a focus on lowering costs to maintain competitive prices against foreign imports. At the same time it is important to note that since the 1970’s there has been increasing concern for the welfare of animals used in meat production. In particular, the 21st century has seen the rise of a consumer group that has begun to prioritize animal welfare and food quality over the price of the meat. This has resulted in demand for new modes of producing meat, with a focus on sustainability and animal welfare (Carlsson et al., 2004).

Mobile slaughtering

Over the last approximately 20 years concerns over the lengthy transport of animals required because of centralized slaughterhouses has been a concern of consumers in Europe (Carlsson et al., 2004). Mobile slaughtering was developed in response to the concerns over welfare, as it does not require the transport of animals outside of the farm. Today, mobile slaughterhouses are seen all over the world and provide meat for concerned consumers (Carlsson et al., 2004). In contrast to the typical industrial methods used to produce the majority of meat consumed in Sweden today, mobile slaughtering may offer a different experience of cattle for those engaged in beef production. As has been mentioned previously, mobile slaughtering occurs on the farm where cattle are raised, with those who have cared for the living cattle present during slaughter. During the slaughtering process, the animals wait in a holding area located somewhere on the farm (usually a field or something similar) where they are tended to by farmers and farm hands. The farmers or farm hands are responsible for coaxing cattle into the slaughterhouse where the animals are met by the slaughterer. On average, approximately 25 cattle are slaughtered per day (roughly 9,000 per year) in the mobile slaughterhouse, a number much lower than the 30,000-50,000 cattle slaughtered per year in high-capacity Swedish slaughterhouses, (translating to between approximately 80 and 130 cattle slaughtered per day) (Hansson, 2000). Additionally, the cattle being slaughtered are beef cattle, rather than dairy cattle, as is the norm in Sweden (Jorbruksverket, 2009). Once the cattle bodies have been slaughtered and processed, they are placed into a cooling truck and are then transported to a meat processing plant for further refinement. A unique aspect of the slaughtering company that is studied in this research is that the meat produced is packaged with a label containing a QR code which can then be scanned and provides information to consumers about where the meat came from, who raised it, and what breed of cow it was.

This chapter has discussed how advancements in technology, society, as well as growing concerns over public health and safety, contributed to the changes to slaughtering that occurred in Sweden over the past 300 years. Whereas in the 18th century, Sweden saw small-scale beef production involving one or a few people, today the common story is of large-scale beef production involving many different people, with slaughtering in particular, occurring in distant but centralized locations. In contrast to the mainstream mode of industrial slaughter, mobile slaughtering introduces several practical differences to the slaughter of animals. Firstly, slaughter occurs on a relatively small scale (only 25 animals per day) and occurs in locality to the farmers who raised the animals. Secondly, there is less division of labour within the mobile slaughterhouse than within the industrialized slaughterhouse. Additionally, the inclusion of ‘Quick Response’ (QR) codes poses a contrast to the typically anonymous labelling found on meat produced in an industrialized atmosphere. However, there are also similarities between industrialized slaughter and mobile slaughter. For example, there is a division between who actually does the slaughtering, as well as a separation between consumers and the production of their food in a physical sense. This history of beef production and in particular the history of slaughter in Sweden has situated some of the practical aspects of mobile slaughtering in relation to historical trends and practices in the Swedish beef production industry.
3. Theoretical Approach:

In order to understand how those engaged in the production of beef in the context of the mobile slaughtering industry, I engage with hermeneutic phenomenological theory, the concept of liminality, as well as the concept of ‘boundary labour’. I use hermeneutic phenomenology and the associated lifeworld existentials in order to inspire my methodology, as well as to analyse data. Additionally, I use the concept of liminality in order to frame informants’ experiences of cattle as changing with various contexts of interaction. Finally, I utilize the concept of ‘boundary labour’ as proposed by Colter Ellis (2014) in order to understand and reflect on informants’ experiences of cattle bodies. In this chapter, I provide a brief history of all concepts use as well as an explanation of how they will be operationalized.

History of Phenomenology

Several philosophers prior to the 18th century used ‘Phenomenology’ as a term, however it is commonly agreed that the idea of phenomenology as a philosophical concept was brought about by the writings of Edmund Husserl, and in particular his 1900 work *Logical Investigations* (see Dowling, 2005). The focus of Husserl’s form of phenomenology was focused on understanding the essence behind what he called ‘objects of consciousness’. Husserl proposed a practice known as ‘phenomenological reduction’, which involves mental experimentation whereby an individual actively adds or subtracts or simply changes certain aspects of an object until it can no longer be labelled as the original entity, with the goal of identifying is boundaries and thereby its essence (Dowling, 2005). In this way, the philosopher would be able to understand the things or associations that make a thing what it is and without which the thing would cease to exist in its existing form (Dowling 2005). An important aspect of philosophy for Husserl was to try to separate one’s self from one’s cultural and social background, in an attempt to be able to describe a phenomenon more clearly and thereby more accurately (Kafle, 2011). Husserl’s phenomenology has come to be known as transcendental phenomenology, where the focus of the method of philosophizing is on describing one’s own experience (Van Manen, 2011).

An important expansion of the field of phenomenology was the development of ‘Hermeneutical Phenomenology’, which was led by Martin Heidegger through the publication of his 1925 work, ‘History of Concept of Time’, as well as his 1927 work ‘Being and Time’ (Laverty, 2003; Kafle, 2011). The field of hermeneutic phenomenology was further expanded upon by the philosophers Hans-George Gadamer, Poul Ricour, and Max Van Manen (Kafle, 2011). Hermeneutic phenomenology is different from transcendental phenomenology because it rejects the idea of being able to have an objective perspective, free from one’s own life history as is required by transcendental phenomenology (Kafle, 2011). Rather, Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on the subjective experiences of individuals and groups, and in how people engage in interpretive processes as they experience and create their lived worlds (Kafle, 2011). However, here I will use phenomenology more in the sense of Merleau-Ponty, who was influenced by both Husserl and Heidegger. Merleau-Ponty was more focused on the phenomenology of the body and senses. In particular I will draw here on his use and definition of the lifeworld existentials (see table 1) and its further elaboration by (Van Manen, 2011)
Operationalizing Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Existentials

In this study I use Hermeneutic phenomenology in order to understand how my informants perceive the phenomenon of mobile slaughter. In particular, I use the four lifeworld existentials proposed by Van Manen including spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality as tools for reflecting on and describing the lived experiences of informants. The existentials have been described as the themes in which lived experience can be described (Van Manen, 2011). Further, the existentials have been found to be productive tools for understanding the lived experience of informants (Rich et al., 2013). In this study, I engage with these existentials specifically to understand how informants engage with cattle bodies during beef production using mobile slaughter. Table 1 summarizes what is meant by each of the four existentials.

Table 1. The existentials as defined in this thesis (from Merleau-Ponty and Van Manen 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatiality</th>
<th>Lived space. Refers to the way we experience and feel the spaces that we occupy. I use spatiality to refer to the ways in which cattle are engaged with in shared and un-shared spaces. (Van Manen, 2011).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporality</td>
<td>Lived time. A subjective account of how time is experienced, as opposed to ‘clock time’. I use temporality to reference how informants describe the length of time they perceive themselves as interacting with cattle bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporeality</td>
<td>Lived body. Refers to the fact that we always experience and exist in the world through our bodies I use corporeality to describe how informants describe their experience of cattle using understandings of their bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationality</td>
<td>Lived relationships. Relationality is typically used to describe human-human relationships, however is used additionally in this study to refer to human-animal relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Liminality

Liminality is a sociological concept, which was developed to understand the changing identities and social standings of people undergoing a transformation during a rite of passage (Wels et al., 2011; Budhwa, 1997). Rites of passage include times in a person’s life when their social standing is changing. For example, when people go through puberty they transition from child to adult, or when people get married they transition from single to married, thus reflecting in a change to their identity with regards to how they interact with society as a whole. During these transitions, people enter into liminal spaces where they neither belong nor do they not belong to particular identities (Turner, 1966). The first person to introduce the term ‘liminality’ into the field of anthropology was Arnold Van Gene when in 1909 he introduced the term in French. However, the concept did not receive much attention until 1960 when it was translated into English (Wels et al., 2011). Despite being introduced by Van Gennep, the concept of liminality was propagated primarily by Viktor Turner, who in 1967 used the concepts proposed by Van Gennep to interpret Ndembu rituals (Wels et al., 2011). The concept of Liminality describes three phases (Turner, 1966) for those engaged in rites of passage, including:

1. Separation
2. Liminal Period
3. Re-assimilation
During the first part of the rite, separation, the individual becomes engaged in behaviour symbolic of their detachment from the group (Turner, 1966). The second phase, the liminal period, is an ambiguous state where the individual is neither belonging to what they once were, nor belonging to what they will become (Turner, 1966). The individual undergoes many changes during this time, although their identity is hard to determine. The final phase, re-assimilation, describes the time when the individual re-enters the society they once belonged to as something new (Turner, 1966). While Liminality is a sociological concept generally used to understand rites of passage, Viktor Turner himself has said that it can be used in a broad sense (Wels et al., 2011). Wels et al. describe Turner’s view of the flexibility of the concept of liminality, saying: 

While Turner experimented conceptually with the term, he himself was not very strict about precisely how it might be used. For him, a 'liminal phase' could thus refer to almost anything in which there was a normally short lived period of upending of a prior hierarchy and during which power reversals occurred.

The research conducted in this study is not focused on the hierarchical or power aspect of the relationship between informants and cattle per se, however it is focused on the changes to the perception, and experience of cattle bodies from informants’ point of view. Changes to perception and experience are ultimately the products of the changing power relationships that Turner describes, thus I argue that liminality is an appropriate concept to be used in this research.

Operationalizing Liminality

I use the concept of liminality here to frame informants’ transformative experience of cattle bodies throughout the production of beef in the context of mobile slaughter. This allows me to analyse people’s experiences in a temporally contextualized sense. Because contexts of engagement with cattle impact informants’ experiences and perceptions of cattle, I find liminality helpful in structuring my empirical chapters and specifically, in understanding how my informants experience and view cattle bodies before, during, and after slaughter. Thus, in this research the three phases of liminality as described by Turner are used as inspiration, though they may not be easily matched with the originally proposed categories of ‘separation’, ‘liminal period’, and ‘re-assimilation’. Rather, I use the phases of liminality here to refer to engagements with and perceptions of living cattle prior to slaughter, engagements with and perceptions of cattle during slaughter, and finally to understand engagements with and perceptions of cattle bodies as they re-emerge as meat. These phases I have used to structure the thesis into chapters and they correspond to chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively.

Boundary Labour

Boundary labour is a concept which was introduced by Ellis in his 2014 paper “Boundary labour and the production of emotionless commodities: The case of beef production”. Ellis describes boundary labour as a type of emotional work done by cattle farmers where they negotiate feelings of connection and disconnection towards the animals that they work with. Ellis (2014) describes the basis of his conceptualization of Boundary labour as being on Lamont’s (1992) conceptualization of the term ‘boundary work’ and Hochschild’s (1979 and 1983) conceptualization of the term ‘emotional labour’. Ellis argues that the imagined boundaries farmers use to define their relationship with cattle allows for farmers to both care for cattle and to treat them as commodities. Ellis further argues that the emotional work done by farmers is essential for the farmer to have the ability to raise cattle destined for slaughter. The boundaries refer to the distinctions farmers make between themselves and cattle as well as between other animals and cattle. In this way, Informants are thus in a sense engaging with imagined geographies in order to come to the conclusion that cattle are ‘killable’ (see Ellis 2014). The idea behind boundary labour has been explored in other literature related to human cattle relationships, though under different terminology. For example,
Wilkie (2005) uses the term ‘concerned detachment’ to refer to the ways in which cattle farmers are able to both attach themselves and detach themselves emotionally in order to continue the work they do. Wilkie’s conceptualization of ‘concerned detachment’ is tied to Ellis’ conceptualization of boundary labour in the sense that both deal with the idea that cattle farmers are simultaneously engaged in connecting and disconnecting with living cattle. Wilkie also considers the basis for the connection and disconnection from cattle, saying: “How people regard and relate to livestock cannot be isolated from the cultural and socio-economic ways in which they encounter them” (2005). These words correlate with Ellis’ description of imagined boundaries which allow for cattle to be regarded as commodities, and yet as them still being deserving of care. Here I utilize Ellis’ concept of boundary labour rather than Wilkie’s concept of ‘concerned detachment’ because Wilkie uses this term to refer to specific types of farmer cattle relationships, rather than as a term to interpret the emotional work undertaken by all beef cattle farmers.

In my own research, I utilize the concept of boundary labour in order to understand the relationships informants have with their cattle. In particular, I use boundary labour as a way to understand the complicated scenario whereby informants may describe both connection to and disconnection from cattle bodies as living things. Additionally I refer back to boundary labour as a means of platform for engaging the ethnographic research done here with other accounts of human-cattle relationships.
4. Methodology

I have used ethnographic methods, in particular participant observation to approach an understanding of the existentials and also liminality. This has been combined with semi structured and unstructured interviews. Below, follows a detailed account of methodology and informants.

Ethnographic research

In order to understand how informants experience and engage with cattle bodies I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork involving participant observation as well as semi-structured and unstructured interviews, which is an appropriate methodology for the theoretical framework of hermeneutical phenomenology (Barnard and Viktor, 2016). Ethnographic work is a type of qualitative research methodology that examines humans and societies in all of their complexity (Shagrir, 2017). An important aspect of ethnographic work is participant observation. During participant observation, the researcher takes part in daily activities, rituals, interactions, or the like in order to better understand the experiences of their informants (Musante and DeWalt, 2010). Often, participant observation allows for researchers to uncover some aspects of their informant’s experiences, which are not always mentioned during interviews (Musante and DeWalt, 2010). Another important aspect of ethnographic fieldwork is interviews. During my research I conducted mainly semi-structured interviews with the exception of one informant who I interviewed in an unstructured format. During semi-structured interviews the researcher has an interview guide used to structure the interview, however does not control or limit the informants’ answers (Evans, 2018). The interview follows a natural conversational flow, but the interviewer maintains the ability to control the topics being discussed (Evans, 2018). This allows for the interviewer to ensure that the interview is on topic, without limiting the informant’s responses (Evans, 2018). An unstructured interview on the other hand, is basically a conversation between the informant and the interviewer. In this type of interview, the informant takes the lead and the interviewer follows the topic of conversation lead by the informant. In an unstructured interview on the other hand, no conversation schedule is used by the interviewer (Bernard, 2006). Only one informant, Alice, was interviewed in an unstructured manner, and this was because I spent the most time with this informant. She drove me to and from the study sites and I also stayed at her home, so we had a lot of time to talk freely and conversations therefore developed which I have later found key in including here.

Choosing informants

The first thing I had to do before I could start my fieldwork was to find a way of actually getting into the field. When I began my research process, I was not sure that I would work with mobile slaughter and thus began calling several Swedish slaughtering companies. However, most did not answer, and those that did were uninterested in allowing me to speak with them. Eventually, I ended up calling the mobile slaughtering company and asking if I could interview some people in their company. This got me in touch with my chief informant, Alice. Through Alice, I was introduced to all other informants. Thus, the informants were not handpicked individually but rather were largely a product of opportunity. That being said, all of the informants are somehow involved with the process of mobile slaughtering, and provide an array of different perspectives.
on the phenomenon. The various roles of people engaged in this study include 3 farmers, 2 slaughterers, 3 business coordinators, and 1 meat packaging plant operator. Below, I describe each of these roles and what they entail in terms how informants engage with cattle bodies in a practical sense. Despite some informants sharing the same general role within the process of beef production, it is important to remember that all informants have had unique experiences with cattle. Thus, the job descriptions are used to loosely describe where informants are situated with regards to the production of beef in the mobile slaughtering industry. The description of the various roles within beef production in the mobile slaughtering industry is also complemented with a more description of each individual's experiences in general, as presented in Table 2.

The work in the mobile slaughterhouse is very labour intensive, and requires focus to ensure safety and quality work, thus I was unable to interview everyone working in the mobile slaughterhouse for practical reasons. The two slaughterers that I did interview were both responsible for shooting the cattle, bleeding them, and removing their heads. This job is positioned right near the back door of the mobile slaughterhouse, so the staff working in this position could pop out and chat with me during a break. Additionally, as these people are the first in the line of production within the mobile slaughterhouse, they also finish first, allowing for time to give an interview. Additionally, the particular slaughterers were the most comfortable of all slaughterers in speaking English, making the interviews easier to conduct with them than other slaughterers.

Roles of informants

Business Coordinators
Informants who are in this category are the people who work on the business side of things for the mobile slaughtering company. These people do not need to engage with cattle on a daily basis as a part of their role within the company, however all of those interviewed have witnessed the cattle being slaughtered and come from a rural background. Some have their own cattle that they care for outside of their work responsibilities.

Slaughterers
The slaughterers I interviewed both have the same role; they are both in charge of shooting the cattle and processing their bodies. These people engage a lot with cattle after they have been killed, but also are present for and actively involved in their deaths. The amount of time these people spend with individual animals is limited to the time it takes them to shoot each animal, usually lasting only several seconds, but sometimes longer in order to ensure accuracy.

Farmers
The farmers are the ones who take care of the cow during its lifetime. They are responsible for making sure the animals are healthy and safe. These people also have to make the decision to slaughter the animals that they care for. All of the farmers that I interviewed were present while their cattle were being slaughtered, and are responsible for coaxing cattle inside of the slaughterhouse. Most farmers do not enter the slaughterhouse during slaughter.

Meat Packaging Plant Worker/Operations
Only one informant was interviewed from the meat packaging plant. The role of this informant was to oversee operations at the meat packaging plant. Despite this, the informant has been working at the meat packaging plant for several decades, and has been involved in all aspects of the ‘hands-on’ work conducted at the plant, including hanging the bodies and cutting them into refined cuts of meat, as well as packaging them and labelling them.

Informant background information and interview details
Here I provide detailed information relevant to understanding the perspectives of the informants with regards to how they describe experiencing and perceiving cattle bodies. It should be noted
that all names have been changed in order to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in the study.

Alice
Alice is the head of purchasing for the mobile slaughter company. She makes decisions about which farms the company will do business with, and which types of cows are slaughtered. Alice spends much time outside of work caring for cattle on her sister’s farm. Alice has been engaged with the process of slaughter for many years and has seen slaughter many times. I interviewed Alice once in person at the headquarters for the mobile slaughtering company in Järvsö on September 29th of 2017 and once over the phone on April 24th 2018. However, I also spent much time chatting with Alice, as she was the person who showed me around the mobile slaughterhouse and often drove me to various farms. Thus, we spent time engaging in many informal conversations.

Lovisa
Lovisa is the founder of the mobile slaughtering company and the one who developed the concept of the mobile slaughterhouse from the beginning. Lovisa is also the mother of Alice, and helps with cattle on her daughter’s farm. I interviewed Lovisa once in person at the head office of the mobile slaughtering company in Järvsö on September 29th 2017.

Ebba
Ebba works in sales for the mobile slaughtering company. Ebba has been working for the company since young adulthood and started by working in the meat packing plant. She initially was responsible for cutting the meat and packaging it. Now she sells the product to grocery stores, and brings possible buyers (grocer store chains) to the slaughtering truck to show them how the process works. I interviewed Ebba once in person while visiting the head office of the mobile slaughtering company in Järvsö on September 29th 2017.

Axel
Axel is a slaughterer for the mobile slaughtering company. He is responsible for shooting the cattle, slitting their throats, and removing their head. Axel spends little time with living cattle (usually no more than several minutes per cow). Axel has been working for the company for two years, and previously worked at an industrialized slaughterhouse for eighteen years. I interviewed Axel once in person during a visit to a farm in Bro as well as once on the phone on April 20th.

Johan
Johan is a slaughterer for the mobile slaughtering company. He is responsible for shooting the cattle, slitting their throats, and removing the head. Johan has been working for the company for one year and previously worked at an industrial slaughterhouse for several years. I interviewed Johan once during a farm visit in Linköping on February 8th 2018.

Sigrid
Sigrid is a beef cattle farmer. She cares for the cows during their lives and is present for the slaughter of her animals. Sigrid and Oscar are married and have a farm together. Sigrid has been a cattle farmer for most of her adult life. I have interviewed Sigrid once in person at her farm in Järvsö on September 29th, as well as interviewed her via a questionnaire sent April 22nd 2018.

Oscar
Oscar is a beef cattle farmer. He cares for the cows during their lives and is present for the slaughter of his animals. Sigrid and Oscar are married and have a farm together. Oscar grew up on a dairy farm before he himself switched to beef cattle. I interviewed Oscar once in person at his farm in Järvsö on September 29th 2017.
Niklas
Niklas is a beef cattle farmer as well as a producer of KRAV grains. He has become blind and can no longer take care of his cattle alone himself, so he relies on farm staff to help him. Niklas is present on the farm when his animals are slaughtered. I interviewed Niklas once with the help of a friend who acted as an interpreter at his home in Linköping on February 8th 2018. The reason I used an interpreter for Niklas and no other informants is because Alice advised me that Niklas was not prepared to take an interview in English, however I thought his perspective would be valuable as he uses his cattle in the production of KRAV grains.

Rasmus
Rasmus is one of the heads of the meat packaging plant. Rasmus used to work on the floor of the plant, working to cut the meat and to package it for approximately thirty years. Now, Rasmus works in various contexts throughout the day to ensure the plant runs smoothly. I interviewed Rasmus once over the phone on April 24th.

Participant Observation
On three occasions I visited farms located in Bro, Järvsö, and Linköping, spending a total of 3 days conducting fieldwork. The visits occurred on August 28th 2017, September 29th 2017, and February 8th 2018, and were scheduled to occur the same day that farmers would have the mobile slaughterhouse visiting. During the visits, I watched the process of slaughter from various locations. Sometimes I was standing in the door between the staff changing area and the main processing area, watching the slaughterers do their work. Most often I stood in front of the clear wall of the shooting box and watched the slaughterers shoot and bleed the animals. I also stood in the front of the slaughterhouse and observed the cows and how they interacted with people before they entered into the slaughterhouse. These points of observations allowed me to follow and observe how staff interacted with the cattle bodies and to make note of their movements and gestures. Usually, I was unable to talk with slaughterers while they worked, as it was often quite loud and the slaughterers are usually very focussed on the work that they are doing, as it is quite dangerous and requires a high level of attention to detail. However, I often chatted with Alice as the slaughtering was taking place, during which time she would explain to me exactly what was happening and why. My focus during participant observation can generally be described as focused on the interaction between the humans and the cattle, with a focus on the phenomenological existentials described in chapter 2 but in particular the body-body interactions. The observations also allowed me to develop questions around movements and gestures I could see during the process. During fieldwork I carried a notebook where I could write down anything of interest to my study, as well as comments made to me by informants. A set up of the mobile slaughterhouse is shown in figure 1, to give an idea of my movements and vantage points during participant observation.
Interviews

Prior to conducting in-person interviews I formulated an interview guide with a number of questions to ask my informants. Questions were defined to address how my informants experienced and perceived slaughtering, and the four existentials suggested by Van Manen (2011) were used as a structure in the interview guides. In other words, I created questions that incorporated concepts about lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relationships in order to uncover the lifeworlds of my informants. The original interview guides I used can be found in the Appendix. However, in the actual interview I did not follow a particular order of questioning. Rather, I used the questions as a source of inspiration to refer to in order to keep the conversation on track in terms of covering the issues I was exploring. Additionally, the questions could be referred back to given a lull in conversation. In the beginning, I defined interview questions based on the role each informant had within the beef production process. For example, I would ask different questions to a slaughterer than I would a farmer because of the practical aspects of the work that they did. However, upon getting to know informants I often asked more specific questions based on their own experiences, thus I let the replies and reflections of the respondents shape the interviews. The in-person interviews were conducted at various locations, including the head office of the mobile slaughtering company, the homes of the farmers, as well as outside of the mobile slaughterhouse. I recorded all of my interviews on my iPhone and then transcribed them afterwards.

In addition to in-person interviews, I also conducted phone interviews as well as one email questionnaire to follow up with some informants about new questions I had. I was unable to record the phone interviews, so instead advised informants that I would be taking notes during the interview, as well as notifying them when I would pause to write down a specific quote. In total, I conducted eleven interviews with nine different informants as well as sent one questionnaire to one informant. With regards to the email questionnaire, I sent the informant an email with a list of questions, to which the informant gave detailed answers in Swedish, as the informant felt that she could express herself more freely in Swedish. I then had the answers of the informants translated to English by a native Swedish speaker, not disclosing the informant’s identities in order to protect their privacy. In total, I conducted eleven interviews with nine different informants as well as sent one questionnaire to one informant.

Analysis

In order to interpret informant interviews and field notes from participant observation, I conducted a thematic analysis of responses. Thematic analysis is a method that allows researchers to identify and analyse patterns within their data sets (Braun and Clarke, 2008). The exact step-by-step process involved in thematic analysis is not rigidly defined, and thus most researchers adapt specific methods that work for them (Braun and Clarke, 2008). In this case I had already in a sense thematised questions, however another level of thematisation was required to see crosscutting themes between respondents and also new themes that I may have missed in the design of my questions. Thus, while I consciously looked for particular themes, the design of my analysis also allowed me to be surprised. In all thematic analysis, a researcher looks within their data for reoccuring themes in order to help them answer their research question. Thus, a theme must capture something important in the data that helps the researcher to answer the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2008). It is important to keep in mind that while much qualitative research talks about how themes ‘emerge’ from data sets, there are decisions constantly being made by the researcher about what constitutes a theme and what does not (Braun and Clarke, 2008). Therefore it is not always the themes that recur the most that are the most important, but rather the themes that help to shed light on the question being explored (Braun and Clarke, 2008).

To thematically analyse my own data in a practical sense, I began by reading and re-reading the interviews I had transcribed, as well as the notes I took during participant observation. Dur-
ing this time, I reflected on how the responses were formulated and what sorts of responses from my informants actually contributed to answering my research question. I highlighted relevant responses and then collected similar responses together. Once I had groupings of similar responses, I came up with names for what these responses meant with regards to my research question. These groups of responses became my themes and the starting points for my empirical chapters.

Reflexivity

During ethnographic work, it is important that the researcher maintains reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process of looking back on oneself and questioning assumptions and preconceived ideas (Davies, 2002, pg. 4). In ethnographic research, the researcher becomes a tool for data collection. The researcher engages with people and talks with them, and also brings with themselves their own experiences and understandings of the world they live in. Davies (2002, pg. 3) says:

> All researchers are to some degree connected to, a part of, the object of their research. And, depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of research are artefacts of the researcher’s presence and inevitable influence on the research process. For these reasons, considerations of reflexivity are important for all forms of research.

Reflexivity has been of paramount importance in my own research process. Approaching this topic, I had my own strong pre-understanding about how the body of the cow changes during the process of slaughter. The topic of research has been so morally and ethically engaging for me, therefore reflexivity was particularly important for me. I realized after I conducted my first interview that I was asking the wrong questions because they were based on my assumptions of what I would find while in the field. I quickly learned that I needed to be more adaptive and reflexive in my thinking and my interviewing. A useful practice during my research was therefore to ask myself ‘Why do I think this way?’ This was in order to try to understand and reveal my own ideas about the topic of slaughter so as to avoid including these preconceptions in my research or data analysis. An example of the reflexivity present in my research is found in the additional phone and email interviews I conducted after reflecting on the data I had already collected. Despite my efforts to be reflexive however, I think it is important to note that the research presented in this thesis is still subjective in nature. The questions I pose, as well as the ways that I interpret and analyse the results are inherently products of my own experiences. Thus, the results found in this study should not be taken as objective, but rather a subjective reflection on the experiences of those engaged in the mobile slaughtering industry.

Ethics

Prior to engaging in interviews, I asked informants to read an information sheet about the research I was conducting. A copy of this information sheet can be found in the appendix. After reading the information sheet I asked informants to sign a form allowing me to use our interview in my thesis. In this form, I asked informants if they wanted their identity being protected. A copy of this form can also be found in the appendix. Despite none of my informants being concerned about their identity, I made the decision to use pseudonyms instead of informant’s real names because the topic of meat production and consumption is so hotly debated today. It is of utmost importance to me that neither my informants nor the mobile slaughtering company experience any negative impacts from the research that I have conducted.
5. Experiencing Living Cattle

Asking my informants about their experiences with the cattle, I had the aim of understanding how they made sense of interacting with living cattle that they know will eventually be slaughtered. The experiences of course differed between informants based on the nature of their relationship with the cattle. For example, slaughterers only spend a small amount of time with the living cattle, while farmers spend years interacting with the same animals. For this reason, I have received more detailed responses from informants who engage regularly with living cattle for extended time periods, and thus the responses that are discussed in this section are primarily those of farmers and informants who care for cattle. After analysing the interviews as well as field notes, I came away with several themes regarding how they experience and make sense of their relationship with the living cattle. These themes include perceiving cattle husbandry as natural and necessary, believing that cattle can and must live good lives on the farm, the importance of understanding cattle, as well as coming to terms with the economic reality of raising cattle. In the following discussion I use the aforementioned themes to analyse the first phase of informants’ experiences with cattle bodies.

Perceiving Cattle Husbandry as Natural and Necessary

In order to understand how informants experience living cattle, it is important to consider their reflections on why they engage with cattle in the first place. Thus, during my interviews I asked questions which would allow me to grasp the how informants defined the relationship between those who care for cattle and the cattle themselves. Therefore, I asked informants why they keep cattle and in beef production in general. When I asked my informants about how they perceived the practice of keeping animals and using animals for meat, all informants expressed that they felt that is was something natural using the term that it was a “natural practice”. Often this explanation was given in reference to history; eating meat was explained as natural by my informants because it is something that we collectively as a species have been doing for a long time. For example, in a discussion about the naturalness of killing and consuming cattle, Ebba, who works in sales for the mobile slaughtering company, described to me her philosophy on meat eating, and how she describes this to customers. While this description focuses on meat, it inadvertently acknowledges a relationship we have with living cattle, as all meat comes from what was once a living animal. Ebba describes her position in discussions about eating meat saying:

I end up in these discussions…talking about the hunting and gathering part of our [history]- hunting was part of the year, but gathering was the biggest part of our nutrition. It came from the plant world, including whole grains and so on, and then we added meat in small doses. I think it was because the access to meat wasn’t very big, but we had it as long as the human has been on the Earth or as long as we have the science at least to prove it. So, I think we need meat in small doses.

Ebba’s words reflect a corporeal understanding of the need for humans to produce and consume meat. When Ebba says: “…we need meat…” it reflects an understanding of meat as a necessary resource for human survival. Ebba’s reasoning for the perceived corporeal need to consume meat is explained by a long history of consuming meat, with Ebba saying “…we had it as long as the human has been on earth…” Ebba’s words suggest that she has a corporeal understanding of
human’s need to consume meat, which is fuelled by a temporal understanding of human’s relationship with meat consumption. While the preceding discussion in this chapter has focused on the idea of eating meat, the understanding of meat consumption as a natural part of human life inevitably relates to how the relationship with the living animal is perceived as well. The idea that animals are kept on the farm in order to provide meat represents a rationale for the engagement with living cattle, and thus contributes to how informants understand their engagement with living cattle.

In addition to the meat that beef cattle provide, they also provide services to farmers including providing fertilizers as well as maintaining fields and other landscapes beneficial to other agricultural production. While these roles may not be the primary reason why informants invested in cattle in the first place, they are still perceived as invaluable by informants. For example, one topic that came up several times during my discussions with informants was the lack of consumer knowledge about how plant foods are produced. Lovisa, the founder of the mobile slaughtering company compared the rearing of beef cattle for meat with how plant foods are produced, commenting on consumers who are being critical of animal husbandry:

> They drink oat milk and they use manure from animals on the fields to get the oats you know, so sometimes there is a little bit less knowledge about the whole thing.

Lovisa’s words above also reflect the opinions of Niklas; a farmer who produces KRAV certified grains in addition to beef. KRAV is a Swedish label that signifies organic food production. Niklas explained to me that in order to produce KRAV certified grains, there is a requirement to use animal manure to fertilize crops in order to maintain the organic label. Thus, from Niklas’ perspective, living cattle are a necessary part of his overall agricultural production. The descriptions of cattle being essential to the production of non-meat products by Lovisa and Niklas suggest that they see cattle are an essential part of agriculture from a corporeal perspective. Lovisa and Niklas verbalise the perspective that we cannot produce food to meet our corporeal needs without the use of animals.

Part of the understanding of the necessity of keeping cattle has to do with the corporeal aspect of working with the animals. The trouble for those of my informants who care for the animals during their lifetime is that the cattle bodies become too large to be handled by human bodies. For example, Sigrid, a cattle farmer I interviewed in Järvsö, elaborated on the necessity of cattle slaughter, in response to me asking how she felt when it came time to slaughter her animals:

> Some days before I think ‘Oh no, not again’, but at the same time, they are so big, and they fight with each other and we can’t manage them anymore… if they come you have to jump out of the way!

Sigrid’s words reflect corporeal challenges faced by those who care for cattle, which in turn lead for those who care for the cattle to feel that they are ready for the cattle to be slaughtered in a temporal sense. Here we see an interaction between the corporeality experienced by the informant and the sense of temporality experienced by the informant with regards to slaughtering. In other words, it seems as though the corporeal experience of cattle suggests to Sigrid that it is time to slaughter her animals. Thus, cattle slaughter becomes necessary at a particular time because of the interaction between human and animal bodies.

**Believing that Cattle Can and Must Live Good Lives on the Farm**

One of the most important things, if not the most important thing to all of my informants was the feeling that the work they do contributes to the wellbeing of the cattle. Every informant brought up the importance of providing the cattle a good life. The informants held the belief that they
contribute to providing good lives for their animals. For example when I interviewed Oscar and Sigrid I asked them what a good life looks like for cattle, and Oscar responded by laughing and saying “With us!” This light-hearted response made me understand that there was no doubt in my Oscar's mind that his wife and him were providing a good life for their cattle. Ebba also expressed her feelings about the importance of animal welfare saying:

We should eat meat that we know comes from good farmers, where the animals have lived well, where they have had the best feed ever possible, and they had farmers looking out for them every day.

Ebba’s description of what meat we should eat reflects the importance in her mind of relationality between farmers and the animals that they care for, as well as relationality between consumers and those who produce their meat. Firstly, Ebba wants to eat meat that comes from animals that “…had farmers looking out for them…” suggesting that care for the animals is important to her, and that ensuring animal welfare gives her comfort in terms of. Additionally, Ebba addresses her meat-consuming contemporaries, saying: “We should eat meat that we know…” For Ebba, a relationship between consumers and those who produce their meat is then important when it comes to ensuring good animal welfare. The feelings expressed by Ebba are ones of responsibility and acknowledgement of the living animal, which eventually becomes the product. This feeling of responsibility seems to be an essential and non-negotiable aspect of good meat production for many of my informants, having been told by many that they only eat meat when they are sure the animal has had a good life. Alice, the head of purchasing in the abattoir, reflected on the quality of life for beef cattle, saying:

I constantly ask myself the question if what we are doing is right or could we do it better? Are we, you know, letting some things pass through because we never really reflected on it? So that’s like a constant on-going process for me personally. And sometimes, I mean I don’t even eat meat more than once a week, I’m like a secret vegetarian.

Alice’s words to me represent a constant process of reflection that all my informants seem to take upon themselves when it comes to the quality of lives for their animals. While some people are quite confident that they are doing the best possible (see the quote from Oscar and Sigrid above), there is still some room for reflection on how to improve practices. Informants also reflected on the nature of the care that cattle keepers provide in the first place. For example, I asked Alice how she sees the quality of life for the animals she helps to tend on her sister’s farm to which she said:

I mean if you just let out all the animals in the woods they wouldn’t survive. If you look at giving the cow a good life from a perspective where she can choose what she wants to do, well then she doesn’t have a good life staying at my sister’s farm, if you look at it that way. If you look at it on the other hand, we are also providing for her. We make sure that she has dry spaces to lie down. We provide food, water, and medical care if she needs it.

This reflection by Alice suggests that part of her understanding of keeping cattle is dependent on believing that cattle are dependent on their caregivers. In terms of relationality, the nature of the relationship seems to be important when it comes to feeling good about keeping cattle. Alice specifies that given that farmers provide for animals in ways that the cattle cannot provide for themselves, they have a good life on the farm. However, if the animals were not dependent on the care of the farmers, i.e. “…where she can choose what she wants to do…” then the care is not good on the farm. Thus, the nature of the relationship has to be one where the cattle need the farmer, rather than one of confining a wild animal perfectly capable of taking care of itself.
The importance of understanding cattle

Given that my informants who help care for cattle believe that they can and should provide a good life for their cattle, a following question is how they go about providing a good life for the animals? The key to providing a good life for cattle according to my informants comes from two things: first, an understanding of cattle behaviour in general, and secondly understanding individual cattle personalities. In terms of relationality, these key understandings suggest that good relationships between caregivers and cattle are essential to the welfare of cattle.

On the more external level of having knowledge of animal behaviour, the key to providing a good life for cattle lies in providing a static environment for the animals throughout their life and up to their death. As Lovisa says: “[the cattle] are dependent on everything being the same everyday otherwise they get stressed”. The maintenance of a stable environment involves both constant relationships as well as space. For example Sigrid explains how, when raising calves, her and her husband consider stability from the start: “we put groups together and they stay in those groups all their lives. They don’t change friends”. In terms of relationality, this suggests that part of Sigrid’s relationship of cattle is in the ability to maintain the social relationships that exist between cattle. Additionally, space is important to the wellbeing of cattle, with the avoidance of transporting cattle from the farm prior to slaughter being one of the ways that those in the mobile slaughtering mode of beef production try to increase the welfare of cattle.

On a somewhat deeper and more personal level is the idea that those who care for the welfare of cattle should also understand cattle as individuals. For my informants who spent a good deal of time engaged with cattle, most commented on and described their animals as having different personalities. Understanding the various personalities of cattle seems to be a key element in being able to providing good lives for the animals. An understanding of the individuality provides more specific information to the farmer about how best to care, not only for the whole herd, but also how to provide care for individual cows based on their sometimes unique and varying needs. When describing the typical industrial mode of beef production and the process of transporting cattle to the slaughterhouse, Lovisa describes the cattle’s experience in a very empathetic way, saying:

They often react like you and I would do if we were put with totally new people in a very limited space. We would try to think ‘who is this, can I rely on that one?’ and some of the cows are high in ranking and will be very aggressive and some are very low and so that is what is happening in there if you think about the cow’s perspective.

Lovisa’s description of how she imagines cattle experience transport illustrates the relationality that exists between her and cattle, due to her empathetic imagining of how the cattle themselves experience new spaces and animals. Sigrid talks about her own cattle in a similarly empathetic way, saying:

Well it’s nice working with them, I feel like they are members of the family a little bit. We have cows that are 11 years old now. Each of them has a personality, and I know how they work and they can talk with us – not with words but how they move. So, we know what they feel and we can understand them.

Sigrid’s words demonstrate that for my informants, an understanding of each cow in terms of their personality allows for them to provide better care. Beyond just being able to provide basic needs according to a general understanding of cattle behaviour, farmers and those who care for cattle feel that they can understand the needs of particular individuals. This type of caring and understanding described to me seems to allow those caring for animals to feel that they are able to provide a good life for it up to its slaughter. When Sigrid says “…I feel like they are members of the family…” and then follows this by saying how this feeling contributes to her ability to understand the animals, it suggests that for her relationality plays a big role in her ability to pro-
vide for her cattle. In other words, having a close relationship with her cattle allows for her to know them better and thus better able to provide for them.

Sometimes however, connection between a cow and a caregiver becomes so strong it causes the caregiver to be unable to slaughter the animal. One case of this is cattle that spend longer than the usual two years on the farm, because they have been chosen to reproduce and provide offspring. If the cattle spend a longer time on the farm, it gives more opportunity for a deeper relationship to develop between the cattle and the caregiver to form. It seems that these long-term animals have more of an emotional bond with the informants than do the cows that only spend a few years in their care. For example, when I asked Oscar and Sigrid about their mother cows who they had cared for over eleven years, and how it would feel to slaughter them, they said in a surprised tone “don’t talk about it!” I pressed further, asking if they would be able to do it, to which Oscar responded “Yeah we have to, if they are sick or too old, you have to meet them with a bullet. It’s not good for the animal otherwise.” In this way, the death of these animals is conceptualized in a similar manner to that of a pet that has to be put down. In this case, the death is no longer about necessity in terms of providing meat, but rather necessitated for the sake of the animal. The deepened connection to animals that have lived for longer than usual described to me by Sigrid and Oscar reflect an interaction between temporality and relationality, whereby the length of the relationship positively influences the closeness of the relationship between farmers and cattle, as expressed by the farmers.

Deciding to keep a cow for longer than normal and have it reproduce is often influenced by it carrying desirable physical characteristics to ensure good quality in the next generation of livestock. This decision then causes increased time to be spent with particular animals, leading to deeper perceived relationships between farmers and cattle. However, sometimes cattle cross the border from farm animal into a more ‘pet-like’ category because of their unique behaviour or personality. Several informants told me stories about special animals with unique personalities. For example, Alice told me about a special cow named Ingelin, who she describes in the following quote:

She was very special, she came to us in 2013, so four years ago and we had her and the other heifers, and they were running around, really scared and stressed and it’s like ‘What is this place I don’t want to be here, or do I want to be here? Where is the food?’ So I was out there cause I didn’t want them to be so scared so I was hanging out with them a lot, walking around them, giving them food and talking to them. And suddenly one day I was bending over for something, and someone came and just licked my back, and I turned around and there she was. So she was like ‘Hi’, and since that day, she’s been like, she’s been like a friend. Super nice but yeah she’s very special to me; she’s our supermodel. She’s been on every front page…She really like; she was so different from the others. She looks exactly like the others so if I’m just looking at the herd I can point her out because she looks exactly like the others but her behaviour is like, she’s um, she’s behaving like she’s safe. Like ‘I’m cool with this’ and that’s good and she never has shown any kind of aggression or escape tendencies.

The special relationship Alice describes suggests that it is not only duration of time that causes emotional connectedness but also the behaviour of the cow itself. Thus, despite the positive correlation between temporality and relationality sometimes experienced by farmers in terms of their relationships with cattle, it is not to say that the positive relationship always exists, nor is it the only way for relationships to become more deep. For example, when I asked Alice how she became attached to Ingelin her replies always came back to this particular moment of being licked on the back. Alice’s story to me illustrated that the deeper relationships between my informants and the animals they engaged with are sometimes based on complicated interactions, which may also lead to the informant spending more time than usual with the animal, thus deepening the bond further. In a corporeal sense, the relationship between Alice and Ingelin is signif-
icant. Being licked unexpectedly may have given Ingelin’s body more agency in Alice’s mind than has been asserted by other cows previously, causing her to experience the body of Ingelin differently to how she experiences other cattle.

Economic Reality

Despite the feelings of empathy, understanding, and connectedness that my informants express towards the animals they engage with, there is still the reality that they are conducting a business using animal bodies. In this context, the animal must exist to some extent as an economic commodity, though this is not something that has been explicitly stated to me by any of the informants. Rather, in the interviews when the animals are referred to in an economic sense is usually in an indirect way. For example, when Lovisa told me about some of the downsides of industrial slaughter involving cattle transport she said:

The animals lose six kilograms on average through the night [while transported]. They are losing water because they are so stressed. This is a sign something is not good. This is bad for the farmer because they lose six kilograms of payment [per animal].

In this quote, Lovisa shows concern over the stressed animal and gives the perspective of providing better animal welfare through the avoidance of transport. But inexplicitly, Lovisa also describes the animals as an economic commodity. The way Lovisa defines the bodies in terms of mass and payment introduces a completely new phraseology in comparison to the way the animal was described in the preceding discussion. Thus in terms of relationality, the relationships that caregivers experience with their cattle are not only relationships of care and compassion, but also economically charged relationships whereby the cattle provide economic services to the caregivers.

Similarly, when I asked farmers why they began using mobile slaughtering to slaughter their animals they all said that they changed their mode of slaughter for economic reasons. For example, Oscar and Sigrid nearly gave up on beef farming when the price they were offered by the industrial slaughterhouse became too low for them to support themselves. At this time, they were approached by the mobile slaughtering company and were offered more money for their cattle, so decided to stick with cattle farming. Similarly, Niklas decided to use mobile slaughtering because the payment was better than selling to a typical industrial slaughterhouse. Despite this, all the aforementioned farmers also expressed that they prefer to use the mobile abattoir because it makes them feel better about the welfare of their animals. For example, Sigrid says of the experience of walking her animals to the slaughterhouse: “…it feels good in the heart to follow them to the end.” These words in conjunction with the reality that Sigrid made the choice to use mobile slaughtering suggest duality in how she relates to her cattle. This dual experience can be described as a form of boundary labour. On the one hand, Sigrid conveys affection and empathy towards her animals in saying that it feels good to follow them to the end. However at the same time, Sigrid’s words suggest disconnect, as she is still able to take her animals to slaughter. The experience described by Sigrid reflects that she is engaging in boundary labour (Ellis, 2014), whereby she both connects to the cattle she kills, as well as accepts it as a fact that they need to be killed. This example shows that boundary labour is an important emotional task undergone by Sigrid as it allows her to walk her animals to slaughter, and yet still feel emotionally good about the relationship she has with her cattle. It may also be noted that the term Boundary labour was used by Ellis to describe the experiences of a group of cattle farmers where only 1/38 informants actually transported their own cattle to transport. Thus, Ellis found that boundary labour was an important tool for cattle farmers to be able to both care for their cattle and accept their deaths, even when they were not involved in slaughter. Thus, it may be an even more important emo-
tional tool for farmers in the context of mobile slaughter given that farmers are present for the deaths of their animals.

Phase one of Liminality: The Experience of Living Cattle

In this chapter I have discussed how informants experience living cattle bodies that they know will eventually have to be slaughtered. I focused on the experiences of farmers and other informants who spend long time periods caring for and engaging with living cattle, although I considered feedback from all informants.

Keeping cattle on farms is understood by informants as being necessary and natural due to corporeal and temporal understandings of the relationships between human and cattle bodies. The understanding of the necessity of meat for human consumption (which I call corporeal) is interdependent on the understanding of the relationship that humans have with cattle in history. Thus, the long perceived history of consuming cattle inspires informants’ understanding that humans need to consume meat in order to provide for our bodies in the minds of informants. As well as understanding cattle bodies as necessary on the farm for the meat that they produce, cattle bodies are additionally understood as necessary to the production of non-meat foods, such as grains. Thus, even outside of the context of slaughtering cattle for meat, cattle bodies are understood in a corporeal sense as a necessary part of food production in general. The decision to slaughter cattle is seen as necessary not only because it provides meat, but also because the animal bodies become too large to interact with. Thus, the corporeal experience of cattle caregivers influences the temporal relationship they have with cattle. When cattle bodies become too large to be engaged with by human bodies, this is perceived as a signal to informants that it is time for the cattle to be slaughtered. Providing good lives for the cattle kept on farms is perceived as being important to informants. In terms of relationality, this reflects an understanding that a relationship of care between farmers and cattle must be in place. Empathy in the form of the ability to imagine the lived experiences of cattle, both as individuals and as groups, is seen as essential in being able to have a good relationship with cattle. Additionally however, the ability to view the relationship that exists between cattle and farmers as positive is dependent on the understanding that cattle need the farmers in order to survive, and cannot survive on their own. Some of the relationships that develop between caregivers and specific animals become more deeply felt than the relationships caregivers have for all cattle. Informants describe a relationship between temporality and relationality, saying that deeper relationships sometimes develop after longer times spent interacting with particular animals. However, temporality is not the only factor influencing relationality, with certain individual animals being able to deepen the connections caregivers feel towards them by engaging with caregivers in memorable corporeal ways. In addition to the empathetic and caring relationships described by informants between themselves and cattle, economic relationships also exist. In terms of relationality, the cow is interacted with as an economic commodity, whereby it provides a service to the farmer.

The experiences of cattle described by the informants in this chapter are very similar to experiences of cattle caregivers described in other literature. For example, both Ellis and Wilkie describe their informants as simultaneously feeling connection and disconnection towards their animals. The informants in this study have expressed feelings of both empathy and understanding towards their cattle, whilst at the same time being able to describe them in economic terms. As has been described previously, Ellis describes these conflicting and yet coexisting feelings towards cattle as possible because of emotional work he terms as ‘boundary labour’ (2014). Thus, it seems that both farmers that use industrialized slaughter and farmers that opt for mobile slaughter both engage in boundary labour. With regards to pre-industrialized slaughter, there are no accounts of the emotional conflicts that farmers faced. However, those farmers who produced beef in pre-industrialized times would also have had to care for their animals as well as had to accept their death at some point, so it may be the case that they also would have engaged in boundary labour.
6. Experiencing Slaughter

Through thematic analysis of interviews and field notes, I have found that when it is time for cattle to be slaughtered, the way that cattle are perceived, talked about and experienced by the people around them begins to change. On the day of slaughter, farmers deliver their cattle to the slaughterhouse, and then pass them over into the care of the slaughterers. Once the animal has entered into the slaughterhouse, the experience of the cattle bodies begins to change through a process of transformation, dependent on the removal of animal-characteristics. In this section, I describe the process of slaughter first from the perspective of the farmer, and then follow the cow into the slaughterhouse and engage with the perspectives of those who spend time inside. The thematic analysis of interviews and field notes from participant observation yielded several subthemes including the farmers role during slaughter, coexisting connection and disconnection experienced by slaughterers towards living cattle, and the process of transformation as a process of deconstruction. Dividing this chapter into these themes allow me to relay informant’s perspectives of cattle bodies throughout the process of slaughter in a linear sense.

The Farmer’s role during slaughter: the changing of hands

One informant amongst the caregivers, the farmers, Sigrid, explained to me both in person and in a questionnaire her involvement during the slaughtering process. During a visit to Sigrid’s farm on a day her and her husband were having their cattle slaughtered, I asked her how the slaughtering process happens, to which she replied: “[The cattle] go into the wagon and we take them to the fence there and then they go into the slaughterhouse and then bang in the head”. I further explored this topic in a questionnaire when I asked Sigrid “Do you feel that you are a part of the process of killing your animals?” to which she responded: “Yes in a way, I drive the animals into the slaughterhouse, but the killing itself is done by the butcher”. These two responses together suggest that while Sigrid is involved with cattle prior to slaughter, she does not perceive herself as being involved in the actual act of slaughter. This understanding was agreed upon by Axel the slaughterer, who when I asked him how he perceives farmers engagement during slaughter said:

    Most of the farmers usually stay outside… some are more involved and want to come inside and see what we are doing, but not the majority

Sigrid and Axel’s words reflect a new spatial and corporeal experience of cattle bodies for farmers on the day of slaughter. In terms of spatiality, although the slaughter of cattle occurs at the same location that farmers occupy, farmers still experience a spatial disconnect from cattle bodies during slaughter via the entrance of cattle into the mobile abattoir, where farmers themselves do not enter. In terms of corporeality, farmers literally lose touch with their animals when it is time for slaughter. Up to slaughter, farmers spend time coaxing animals into the slaughtering truck, engaging with the animals physically, however when it is time for an individual animal to enter into the mobile abattoir, the animal leaves the hands of the farmer and enters the slaughterhouse. However, still the smells and sounds of the abattoir are present even outside, thus farmers still experience the slaughter. For example, Sigrid has referenced to me that she follows her animals “…the whole way down the line till the “bang””. But, one sense that farmers tend to lose, since they do not usually enter the abattoir is the sight and touch of their animals. Thus, while
farmers are not totally corporeally disconnected from the act of slaughter, there are still changes in their ability to engage with cattle during this time.

The coexistence of connection and disconnection to cattle as living things as experienced by slaughterers.

As Sigrid explains it, the last part of her involvement with the slaughtering process is to “drive [the cattle] into the slaughterhouse”. Thus, the cattle walk away from the farmer and enter into the care of the slaughterer. In terms of relationality between informants and cattle, this reflects a change in the experience of cattle. During a conversation I had with Axel about how he comes to terms with killing animals, he reflected on how his experience with cattle is different than the farmers, saying:

I think it would be hard for the farmers who spend one or two years with them [to see the slaughter]… Usually I spend only four seconds with the animal…so I don’t spend much time with them.

Axel’s words emphasize the different nature of the relationship with cattle that a farmer has compared to a slaughterer. In particular, Axel references the time spent with cattle in relation to the ease of killing cattle, relates back to the discussion in chapter five regarding the relationship between temporality and relationality when it comes to how farmers engage with cattle. In this case, Axel acknowledges that he spends much less time with the living cattle than do the farmers, and says that this makes it easier for him to kill them, which reflects that the lack of time spent with the animals induces a less-deeply felt relationship between Axel and the cattle he slaughters.

Alice has mentioned to me her awe for Axel and his colleagues who slaughter everyday saying to me “I have a great respect for the people who do this all day long without becoming completely disconnected”. Which suggests that those who do not physically slaughter the animals have the perspective that it is an unpleasant or difficult activity. The reason for Alice’s awe at the work that Axel does may be analysed in terms of relationality and temporality, as was discussed in the preceding chapter. As was mentioned before, Axel spends very little time with living cattle, while in contrast, Alice has spent a great deal of time with living cattle and cares for cattle on a regular basis on her sister’s farm. Considering the increased depth of relationship described as occurring with increased temporal experience of cattle, it makes sense that Alice would perceive slaughtering animals differently than Axel would. This differs from the discussion of slaughtering one’s own animals (as was done on page 32), because Alice does not talk about slaughtering her own animals, but rather just the act of slaughter in general. Thus it seems that Alice’s increased time spent with cattle, as well as her increased relationship to cattle, in comparison with Axel, may cause Alice to extend compassion to animals that are not her own.

Despite the short time that Axel spends with the living animal, and the fact that it is unlikely for a deep relationship to develop during this time, Axel still utilizes different ‘mental techniques’ in order to engage in slaughtering. Based on my interviews with Axel, it seems that during his brief time with living cattle, he both connects to cattle as living things, but at the same time tries to disconnect from the thought that they are animals. For example, when I asked Axel how he felt the first time he slaughtered, he said to me:

First time I slaughtered an animal it was hard, but this got easier and easier over time… maybe I got dumbed off I don’t know, you kind of stop seeing them as living things. If you see it as a living animal it makes it hard.

Further, Axel described to me what he thinks about during work, saying:
I always try to think about other things when I’m working… I think about my next travel plans or anything [other than] work. If I couldn’t do this I would probably have to quit. I think other people in the slaughterhouse probably have similar things on their mind, but it’s hard to say… it’s nothing we talk about.

In these quotes, Axel describes from his perspective the utility that disconnecting from the concept of a living animal has in his own line of work, saying that it would be hard for him to do what he does without disconnecting. In terms of relationality, these quotes are meaningful because they suggest that there is an active choice to disconnect from cattle because “If you see it as a living animal it makes it hard.” Thus, it is not just the lack of time in which Axel engages with living cattle which influences the relationship he feels with them, but also an active choice to limit the relationship so that he can carry on with his work. The second quote is particularly interesting because it also acknowledges the way that Axel experiences the closeness inside of the slaughterhouse to the body-animal problematic. Axel says that he thinks about other things while he works, in particular the fact that he thinks about his next travel plans suggests that he does use mental techniques to experience a space other than the one he is physically inside of, suggesting further disconnection from the act of slaughtering living cattle.

However, despite this, Axel was also adamant about making the animals calm before he shoots them. He described to me his process of calming the animals down so that he could shoot them, saying:

Sometimes the cows are upset or moving around so I sing for them or talk to them quietly. I don’t know if it really works but they become still and it makes me feel better.

This quote is somewhat contradictory to the other quotes above. On the one hand, Axel describes his utilization of disconnecting from the concept of the animal as a living thing in order to be able to carry on with his work. On the other hand, in this quote, Axel actually describes quite the opposite. By singing to the animals, he is acknowledges the living animal and engages with it as such. In other words, Axel utilizes an understanding of cattle as living things in order to calm them. In this case, he displays an empathetic attitude towards the animals, suggesting that he does connect with them as living beings on some level. Additionally, Axel’s account of singing to animals suggests that he experiences cattle as living things in a corporeal sense, as the animals stop moving when he sings, making it easier for his own body to engage with them. At the same time, in his previous quotes describing his experience during slaughter, Fredrick says he tries to forget that they are living things. This reflects a different sort of experience with cattle bodies in terms of relationality than does his account of disconnecting from the animals as living beings. Thus, from Axel’s point of view, it seems that once the animal enters into the slaughterhouse, he engages with it as both an animal and a product. Axel appeals to the animal nature of cattle by singing to them and making them calm, but also disconnects from the living animal by keeping his mind on other things. Like Sigrid’s ability to both walk her cattle to slaughter, and develop meaningful relationships with them as was discussed at the end of chapter 5, Axel’s engagement with living cattle suggests that he also engages in boundary labour as defined by Ellis (2014). Fredrick emotionally engages himself in such a way that it allows him to complete his task as a slaughterer, however he also is able to engage with them in an empathetic sense. This is interesting, as Ellis (2014) used this term only to refer to farmers who engaged with living animals. Specifically, Ellis says that animal slaughter is a “…complex process, but it takes only seconds and is largely impersonal”. However, the empathy conveyed by Axel’s use of singing and talking techniques suggests that perhaps the slaughtering process is more personal than suggested from Ellis study.

Alice has mentioned to me her awe for Axel and his colleagues who slaughter everyday saying to me “I have a great respect for the people who do this all day long without becoming com-
pletely disconnected”. Which suggests that those who do not physically slaughter the animals have the perspective that it is an unpleasant or difficult activity, which they may feel the need to disconnect from. The reason for Alice’s awe at the work that Axel does may be analysed in terms of relationality and temporality, as was discussed in the preceding chapter. As was mentioned before, Axel spends very little time with living cattle, while in contrast, Alice has spent a great deal of time with living cattle and cares for cattle on a regular basis on her sister’s farm. Considering the increased depth of relationship described as occurring with increased temporal experience of cattle, it makes sense that Alice would perceive slaughtering animals as more differently than Axel would. This differs from the discussion of slaughtering one’s own animals (as was done on page 32), because Alice does not talk about slaughtering her own animals, but rather just the act of slaughter in general. Thus it seems that Alice’s increased time spent with cattle, as well as her increased relationship to cattle, in comparison with Axel, may cause Alice to extend compassion to animals that are not her own.

The transformation from living animal to consumable product

Given that a living cow enters the mobile slaughterhouse on one end, and meat exits the mobile slaughterhouse on the other end, it is clear that a change to the cow’s body must take place inside of the slaughtering truck. The way that the change of animal bodies is experienced has not been described to me as being sudden shift from one or the other; rather, the perceived change to the cow’s body has been described as ambivalent and sometimes hard to pin point exactly, causing some people discomfort. For example, Alice has said to me during several personal conversations that while she is okay with what happens inside of the slaughtering truck, it is not something that she necessarily enjoys experiencing herself. During a phone interview, Alice described to me how she perceives the process of slaughter as a process of transformation, saying:

It still grosses me out a little bit. There is a transition from animal to food, where you are seeing all the gross parts… taking off the head, the legs, the intestines, the skin comes off… the process is kind of gross.

When Alice says that the process of slaughter “…grosses [her] out a little bit…” it reflects her corporeal experience of the cattle bodies in an immediate sense. In this quote, Alice describes the source of her disgust as the sight of particular parts of cattle bodies. Thus, suggesting that particular visual aspects of cattle bodies evoke a corporeal response in Alice. Further, I asked Alice when this process of transformation begins for her, to which she replied:

The transformation starts after they cut [the throat]. They skin the head and cut off the legs. Skinning the head is not the most pleasant to watch. Also, when they pull the oesophagus out… it’s really a transition between a live animal and food. The period where it’s neither an animal nor food is when they are taking all this stuff away and cut the animal in half.

Alice’s descriptions of the process of deconstructing cattle bodies suggests that there are perceived corporeal aspects of cattle bodies which prevent them from being seen as meat. In particular it seems that the skins, hooves, heads, and internal organs must be removed before cattle bodies can be perceived as anything edible. Axel also described his perception of the cow’s body changing and transforming as physical modifications are made to the body. Specifically, Axel explained to me:

When they enter the slaughterhouse they are still an animal you have to take care of… basically I think of them like an animal until they are shot and bled, then I really know
it’s dead. I’m not sure how other people see it, but for me it’s a process… but the cow changes after I kill it. It takes maybe two minutes after I first see the cow before I start to see it as anything else.

Both Alice’s and Axel’s descriptions of the perceived changes to the animals body reflect a non-instant process of the animal becoming meat in their mind. Axel acknowledges the aspect of temporality in terms of how he perceives the cow, and in his reference if time in the process of transformation and the physical changes this entails. In particular, the “two minutes” referenced by Axel corresponds to the time it takes to shoot and bleed the animal, a process I later discuss as ‘de-animation’.

De-Animation and De-animalization:

In the preface to Vialles’ 1994 work ‘Animal to Edible, Héritier-Augé describes animal bodies as becoming meat once they have undergone de-animation and de-animalization. Vialles herself describes these processes as stunning/bleeding and de-animalization. Here, I use Héritier-Augé’s definitions of these terms as they create more continuity between the two steps and also do not create distinction between the act of shooting and the act of bleeding.

Vialles describes de-animation (under the terminology of stunning and bleeding) as the part during slaughter that renders the animal motionless (1994). The animal no longer behaves like an animal. When it comes to the slaughter of cattle in a mobile abattoir, this part involves the shooting of the cattle and the slitting of their throats. As Axel says, these are the parts in the process that let him “really know [the cow] is dead”. However, as is described by my informants, the cow’s body is still not yet perceived as a meat product.

The next part of the process as described by Vialles is de-animalization. This is the part of the slaughtering process where the animals lose their perceived animal like characteristics, and furthermore undergo ‘aestheticization’. Though Sigrid has not followed the cattle inside of the slaughterhouse, she described the processes that occur during this time, saying:

The head is removed. The legs below the knee are removed. The skin is removed. The abdomen is taken away. The body is cleaved.

As Sigrid describes, the process of de-animalization is a process of removing animal characteristics. It is a removal of the parts of the body that my informants seem to perceive as not being a part of meat, but rather perhaps as a part of animals. The process of removing animal-like characteristics has been explored in other literature as a process of ‘deconstruction’. For example, Wang and Pendelbury (2016) describe the modern industrial slaughterhouses saying:

The modern idea of the abattoir is more than a place where animals are killed for human consumption. It is also designed to optimise a disassembling process that efficiently took apart the livestock into small pieces.

This quote from Wang and Pendelbury (2016) suggest that it is the process of disassembling that makes animals into meat. This descriptions is supported by the informants who have told me about all of the parts of the body that need to be removed before the animal body can be seen as a meat product (as was also brought up by Alice above). Thus, the process of transforming a living cow can be described as a process of disassembly and removal, as outlined by Wang and Pendelbury (2016).

Once cattle bodies have been processed through the slaughterhouse, large pieces of meat have emerged. The meat exiting the truck no longer has many of the characteristics that my informants could use to identify it as an animal. Special characteristics, such as markings on the skin or
the shape of the face are gone. Thus, by the time the cow’s body exits the slaughtering truck to enter the refrigeration truck, it has transformed from animal into meat from the perspectives of informants. However, as Vialles describes the process of de-animalization as a process of ‘aestheticization’, it is not only removal of part of the body but also careful decisions to shape the body in a particular way. The process is about removal of non-edible characteristics, but it is also about the creation of meat. The aestheticization of meat thus continues in the meat processing plant.

Phase 2 of liminality: The liminal experience of cattle bodies as they transform from animals into meat

This chapter has shown how informants’ experience cattle bodies throughout the liminal phase of slaughter. In this section I have focussed on the experiences of those working inside of the slaughterhouse, however began with a description of farmers changing experience of cattle bodies on the day of slaughter.

On the day of slaughter, farmer’s engagement with cattle bodies seems to change in terms of spatiality and corporeality. In terms of spatiality, farmers become spatially disconnected from cattle bodies once cattle enter into the mobile abattoir. In terms of corporeality, slaughterers experience changes to how they experience the bodies of cattle in that they can no longer touch the bodies when they become spatially separated, and cannot see most of the process that occurs inside of the abattoir. However, farmers may still hear and smell the effects of the slaughtering process. The passing on of cattle from the hands of farmers into the hands of slaughterers reflects a different relational experience of cattle bodies. In particular, the ability to slaughter animals is seen as easier for slaughterers who have spent less time with the animals than for farmers who have spent a long time with animals. Thus in this sense, the temporality of ones relationship with living animals is perceived as influencing the deepness of relationship between informant and cattle bodies (as was discussed in the preceding chapter). Once cattle enter into the mobile abattoir it seems as though slaughterers both connect-to and disconnect-from the cattle bodies as living things. In terms of relationality, slaughterers both disengage and engage in short-termed relationships with living cattle. Disconnecting from animals seems to be used as a tool by slaughterers in order to avoid mental trauma from slaughtering. Additionally, it seems that although slaughterers share the same space as cattle, one coping mechanism seems to be ‘imagined spatiality’ whereby slaughterers may imagine they are in other spaces or engaged in other activities. However, slaughterers also engage in an empathetic relationship with cattle by singing to them in order to calm them down. This in turn reflects a corporeal experience of cattle bodies, whereby the slaughterer is confronted with the living cattle through the movements it makes, and therefore engages in singing in order to make the movements of the animal stop thereby making the physical act of shooting cattle easier for the slaughterer.

The process of slaughtering animals is seen by informants as a transformative process whereby physical aspects of cattle bodies are removed, thus affecting the perception of cattle bodies. The transformation from animal to meat is interpreted in both a corporeal and temporal sense. In terms of corporeality, the removal of particular parts of cattle bodies seems to be essential to the perceived transformation of how cattle bodies from animals to meat. The removal of these characteristics reflects a change in the visual experience of informants viewing cattle slaughter, and thus a change in the corporeal experience of cattle bodies. Additionally, time is referenced with regards to some of the physical changes that occur to the body, thus suggesting that the perceived transformation process from living animal to meat is also dependant on lived time. The physical transformation of cattle bodies that induces perceived changes to their identities from the perspectives of informants can be broken down into two sub-processes, described by Vialles (1994) as de-animation and de-animalization. De-animation and de-animalization can are described as the process where first the animal is rendered motionless, and secondly, rendered free of animal-
like characteristics, respectively. This entire process has been described as deconstruction by Wang and Pendelbury (2016), whereby animal bodies are taken apart inside of the slaughterhouse, rendering consumable products.

The idea that animal bodies go through a phase of liminality, whereby ‘the slaughtered beast is no longer one animal and not yet meat’ (Van Gennep 1909, via Vialles, 1994), is agreed upon in other literature. The process has been described, as mentioned above as a process of disassembly (Wang and Pendelbury, 2016) involving stages of de-animation as well as de-animalization (Héritier-Augé and Vialles, 1994) and this disassembly has also been brought up by my informants as important in terms of the transformation of animal to meat.

The experiences described in this chapter suggest that though the mobile slaughterhouse represents a unique scenario for engaging with cattle bodies, it however has similarities and differences to both industrial and pre-industrial slaughter. For example, Vialles describes the industrialized slaughterhouse as ‘a place that is no place’ and says that those who care for animals during their lifetime rarely follow their animals to the slaughterhouse (1994, pg. 29). In contrast to this, mobile slaughtering occurs on the farm where farmers live, and the farmers themselves have the responsibility of coaxing the animals inside of the mobile abattoir. Thus, cattle bodies are experienced in a much more personal manner during mobile slaughter than in industrialized slaughter. The shared space and increased involvement of farmers during slaughter reflects similarities between mobile slaughter and pre-industrial slaughter in terms of how cattle are engaged with. In particular, in both cases, the farmer would be present during slaughter, and would have the responsibility of keeping the animal calm during the process. However, in contrast, in mobile slaughter there is a new person killing the cattle, while in pre-industrial slaughter, slaughter was usually done by the farmer. Additionally, it is important to note that while the farmers follow their animals to the mobile abattoir, they do not usually enter the space, reflecting a similar separation from their cattle and the actual act of slaughter as is found in industrialized circumstances. A unique aspect of mobile slaughtering is the contact that occurs between farmers and slaughterers, which is usually found neither in industrial nor pre-industrial slaughter, the first because of logistics, and the second because they were often the same person.

Within the mobile slaughterhouse, cattle are experienced by informants in some ways similarly to and in some ways different from industrial and pre-industrial slaughter. In the mobile slaughterhouse, there are roughly six men working at a time. This is more than the number of those who would have been involved during pre-industrial slaughter, and much less than the number of those sometimes involved in industrialized slaughter (Myrdal and Morell, 2011; KLS Ugglarps AB, n.d.). Accounts from industrialized slaughterhouses have suggested that due to the high level of division of labour within the slaughterhouse, those who work there no longer feel any responsibility for the actual death of the animal (Vialles, 1994; Pachirat, 2011; Purcell, 2011). The effect of this separation is that there is confusion about who is responsible for the act of killing. In Vialles’ (1994) work, she found that the separation between the person responsible for shooting cattle and the person responsible for cutting the throats of the cattle (the two jobs that combine to render the animal dead) meant that there was confusion amongst workers with regards to who was actually responsible for the death. Pachirat (2011) found a similar situation in the slaughterhouse he studied, some informants felt that it was the shooter alone that should carry the responsibility for death, even though the animal is not technically dead until it has had it’s throat slit. The job of shooting and the job of throat cutting are both done by the same person in the mobile abattoir and the ones who do this task admit to themselves and others that they are responsible for killing. In other words, there is no ambiguity in the mobile slaughterhouse terms of who is responsible for killing, as seen in the industrialized slaughterhouse according to the studies presented above. Additionally, those who work in the mobile slaughterhouse spend a much longer amount of time with each animal body, engaging in more complicated tasks than those in the industrialized slaughterhouse. The lack of ambiguity in terms of responsibility for death, in addition to the longer amount of time spent working with one animal then reflects similarities to pre-industrialized slaughter. In both mobile slaughter and pre-industrialized slaughter,
responsibility for death is obvious, and there is extended contact between one animal and one person. However, it is still true that the person who raises the animals is not the same person who kills them in the case of the mobile abattoir, which was often the case in pre-industrialized beef production.

The idea that animal bodies go through a phase of liminality, whereby ‘the slaughtered beast is no longer one animal and not yet meat’ (Van Gennep 1909, via Vialles, 1994), is agreed upon in other literature. The process has been described, as mentioned above as a process of disassembly (Wang and Pendelbury, 2016) involving stages of de-animation as well as de-animalization (Héritier-Augé and Vialles, 1994) and this disassembly has also been brought up by my informants as important in terms of the transformation of animal to meat.
7. Experiencing the Meat

This final empirical chapter focuses on how the bodies of cattle are interacted with and thought about once they are labelled as ‘meat’. This chapter looks at the perspective of the head of the meat packing plant with regards to how meat is perceived in the packaging plant, as well as the way that those who have worked in previous parts of beef production perceive and engage with meat. The thematic analysis of informant interviews as well as field notes yielded several sub-themes including the how cattle bodies are perceived at the meat processing plant, the outcomes of food labels with a QR code, the importance of a consumer understanding meat production, and re-engaging with the body of the animal. I have framed this chapter using the preceding subthemes in order to illustrate the perspectives of cattle bodies during last phase of liminality from the time when cattle bodies arrive at the meat processing plant to when they arrive at the grocery store.

Perception of cattle bodies at meat processing plant

Based on the feedback from my informants, it seems that once cattle bodies have arrived into the cooling truck at the end of slaughter, they are firmly identified as meat. The meat is then transported from the farm via a cooling truck and taken to a meat processing plant owned by the mobile slaughtering company. In order to understand how the bodies of cattle are experienced differently once they have arrived at the meat processing plant, I asked Rasmus, the head of the processing plant, how he would compare the experience at the mobile slaughterhouse to that of the meat processing plant, to which he replied:

The biggest difference is that you don’t kill the animals here. It’s…clean[er] this way… you don’t have the skin or the feet. When it comes here, one cow is in four pieces, it’s in big parts, but it already looks like meat. [There’s] not so much blood or the same smell as in the slaughterhouse… here it’s already food. But when you are at the farm or see them outside [they’re] animals.

Further, in our discussion comparing the various roles within meat production Rasmus said:

During slaughter, it’s kind of gross. Me in person, I have no problem with everything cause I know what happened. But I would not like to work in the slaughterhouse. I have no problem with what happened, but I don’t want to kill them. But I have been in this industry, so I have no problem with it, but I [prefer] this side of the industry.

Rasmus’ words suggest that he prefers to experience cattle bodies at the meat processing plant in comparison to the experience at the slaughterhouse because of the different corporeal experiences they bring with them. Rasmus (and also Alice in the previous chapter) talks about the experience being ‘gross’ at the slaughterhouse because of the smell and the blood, reflecting a sensorial experience that he does not enjoy. In contrast, Rasmus prefers the work at the meat processing plant because it is ‘clean’, suggesting a different sort of corporeal experience with cattle bodies than exists at the mobile slaughterhouse. The experience at the meat processing plant is free from many of the corporeal aspects of experiencing cattle bodies at slaughter, including the smell and the sight of blood. As was discussed in chapter 6 with regards to the process of disassembly, it
seems that the smell of cattle bodies undergoing slaughter as well as the presence of blood are also necessary components to be removed before the animal body can be perceived as meat. The different corporeal experience of cattle bodies described by Rasmus at the meat processing plant in comparison to the experience at the slaughterhouse indicates that the space in which cattle bodies are engaged with also impacts the experience of the bodies. Rasmus describes interacting with meat in the clean space of the processing plant, while he describes interacting with animals in the comparatively dirty slaughterhouse, suggesting that the spatial context of interaction impacts the way that cattle bodies are perceived.

Despite Rasmus’s assertion that he perceives and engages with animal bodies as meat when they arrive at the meat processing plant, it is not to say that the perception of and engagement with cattle bodies does not further change during the process of refinement. For example, Ebba, who used to work at the processing plant, described to me the process of refining the meat, saying:

> We have this warehouse where we are actually hanging the bodies of cows for seven to ten days. And the reason for this is that it actually becomes more tender during this. It also releases some of the fluids from the meat, which makes the meat tastier and not so moist as it is normally. And then after seven to ten days we are moving it to an industrial building that we have in Eksilstuna and there we have people cutting up the meat from a whole body down to bone free sirloin steaks or tenderloin and so on. And we are also taking care of the minced meat and bones and yes, everything.

Ebba’s use of culinary words to describe particular cuts of meat suggest that although the cattle bodies may already be perceived as meat when they enter, they still undergo further transformation to make them even more directly identifiable as food products while they are in the meat processing plant. The use of culinary terms to describe the meat such as ‘tender’, ‘tastier’, ‘sirloin steaks’, and ‘tenderloin’ suggest that the cattle bodies are perceived more as food the more that they are refined. Specifically, in terms of relationality, the new terminology used by Ebba to describe the bodies of cattle reflects a perceived culinary relationship between her and the refined cattle bodies.

Food labels with a QR code

Once the cattle bodies have been refined into the desired cuts, they are packaged with a label including a QR code, which may be scanned by consumers in order to receive more information about the meat they are purchasing. This is fairly unique in the meat industry, with most meat labels including nothing more than a corporation name and the country of origin. Having never tried the QR code for myself, I asked Alice what I would see if I scanned a label, to which she replied:

> When you scan the QR code you will be brought to our website and you will get information about the specific animal, including sex, breed, age, as well as some recipes and parts where you can read about the process. And there is also a picture of the farmer and a story about the farm.

Thus, based on Alice’s account, it seems that anyone who scanned a QR code would be confronted with a much more detailed story than is typical of meat packaging today. In particular, they would know about the particular people and animals involved in the production of the meat. The addition of more detailed labels to the meat was something that was introduced by Alice and her mother Lovisa, as they wanted consumers to know more about the story behind the meat that they consume, including a story of people as well as the animals. During an interview at the
headquarters for the mobile slaughtering company, Lovisa and I discussed some of the perceived benefits of more information on meat packages:

Nicole: And what kind of a different experience [do detailed labels] provide for the consumer? Why should [consumers] want to know where their meat comes from?

Lovisa: First of all because 2-3 times a year there are scandals involving meat. The last year [2016] it was two big scandals in Brazil where they were cheating with their meat. They say there weren’t antibiotics, but there was, they say it was a cow, but maybe it was a horse. And this is imported here for cheap meat. And with cheap meat there is always something wrong. Maybe the animal was treated wrong. So people read about this because they want to be sure about what they are eating. So for one thing, there are safety reasons, but there is also the desire for the consumer who wants local meat. Maybe they are also interested in the breed, so I think there are a lot of reasons, but I think the most important one is safety.

In this quote, Lovisa focuses on the idea of increased safety provided to consumers through increasing the information that they can access about the meat they consume. The focus on safety suggests that Lovisa understands these labels as a way to allow for consumers to be more careful about what they put into their own bodies. Additionally, Lovisa perceives the labels as providing the ability for consumers to have a stronger relationship with the production aspect of their meat, implying that consumers may want to know where the meat comes from and to be sure that the animals had a good life. I also discussed this topic with Lovisa’s daughter Alice who took a slightly different perspective on the benefits of knowing more about the meat, saying:

[If] you talk about it in terms of flavour or eating experience, or quality, you also now have the opportunity to compare, ‘What’s the difference between eating a heifer, and what’s the difference between eating a young bull, of different breeds and different ages?’

Alice’s focus on the sensorial experience of flavour suggests that like her mother, she also perceives that the labels provide corporeal benefits to the consumer, although with a focus on enjoyment rather than safety. Additionally, Alice notes that food labels with a QR code may allow for consumers to make connections between particular corporeal experiences and the animal bodies they represent, which suggests that Alice perceives the labels as being able to provide more for consumers in terms of their relationship to the animals behind their food.

In addition to the discussion of perceived benefits provided by detailed labels, I heard concerns from one informant regarding the amount of detail on labels. During a phone interview with the meat plant operator Rasmus, I asked him how he thought consumers feel about the labels, to which he responded:

I think they like it because they can really find out which farmer or which area in Sweden it comes from… [But] I don’t think they would want to have a relationship with the animal. I think knowing the farmer is enough.

Rasmus’ words suggest that while he perceives some of the same benefits from the detailed labels, as do Lovisa and Alice, he also perceives that consumers might not want to know specifics about the animals that they consume. In order to analyse this statement I take this quote in combination to Rasmus descriptions of how he engages with cattle bodies on page 38. On page 38, Rasmus says that he prefers the work at the processing plant because it is cleaner and also states that he prefers not to kill the cattle. This suggests that while Rasmus may be comfortable knowing about the deaths of cattle, he is not actually comfortable with doing it. Additionally, Rasmus
is the only one of my informants who does not often spend time in the mobile abattoir, thus his experience of the deaths of animals is more limited than other informants. Given this information in combination with Rasmus’ perception that consumers may not want to experience animal bodies, it seems that this perspective may stem from his own limited spatial, temporal, and corporeal engagement with living cattle and their slaughter, and from his own discomfort at the idea of killing living cattle. Rasmus’ perspective that consumers may not want to know about cattle bodies is unique amongst informants, and brings me to the next topic of discussion; how informants hope for consumers to engage with the meat that they eat.

Respecting and understanding meat production

After hearing Rasmus’ doubts about consumers’ willingness to become engaged with the animals that they consume, I asked Alice about this as well. Specifically, I asked Alice if she was worried that the labels might make consumers feel uncomfortable with the association between their food and particular animals. Alice responded by saying:

I believe that people who are uncomfortable knowing about the food shouldn’t choose to eat that kind of food. For me, if I have the right to eat meat then I think I should watch the process. If I couldn’t visit the abattoir because it made me feel uncomfortable then that tells me that something is wrong.

Alice’s words suggest that for her, having an understanding of meat production is like a minimum ‘requirement’ for eating meat, which reflect that she feels that consumers should have some sort of relationship to the meat that they consume. Further, for Alice herself, she needs to be comfortable with the corporeal experience of witnessing cattle slaughter in order to feel that consuming meat is a good thing to do. The opinions expressed by Alice are common amongst informants. For instance, during a phone interview Axel described his own experience of learning more about the production of beef in a holistic sense, saying:

We (the slaughterers) talk quite a lot with the farmers. The connection is nice and it’s fun to talk. Talking with them has increased my understanding of the whole process. In the bigger [slaughterhouses] you see what you do and then you go home. Here, you see the farmer, and what they do and everything. I think it’s much nicer to do this. It’s more work but it’s also more interesting.

Axel’s words reflect a difference in terms of relationality when it comes to how he experiences mobile slaughtering in comparison to industrialized slaughter. Specifically, Axel says that he prefers to have the knowledge that comes with a relationship with those who have raised the animals he eventually slaughters. After reflecting on his own experience of learning more about beef production, Axel expressed his desire for consumers to know more, saying:

I think people should really learn more about meat and where it comes from, where any food comes from really…it makes them understand more about how it’s produced and gives more understanding of the animals. People don’t understand the hard work or the animals. I think we should appreciate it more. They don’t see the animals behind the meat.

This quote reflects that beyond the relationships he feels are important between various actors in beef production, the relationships between consumers and the animals they eat are also important. It seems that for Axel, the spatial aspect of mobile slaughter in comparison to industrialized slaughter has allowed for him to engage more with farmers and to learn more about beef production as a whole, thus causing him to want to inspire others to take steps to learn the same
information. If we compare the spatial aspect of Axel and Rasmus’ experience of cattle, it is clear that Rasmus has not had the same opportunity to engage with farmers or see the living cattle to the same extent that Axel has, thus possibly resulting in the perspective described on page 40. Axel and Alice’s feelings, that it is important for consumers to know more about the meat that they consume, were also echoed by Ebba, who when I asked her about her meat-eating philosophy, said:

We should eat meat that we know comes from good farmers where the animals have lived well, where they have had the best feed ever possible, and they had farmers looking out for them every day, and they also have ended their life in the best possible way. That is something that I’m proud of and that I can stand for and respect.

Thus, in similar fashion to Axel, Ebba displays a desire for an increased empathetic relationship between consumers and the animals that they consume. In particular, Ebba says that we should eat meat that we know comes from an animal that had a good life, suggesting she wishes for consumers to acknowledge and care about the living animals behind the meat that they consume. Based on the perspectives described here, it seems that those engaged in the mobile slaughtering industry feel strongly that consumers should have a better understanding of the process behind meat production, and additionally should acknowledge the animals that become their meat.

Re-Engaging with the body of the animal

Beyond asking informants how they want consumers to engage with meat, I also asked them how they themselves engage with the meat they have helped to produce. The perspectives ranged on this topic, with some informants connecting cuts of meat back to particular animals, and other informants simply seeing the meat as meat (though still acknowledging that it did indeed come from a living animal). For example, I asked Axel how he perceives the meat that results from slaughter, to which he said:

Really when the meat comes out at the end it’s not an animal anymore. For me it’s all the same, I eat all sorts of meat. In the end, for me, the meat is meat. I don’t connect it to a particular animal

Taking this quote in combination with Axel’s quote on page 40, it seems that the relational aspect between Axel and the animal bodies that he consumes is not based on individual animals but rather understanding that meat comes from animals in general. In terms of relationality, this reflects a non-personal relationship between Axel and individual cattle, but rather a general understanding that meat does indeed come from animals. In contrast to this, when I asked Sigrid a similar question via an online questionnaire, she gave a much different response. The question and response are as follows:

Nicole: When you consume the meat that comes from your animals, how does this make you feel? Do you connect the meat to particular animals on the farm? How much is the meat connected to the animal?

Sigrid: I have no problem eating the meat we produce ourselves. I know what animal it is and how it was raised. Sure, I might sometimes imagine that this particular piece of meat comes from a specific animal. I mark the meat in the freezer with the date and sometimes the name of the animal, to know from which animal the meat comes from. Sometimes I think: this piece of meat came from the cow who provided, for example, such nice calves, what a pity we had to kill her. Or what a magnificent bull this piece of meat came from.
Sigrid’s words illuminate the fact that she does not feel discomfort in connecting meat back to a particular animal. In terms of relationality, it seems that Sigrid maintains a close relationship with the animal bodies that she has cared for even once they return to her as meat. Looking back at the correlation between temporality and relationality discussed in chapters 5 and 6, it seems that the amount of time spent with living animals may impact the relationship between informants and animal bodies, even once the bodies are perceived as meat. In this case, Axel says that he does not make connections to particular animals and Sigrid says that she does. Axel has not spent nearly as much time with the animals as has Sigrid, and thus it is unlikely that he develops the same relationship with the animals, which seems to carry on into an experience of cattle bodies as meat.

Phase three of liminality: Experiencing the meat

This chapter has aimed to explore how informants experience the bodies of cattle during the last phase of liminality, when they have been defined as meat. This chapter included perspectives from a variety of informants, however highlighted the experiences of the informant working at the meat processing plant.

When cattle bodies arrive at the meat processing plant, they are already perceived as meat when they arrive. The experience of cattle bodies in the context of the processing plant has been described as different from at the slaughterhouse from a corporeal perspective because certain sensorial aspects of experiencing cattle bodies, such as blood and smells, are not present at the processing plant. Although cattle bodies are already described as meat when they arrive at the meat processing plant, they undergo further transformations in order to make them more food-like. The use of culinary language to describe small cuts of cattle bodies, suggests that the cattle bodies are experienced more and more as food the more that they are processed.

One of the special aspects of the meat produced by the mobile slaughtering company is that the meat is labelled with a QR code, which can be scanned with consumers in order to obtain more information about the meat. The information provided on these labels includes information about how the meat was produced; where it was produced, who produced it, and information specific to the animal the meat came from. The general goal of the labels is to provide more information to consumers, as well as to potentially create a relationship between consumers and the source of their meat. Informants have described the labels as beneficial because they are perceived as providing corporeal benefits to consumers in the sense that they provide consumers with more knowledge, which in turn allows them to ensure the safety of what they are eating. Additionally, the labels allow consumers to correlate flavour experience with knowledge about the specific type of animal being consumed. This perspective in turn reflects a perceived benefit of connecting corporeal experiences with particular animals, indicating a deeper relationship between consumers and the animals they eat.

Many informants indicated a desire for consumers to know more about the meat that they consume. In particular, informants expressed the opinion that consumers should be more aware of the work that is involved in producing beef, as well as to acknowledge the animals that eventually become the meat that they consume. In terms of relationality, this reflects a wish from the informants’ side for consumers to have stronger relationships with the animals they consume. Most informants expressed that when they re-engage with cattle bodies as meat, they make a connection to the living cattle that the meat came from. However, there were different levels to this connection. For instance, one informant expressed connecting meat to cattle in general, and not to particular individuals, while another informant actually described labelling meat with the descriptions of the individual animals it came from.

The way that cattle bodies are described by those at the meat processing plant used by the mobile slaughtering company is similar to the accounts of meat being described in industrialized slaughterhouses, where the processing plant is usually attached to the slaughterhouse (Vialles, 1994; Pachirat; 2011). Specifically, informants describe the cattle bodies as clean products in need of refinement. Vialles and Pachirat both describe ‘dirty’ and ‘clean’ ends to the slaughter-
house, reflecting the slaughtering floor and the meat processing side, respectively. This separation is also understood by informants in this study, however here these ‘sides’ are separated in a spatial sense as the slaughterhouse and the meat packaging plant. In stark contrast with today, the meat sold in pre-industrialized times was not processed in sterile environments (Rämme et al., 2012). Thus experiences of meat in pre-industrialized times might not have been as clean products disassociated from animals. What is interesting about the meat produced from the mobile slaughterhouse however, is that it is labelled with QR codes allowing for consumers to access more information about the production of the meat and the specific animal that it came from. In contrast to many meat labels, which provide information about the cut and the location of origin (Verbeke and Ward, 2006), these labels provide more detailed information about specific farmers and specific animals. While I have not interviewed consumers in this research, informants have told me that they feel the QR codes help to reconnect the consumers to the animals and the farmers through the increased access to information. This can be seen as reflecting a desire for a return to pre-industrial consumer-food relationships, where consumers knew how their food was produced. Despite this, there is no denying that there are still differences between consumers experience of meat produced by the mobile slaughtering company and how consumers would have experienced meat prior to industrial times. While there is increased information on the packages, consumers today are still spatially separated from the farmers and animals that contributed to their meat, whereas in the case of pre-industrialized beef production, consumers would have been those who were involved in the production of the meat or else were aware of it as it would have happened in locality to themselves, as is described by Myrdal and Morell (2011). In this study, informants expressed a desire to know where the meat they were eating came from, which was also found by Vialles (1994) who found that many stockbreeders (cattle farmers) wished to eat their own animals, in order to know that the meat was of good quality. Additionally, Vialles (1994) also commented on farmers’ desire to know what they were eating for the purpose of correlating different breeds of cattle with different flavour experiences, which was also stated by some informants in this study. All in all, informants’ experiences of cattle bodies as meat seem to be very similar to accounts of experiences of cattle bodies of meat in the industrialized mode of beef production. One area that differs however is the ways in which consumers are asked to engage with the meat. In industrialized production, there is little reference to production or the animals on meat packages, whereas in the mobile slaughtering industry, it seems to be paramount that consumers have this information.
8. Conclusion

Throughout this research I have had the aim of understanding how those engaged in the mobile slaughtering industry experience cattle bodies throughout the production of beef, including the processes of raising cattle, slaughtering cattle, and processing their bodies into edible products. Additionally, I have aimed to understand how these experiences relate to previous accounts of experiences of cattle bodies in the context of industrial and pre-industrialized slaughter. To understand this I have used through the lived experience of informants and the life existentials based on Merleau-Ponty and in particular Van Manen (2011). I was inspired to conduct this research by previous literature that explored the experiences of those working in the industrialized mode of beef production, as well as by the changes that have occurred in the Swedish slaughtering industry. In particular, I was inspired by literature that highlighted instances of people becoming disengaged with animal bodies as a result of the conditions present in industrialized beef production. In particular, the separation from farm to slaughterhouse, and the intense division of labour within the slaughterhouse have been attribute to disconnection from the lives of cattle. Given that the context of mobile slaughter does not involve either of these conditions, I wondered what the experiences of those involved in mobile slaughter would look like.

The liminal phases

With regards to my first question, I have found that informants perceive cattle bodies as transforming throughout the process of beef production, resulting in differences in how they are experienced, depending on the context in which the cattle are engaged with, and by whom they are engaged with. I have framed the contexts of interaction with cattle bodies using liminality. The liminal stages I have explored include the initial stage of experiencing live cattle, the liminal stage of experiencing cattle during slaughter, and the final stage of experiencing cattle bodies as meat. Each stage has represented new contexts of engagement with animal bodies and thus different perceptions of and experiences with cattle bodies.

During the first phase of liminality, cattle are experienced dually as living things deserving of care, and at the same time as economic commodities that will be killed. During this phase, informants express feelings of connectedness and empathy towards the cattle bodies they engage with, however they also accept that the cattle will eventually be killed. However, some animals are given different status than others and they become harder to slaughter. In this study, I have found that increased time spent with an animal increases the bond felt by the farmer or caregiver. Additionally, unique interactions between cattle and informants can also lead to deeper relationships, making slaughter harder to accept. The second phase of liminality, the slaughtering process, brings about physical changes to cattle bodies, which result in cattle bodies being perceived differently than prior to slaughter. At the beginning of the slaughtering process, cattle bodies are perceived as living animals, however by the time they exit the mobile abattoir they are perceived as meat. During the process of slaughter itself, cattle bodies are perceived as undergoing a transformation where they are neither identified purely as animals nor purely as food. Thus, the second liminal phase in experiencing cattle bodies involves a period of time where cattle bodies are perceived as being betwixt and between animals and meat. The removal of particular physical characteristics has been described as the ultimate cause of cattle bodies being perceived as meat rather than as animals, suggesting that the process undergone by cattle bodies in the mobile slaughterhouse is a process of deconstruction. The final phase of liminality involves engaging with cattle bodies at the meat processing plant and afterwards. During this phase, cattle bodies are perceived as edible culinary products. Despite this, informants felt it was important for both
themselves and consumers to be aware of the mode of production of meat, as well as the animals themselves that went into the meat, suggesting the desire for reconnection between consumers and the animals they eat.

Pre-industrial, industrial, and mobile

With regards to my second question, “how do these experiences relate to accounts of experiences of cattle bodies in industrialized and pre-industrialized beef production”, I have found that there are both similarities as well as differences between informants’ experiences of cattle bodies in the context of mobile slaughter and previous accounts of experiences of cattle bodies in the context of industrial slaughter. Additionally, I have found that some of the practices engaged in by the mobile slaughtering company seem to aspire to re-establish some of the connections present in pre-industrialized beef production.

The ways in which farmers and caregivers experience cattle in this study are very similar to the experiences of cattle described in research involving industrialized slaughter. In particular, both Ellis (2014) and Wilkie (2005) also found that caregivers of cattle experience simultaneous connection and disconnection to their animals. On the one hand, farmers regard their cattle with empathy and understanding, while on the other hand, they are aware of the economic nature of the relationship they have with their cattle. Both Ellis and Wilkie, have described this as possible due to the engagement of farmers and caregivers in emotional work. This emotional work has been described by Ellis as ‘boundary labour’ (the term I use throughout this thesis) and by Wilkie as ‘concerned detachment’. Given that those who cared for cattle in pre-industrialized times would have had the same awareness that their cattle were destined for consumption at some point, it is likely that living cattle bodies would also have been regarded with the attachment and detachment seen both in this study and in studies of industrialized beef production.

The event of slaughtering is unique in contrast to historical pre-industrial modes of slaughter as well as industrialized slaughter in terms of how cattle bodies are experienced. First, the location of the mobile abattoir is not ‘a place that is no place’ as is described by Vialles (1994), but rather occurs at the farm where animals have lived and been raised by farmers who also live there. Additionally, in mobile slaughter, the involvement of farmers is required in the process, where farmers have the responsibility of bringing cattle to the mobile abattoir, whereas in industrialized slaughter, the farmers rarely travel with their animals to the slaughterhouse (Vialles 1994; Ellis, 2014). While this is similar to pre-industrial slaughter in a spatial sense, there is still a difference in who is responsible for different tasks in the context of mobile slaughter; one person raises the cattle while one person slaughters them. The ambiguity in terms of who is responsible for killing as was described by Vialles (1994) and Pachirat (2011), is not present in the mobile slaughterhouse, as the person who shoots the animals also bleeds them. Additionally, workers in the mobile abattoir do not simply make one small cut or tear on animals’ bodies (as was found by Vialles (1994) and Pachirat (2011)), rather, they spend several minutes with each body engaging in more complicated tasks. The description of the transformation that cattle bodies undergo during slaughter from informants agrees with descriptions of this process in other literature with the process being one of disassembly (Wang and Pendelbury, 2016) involving stages of de-animation as well as de-animalization (Héritier-Augé and Vialles, 1994). Additionally, the process is perceived by informants as involving aestheticization of the body as was also described by Vialles (1994).

The way that cattle bodies are experience as meat is similar to how they have been described as being experienced in an industrial setting (Vialles 1994; Pachirat, 2011). Specifically, the meat is a clean product that needs only further aesthetic refinement. This is in contrast to pre-industrial methods, which involved meat being refined in unhygienic and unregulated areas (Rämme et al., 2015). Informants expressed a desire for consumers to know more about the animals and processes behind the meat they consume, which they aspire to do through the use of QR codes on meat packages. This is in contrast to industrialized meat products, which have little information about the meat contained in the package. While use of QR codes can be seen as a
desire by those in the mobile slaughtering industry to reconnect consumers to the sources of their food, it is obviously different as the consumers are still separated from the mode of production, other than via the knowledge they have about the production.

Future research

This study fits into a larger body of research aiming to explore the experiences of those engaged in human-animal interactions, and in particular the interactions between livestock and humans. By utilizing a phenomenological approach, and in particular by engaging with the lifeworld existentials proposed by Van Manen (2011), this research provides insight into specific aspects of lived experiences of cattle bodies, allowing for insight into specific interactions. In particular, this research shows that the context of interacting with cattle bodies is entirely important to how they are engaged with. Additionally, this research shows that while mobile slaughtering has many practical differences from pre-industrial and post-industrial slaughter, there are many aspects of the experiences that carry over, such as the need to engage in boundary labour (Ellis, 2014). This research is important today as meat production and consumption are currently being hotly debated and discussed (Smil, 2013). Thus, this research contributes to a growing body of knowledge that can help to make future decisions regarding how we in western society want our meat to be produced. The research conducted in this study has focussed on how those engaged in the production of beef in the context of mobile slaughtering experience and engage with cattle bodies. Thus, for future research I suggest research on the topic of consumer perspectives towards cattle bodies. Additionally, this research has only focussed on the perspectives of those working at one Swedish mobile slaughtering company, thus I suggest that it may be of valuable to continue this research on a wider scale. The animal welfare issues that mobile slaughtering attempts to combat occur on a global scale, thus it is important to have an understanding of how this mode of production is experienced on a global scale.
References

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Appendix:

I. Interview Guide:

Categories for all participants:

1. Understanding of phenomenon on a large scale
2. Personal Experience/Relationships
3. Experience of others

Prompts for interview of those working on the business side of things:

1. Ask her about the company. What is the history of the company? Why did they decide to do things differently? Ask her about the logistics of the company. How does a cow become meat? What are all the steps involved? Can you compare the process between an industrial slaughterhouse and the mobile slaughtering industry? In your mind, at what point does the cow transition into beef?

2. Ask about her job. What does she do for the company? Can she describe a typical day for herself? How long has she been doing it? Does she like her job? When you tell friends about your job how do you describe what you do and how do they usually respond? How much ‘hands on’ work would you say you do? Do you usually go into the slaughter truck when the slaughtering is taking place? Why did you decide to work for the mobile slaughtering company? Ask her about her relationships with the various people that work for the mobile slaughtering company. How well does she know the farmers, slaughterers, and butchers? Does she have closer relationships with some over others, why or why not? What do you see, smell, hear, and touch throughout the day? What kind of things remind you of work?

3. What are the roles of other people within the company? Can you describe to me what the farmer’s responsibilities are? Why would a Farmer choose to work with the mobile slaughtering company? Can you describe for me what the people in the truck do? What are their job titles? What about the butchers? What does their role look like? Am I missing anyone that you think plays an important role in the production of meat? Who are they? Is there any job that you would not like to participate in? Why or why not? Can you describe this job to me? So who is responsible for killing the cow?

Prompts for Farmer Interview:

1. How does a cow become meat? What are all the steps involved? Can you compare the process between an industrial slaughterhouse and the mobile slaughtering industry? In your mind, at what point does the cow transition into beef?

2. What does a typical day look like for you? What brought you to this line of work? How long have you been doing this work? When you tell friends about your job how do you describe what you do and how do they usually respond? How much ‘hands on’ work would you say you do? Do you usually go into the slaughter truck when the slaughtering is taking place? Do you name your cows? How many do you normally send to slaughter each year? Why do you decide to use the
mobile slaughtering company over a traditional slaughterhouse? Have you used traditional slaughterhouses in the past? Do you consider the people who come to slaughter the animals your ‘co-workers’? How well do you know these people? How much do you know about what happens to the cows you have raised (now meat) once they leave your farm? On a day-to-day basis, whom do you generally work alongside? What do you see, smell, hear, and touch throughout the day? What kind of things remind you of work?

2. What are the roles of other people that help to produce meat? Can you describe for me what the people in the truck do? What are their job titles? What about the butchers? What does their role look like? Am I missing anyone that you think plays an important role in the production of meat? Who are they? Is there any job that you would not like to participate in? Why or why not? Can you describe this job to me? So who is responsible for killing the cow?

Prompts for ‘Slaughterer’ Interview:

1. How does a cow become meat? What are all the steps involved? Can you compare the process between an industrial slaughterhouse and the mobile slaughtering industry? In your mind, at what point does the cow transition into beef? How much do you know about the cows before you butcher them?

2. So what is your role in the production of meat? Do you have a job title? How do you describe your job to other people who don’t work in this industry (i.e. family, friends etc.), and how do they usually respond? Have you always lived in Sweden? What brought you to this line of work? How much do you enjoy the work that you do? Do you feel like this is a job you can grow in and that you would like to do for a long period of time? Can you describe for me a typical day? Can you describe for me what actually happens inside of the slaughtering truck? What do you see, smell, hear, and touch throughout the day? What kind of things remind you of work? How would you describe your relationships with other people in the company? Are you close with the farmers, or those coordinating the slaughtering? What about those in the slaughtering truck? Do you guys talk much during or after work?

3. What are the roles of other people that help to produce meat? Can you describe for me what your co-workers in the truck do? What are their job titles? What about the butchers and the farmers? What does their role look like? Am I missing anyone that you think plays an important role in the production of meat? Who are they? Is there any job that you would not like to participate in? Why or why not? Can you describe this job to me? So who is responsible for killing the cow?

Prompts for Butcher’s Interview:

1. How does a cow become meat? What are all the steps involved? Can you compare the process between an industrial slaughterhouse and the mobile slaughtering industry? In your mind, at what point does the cow transition into beef? Where does the meat that you are processing come from? How much do you know about the cows and where they come from when they arrive to you?

2. Can you tell me what your job title is, if you have one? What does a typical day look like for you? How do you describe your work to other people who don’t work in the meat production industry and how do they usually respond? What brought you to this line of work? What made you eager to work for The mobile slaughtering company over other companies? How are your relationships with co-workers, and who do you consider to be your co-workers?

3. What are the roles of other people within the company? Can you describe to me what the farmer’s responsibilities are? Why would a Farmer choose to work with the mobile slaughtering company? Can you describe for me what the people in the truck do? What are their job titles? Am I missing anyone that you think plays an important role in the production of meat? Who are they? Is there
any job that you would not like to participate in? Why or why not? Can you describe this job to me? So who is responsible for killing the cow?

II. Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Who am I?
My name is Nicole Gosling and I am a Master’s Student at Uppsala University. I am studying a Master’s degree in Global Environmental History. The research that I am conducting will be used to contribute to my Master’s Thesis.

Information about the study:
I am interested in understanding the experiences of those working in the beef production industry. This means that I am interested in interviewing those working within this industry to understand how they experience day-to-day life. I am conducting this research as a part of my Masters degree in Environmental History, which is a field concerned with understanding how humans interact with nature and their environments. I will be conducting the research personally on behalf of Uppsala University.

During the study, I will interview participants for approximately one hour. The interviews may take place anywhere that is convenient to the participant. For example I could come and interview people during their lunch break or meet them after work. The information that I collect from these interviews will be then discussed in my Masters thesis. Of course, if participants wish to remain anonymous in my research, we can select a pseudonym so that the informants name does not appear directly in my research. Likewise, if an informant wishes to be named, I will of course use their name in my research. If at any point a participant does not wish to answer a question or to discuss a particular topic, of course that question/topic in concern will be avoided. Making sure that my informants feel comfortable during our interview is of the utmost importance to me. I feel that this is a beneficial study to take part in because it provides an opportunity to share experiences and stories of working in a field that is not often heard from.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my study, and I sincerely hope that you will consider taking a part in it, as I am so looking forward to talking with you. If you have any more questions or concerns regarding the study please do not hesitate to email me or call me.

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