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To cite this article: Birgitta Schwartz (2020) The animal welfare battle: the production of affected ignorance in the Swedish meat industry debate, Culture and Organization, 26:1, 75-95, DOI: 10.1080/14759551.2018.1513937

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2018.1513937

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Published online: 03 Sep 2018.

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The animal welfare battle: the production of affected ignorance in the Swedish meat industry debate

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ABSTRACT
The Swedish animal welfare debate has for years focused on the meat industry, which sees animals not as sentient creatures but as production factors and commodities to be economically exploited. Although animal rights organizations have tried to change the meat industry and consumer behaviour, meat consumption is increasing. This could be explained as ‘affected ignorance’ generated by what one already knows but does not want to hear about. This paper discusses how various actors, such as meat industry companies, food retailers, and social movement organizations, frame animal welfare in the media debate with the use of discourses, which are important for producing or discouraging affected ignorance. The paper examines a discursive battle in which actors draw on various discourses over time but also hijack opponents’ discourses. This use of discourses seems to blur the debate and confuse people and they will continue to eat meat from factory-farmed animals.

Introduction
The issue of how animals are treated in the large-scale meat industry is repeatedly discussed in the Swedish mass media, with demands for change from animal rights organizations directed towards politicians and the meat industry. This media coverage describes a cruel food industry, which sees animals not as sentient creatures but as production factors (Porcher 2011) and commodities (Case 2005) to be economically exploited. This debate includes campaigns by social movement organizations (SMOs) to expose the cruel treatment of animals; for example, in 2009, members of an SMO broke into a factory farm at night and filmed suffering pigs. Similar protests have been used to take on the fur industry, resulting in the decline of fur farms and fur sales due to fear of activists and lower consumer interest. Despite the debate meat consumption remains high in Sweden and has even increased in recent years1. Although the consumption of organic alternatives, associated with better treatment of animals, has increased somewhat, it is lower than the consumption of conventional food.2 Only a small portion of the population chooses not to consume meat and to be vegetarian or vegan.3 This situation could be related to what Williams (2008) calls ‘affected ignorance’.

Affected ignorance is a kind of ignorance generated by what one knows but does not want to hear. It occurs when people refuse to acknowledge the connection between their actions and the resulting suffering of their victims, ask not to be informed of the practices causing the suffering, do not ask questions, or uncritically accept the dictates of custom and ideological constructions (Williams 2008). Williams states that the lack of extensive public debate on factory farming and animal
suffering is dependent on affected ignorance. She claims that the meat industry is a powerful force in our culture and society that prefers to sustain affected ignorance as the cultural norm when it comes to their practices. She also believes that we can resist affected ignorance and challenge meat industry influence if we take our role as virtuous knowers seriously and are critical of popular beliefs and accepted practices (Williams 2006, 2008). She also states that the current debate in the USA is like a whisper, a low-pitched public discussion that makes relevant information readily available to people who want to know more about industrial farming practices (Williams 2006). Singer (2003) states that we as humans are capable of altruistic concern for other beings, but that imperfect information, powerful meat industry interests, and a desire not to know disturbing facts have limited the gains made by the US animal rights movement over 30 years of activism.

This paper focuses on the Swedish media debate from 2003 to 2013, and illustrates how affected ignorance is actively produced by various actors’ use of discourses in framing animal welfare in the debate. Considerable struggle is involved in this framing contest, in which the actors use a range of discourses and even hijack their opponents’ discourses to seize control of the debate. This use of discourses blurs the debate, confusing people so that they do not change their behaviour and continue to eat meat from factory-farmed animals.

The actors involved in this debate are large companies in the meat industry, farmers’ associations, politicians, veterinarians, farmers, SMOs such as animal rights organizations, food retailers, and journalists. These actors’ interactions in the animal rights debate relate to the fact that business organizations, such as meat industry actors, compete not only on a market but also in a discursive space in which winning the argument is important in order to gain legitimacy in the symbolic field (Tsoukas 1999).

The paper examines the arguments various actors use in the debate in both the media and their own campaigns and advertising. To further their interests, these actors draw on one or more specific discourses over time to sustain their factory farming business or improve the animals’ conditions. Using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1993; Van Dijik 1993), I refer to Stibbe (2001), who observed that how animals are socially and culturally constructed influences how they are treated by human society, and that these cultural constructs are intimately bound up with language and discourse. Discourses can be seen as managing the minds of others, influencing their actions, and as essentially a function of text and talk (Van Dijik 1993), making the media an important arena in which to analyse the actors’ use of discourses. It is important to study ‘how these practices, events and texts are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power’ (Fairclough 1993, 135) in the animal welfare battle. Actors’ control of discourses is related to their power and dominance; it is a way of managing social representations (Van Dijik 1993), influencing or discouraging the production of affected ignorance. In this paper discourses are a way of framing a discussion. So, how the involved actors argue using various discourses relates to how they frame their views of animals and animal welfare for the public. As we will see, these frames can either produce or discourage affected ignorance.

Animal studies

Our relations with and views of animals have a long history recorded in human cultural texts, as was well described by Kalof (2007) in the field of human–animal studies. Kalof’s book examines cultural representations of animals in Western societies from 30,000 BCE to 2000 CE and considers how these representations have changed with changing social conditions. While Kalof also described the cruel domestication of animals, Preece (2002) presented a historical review mainly of Western society’s earlier writings from the sixth century BC to the early twentieth century focusing more on compassionate and respectful attitudes toward animals. Torssonen (2015), on the other hand, discussed livestock welfare from a historical perspective and noted the birth of ‘sellfare’ during the twentieth century. The commodification of animal welfare was a response to public concern for factory animals, a concern that made the consumer responsible (Torssonen 2015).
Studies of debates on meat production (Austgulen 2014) and animal welfare issues have focused on various countries (Harrison 1964; Jones 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Woods 2012). As early as 1964, Harrison published *Animal Machines*, exposing the cruel treatment, in the UK, of animals bred and slaughtered using methods based on industrialized meat production. Woods (2012), also studying the British context, considered how a new discourse of animal welfare emerged, partly in response to Harrison’s book, becoming a term and target of state regulation in 1964–1971. However, divergent scientific and ethical perspectives among various actors in the debate prevented consensus on how animal welfare could be achieved in practice. Even though Harrison’s (1964) book attracted publicity and resulted in improvements for animals (Woods 2012; Broom 2013; Fraser 2013), factory farming methods are still present in many countries today. The role of the mass media in animal protection has also been studied in the USA, for example, by Jones (1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c), who tracked the history of media coverage of animal issues (1996) and evaluated the media’s involvement in social movements (1997a), the use of advertising to promote animal protection (1997b), and the impact of media coverage on the outcome of public policy decisions concerning animals (1997c).

In the context of consumer policy studies, Austgulen (2014) studied the Norwegian debate on meat consumption in relation to environmental and climate harm. The author illustrated how two clashing discourses, presenting the problem and its solutions in different ways, were present in the media debate and policy documents, apparently producing confusion and hindering consumers from changing their consumption patterns to be more sustainable (Austgulen 2014). Another study using a discourse perspective on animal welfare is that of Stibbe (2001), who described how the language and discourses used by the animal product industries contribute to the oppression and exploitation of animals.

This paper also uses the discourse concept, but its novel contribution in relation to other animal welfare studies is that, in examining the media debate and the involved actors’ active use of discourses, it relates these matters to the concept of affected ignorance and how it is both intentionally and unintentionally produced.

**Affected ignorance**

Affected ignorance is a philosophical concept dealing with moral issues on an individual level. Williams (2008) identified four forms of affected ignorance in seeking to understand how people relate to factory farming. The first form occurs when people refuse to acknowledge the connection between their actions and the consequent suffering of their victims. This is recognized when their activities are hidden by calculated language, animals being referred to as objects such as ‘livestock’, ‘protein harvesters’, and ‘biomachines’. The second form occurs when people ask not to be informed of the nature of the practice in question. They do not want to hear about the cruel treatment of animals because it would be too upsetting and would ruin their appetite. The third form is manifested in the readiness of some people simply to avoid asking questions. Even if they suspect cruelty to animals they refuse to investigate the matter, not wanting to know that they might be complicit in an immoral practice. The fourth form of affected ignorance was explained by Williams (2008) as the widespread tendency to uncritically accept ideological constructions and the dictates of custom, dogmatic adherence to conventional rationalizations, and unwillingness to accept that majority opinions and widespread practices can be mistaken or cruel. In describing this ignorance, Singer (1975) cited the example of people who know that traditional family farms have been replaced by big business interests and yet cling to a vague belief that conditions cannot be too bad, or else the government or animal welfare societies would have done something about it. Financial profit and the convenience and ease of conforming to status quo values and practices make people ignorant. Williams (2008) recognized that farmers exploit this ‘honest’ ignorance, as they claim that their animals have good lives and are unwilling to notice animal suffering because the suffering does not count in an anthropocentric and profit-driven industry. The fourth form of affected ignorance is also related to cultural barriers as discussed by Moody-Adams (1994) and Levy (2003), who pointed out that
members of a particular culture are unable to recognize that certain actions and beliefs within that culture are wrong. This is the tendency to avoid acknowledging our human fallibility (Moody-Adams 1994). Each of us tends to be satisfied with the truth of whatever opinions we have been brought up to hold, without reflecting on the fact that they are a result of our upbringing. Therefore, we simply avoid investigating the grounds of our opinions (Levy 2003).

Williams (2006, 2008) and Moody-Adams (1994) based this theoretical concept on the idea that affected ignorance makes one culpable despite one’s culture, because one is choosing to ignore something that is morally important. Levy (2003), on the other hand, criticized Moody-Adams’s (1994) view of culpability, citing the example of Greek slavery to argue that people who are restrained by cultural norms are not culpable: the people of ancient Greece could not imagine how a society could function without slaves, so they did not regard slavery as a possible topic of moral debate. This example could be related to animal farming as well. People are used to eating meat and have always hunted or bred animals for food, so why should modern humans in industrialized societies who are used to consuming a lot of meat morally question how animals are bred in large-scale industrial production? Levy (2003) stated that cultures do not determine actions but close off certain possibilities to act. Moody-Adams (1994), on the other hand, claimed that agents who act never simply follow a culturally prescribed script but are active interpreters of their cultures’ norms and practices; they are therefore responsible for their actions.

Although affected ignorance is primarily an individual-level concept, this paper views it from the perspective of organizations. The media present organizations as the important actors in the animal welfare debate, and even though individual persons may make statements, they are still representing their organizations. As we will see, all forms of affected ignorance are important in the media debate. The fourth form plays a more prominent role, however, and using the concept of affected ignorance at an organizational level makes it possible to focus on how organizations promote this form when using particular discourses framing animal welfare and widespread practices.

**SMOs in a framing contest**

Movements and organizations must be seen in interaction (Zald, Morrill, and Rao 2005), situated in a dynamic relational field in which the ongoing actions and interests of various actors all influence social movements’ emergence, activity, and outcomes (Goldstone 2004). Using the frame concept, the SMO literature has analysed the interaction between organizations (Gamson 1988, 1992; Benford and Hunt 1992; Skillington 1997; Benford and Snow 2000; Guérard, Bode, and Gustafsson 2013). A frame suggests what an issue is about, outlining the basic source of controversy or concern (Gamson 1988). Collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of SMOs (Benford and Snow 2000) and collectively define a situation (Benford and Hunt 1992). Collective action frames are constituted by the interactive, discursive processes that accompany these core framing tasks (Gamson 1992). A collective action frame can contain an injustice component (Gamson 1992), which the animal rights movement highlights as it protests the suffering of factory-farmed animals and advocates political and/or economic change. Collective action frames are continuously reconstituted throughout the interaction that occurs during movement gatherings and campaigns (Benford and Snow 2000). An SMO’s frame can be challenged by the SMO’s own members or while interacting with other organizations (Benford and Snow 2000). Opponents’ attempts to undermine or neutralize an SMO’s version of reality (i.e. counterframing) can occur within complex, multi-organizational arenas, giving rise to framing contests (Benford and Snow 2000) in which organizations deter and divert movements (Zald, Morrill, and Rao 2005).

These framing contests have been the subject of research into the impact of the mass media on the construction of social reality (Scheufele 1999) and into how the media frame movements (Entman and Rojecki 1993; Baylor 1996) and represent activists’ claims (Baylor 1996; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Jones 1996, 1997a). Journalists often seek stories that can be framed in terms of conflict
(Arpan et al. 2006), and the more extreme and dramatic an event, the more likely it is to get media coverage (Baylor 1996). Media organizations also draw on their environment for the ‘raw materials’ they use to create their product (Curran, Gurevitch, and Woollacott 1982/2005). SMOs also influence the media, as journalists adopt the frames they promote and incorporate them into their coverage of issues and events (Scheufele 1999). Also, movement activists depend on the mass media for information on the standpoints of other actors relevant to the issues that concern them, and to learn about others’ reactions to their actions (Koopmans 2004). This also holds for those with whom they interact. So, all actors use the mass media as a crucial source of information about one another’s views and behaviour, evaluating and adapting their own strategies as a result of the reactions they provoke in the public sphere (Koopmans 2004).

In this paper, the aim is to discuss how the actors frame animal welfare in the Swedish media debate and how they use various discourses in an attempt to produce or discourage affected ignorance.

Method
Animal welfare issues connected to factory farming have been debated in Sweden since the 1980s, but I believe my first encounter with the animal welfare debate was in 2003 when I started to follow a series of articles in the Swedish morning newspaper Svenska Dagbladet (SvD) on the suffering of factory-farmed animals. This newspaper was not known for publishing articles criticizing business and industrial practices. The newspaper ran an opinion poll on its website when it published the first article, about the chicken industry, asking readers whether the article would influence them to change their behaviour and stop eating chicken. Most of the 1000 respondents indicated that they did not care about the chickens and would continue to buy and eat chicken. On seeing that result, I started to wonder why most people did not react to the article, which described the suffering of chickens. I continued to follow the series of SvD articles discussing the factory farming issue. This resulted in a research paper (Schwartz 2003) and book chapter (Schwartz 2006). My personal interest in animal welfare issues, including my earlier experience as a volunteer in an organization that aimed to mobilize volunteers as farm workers, also prompted me to continue to follow the animal welfare debate in the media in the years following the publication of that series. My personal interest in the debate is therefore the starting point for discussing and analysing the debate in this paper. My personal views of animal suffering may influence my analysis of the debate and I may be more critical of how certain actors, such as meat companies and farmers’ organizations, use various discourses to sustain affected ignorance, even though I find that other actors, such as SMOs and food retailers, also produce affected ignorance. Affected ignorance is something I recognize in my own behaviour when I buy and eat meat. Although I often look for organic meat, I sometimes buy conventional meat produced in factory farms, despite knowing that they cause animal suffering. Affected ignorance is a complex issue to address.

Using secondary sources, such as written and video material, this paper studies the debate concerning the poor conditions of animals in large-scale meat production. It is based on a study of the media debate over a 10-year period, which gives an understanding of how the actors have been involved in and tackled the debate over time. The empirical data are based on a qualitative study I conducted in 2003 of a series of articles published in Svenska Dagbladet in April and May 2003. The studied articles concentrated on the chickens’ situation as well as on slaughter methods and the treatment of other species, such as cows and pigs. I found these articles as a reader of the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet. From 2013 to 2014, I followed how this debate had evolved since 2003 based on news articles from several of Sweden’s largest newspapers and on Swedish TV and radio news coverage. From 2004 to 2013, various initiatives had made an impact and animal issues were being debated in the media. In 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2012, the chickens’ situation was again raised by journalists, and in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2013, pigs were the main focus due to SMO campaigns. Data were found using Google with search terms such as
djurskyddsfrågor ('animal welfare issues'), djurdebatt ('animal debate'), kycklingdebatt ('chicken debate'), and grisdebatt ('pig debate'). Also, the database Mediearkivet Retriever was used with search terms such as djurskyddsfrågor ('animal welfare issues'), djurdebatt ('animal debate'), kycklingar ('chickens') and grisar ('pigs'). I started searching using more general terms such as ‘animal welfare issues’ and ‘animal debate’, which revealed the kind of meat industry animals being debated. I continued searching about these species using the terms ‘chicken debate’ and ‘chickens’ and ‘pig debate’ and ‘pigs’ to find more articles. The websites of Sweden’s main newspapers and Swedish television (Svt) were also searched, and 56 articles were found.

The media as a source of data

My use of the media as a data source is based on an understanding of the media as a sense-maker, in that they take part in developing a meaningful framework for understanding complex phenomena, acting as a sense-giver that influences sense-making and meaning construction among their audiences regarding specific definitions of reality (Hellgren et al. 2002). I have delimited the material to the animal welfare debate as presented in the media; other SMO campaigns that were not picked up by the media will not be included in the discussion. This is because the mass media have a central role in framing issues for the attentive public (Gamson 1988; Gamson and Modigliani 1989), constituting a site where various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality (Gurevitch and Levy 1985) and competing ways of sense-making (McNair 1998). However, the media can also use its power to ‘manufacture consent’ with the privileged groups in society depending on how media reports on these groups’ activities and give them space in media (Herman and Chomsky 1988/2002). SMOs’ own media have the limitation of preaching only to the converted (Koopmans 2004), and events that are not widely reported have little or no social significance (McNair 1998). News coverage shows who gets to speak, and I am aware that the journalists ask the questions, select what actors to feature in their coverage, and decide what should be retold and how. This means that journalists are active debaters and discourse setters and are therefore also actors in the animal welfare debate, since they construct their narratives around their own values and beliefs (McNair 1998). Journalists’ working norms and practices add considerable value to the process: journalists contribute their own frames and metaphors, drawing on a popular culture that they share with their audience (Gamson 1988; Gamson and Modigliani 1989).

To complement the media as a source of information on how other actors are responding to the media debate, the empirical material also includes other written material such as the websites and advertising campaigns of the Swedish meat company Swedish Meats/Scan, the Swedish food retailer Coop, and the SMOs Djurrättsalliansen (the Animal Rights Alliance) and Djurens rätt (Animal Rights Sweden).

Discourse analysis

The present research method is based on critical discourse analysis, which is used to explore the causal and deterministic relationships among discursive practices, events, and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relationships, and processes (Fairclough 1993). This is done by systematically analysing spoken and written texts, forming systematic analyses of social contexts (Fairclough 1992). Focusing on texts in critical discourse analysis also emphasises the role of language, language use, discourse, and communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality (Van Dijk 1993). Critically analysing the role of discourse reveals the power and dominance in the battle between actors, in which actors try to win their arguments by exploiting various discourses. In this discursive battle, affected ignorance can be produced through the ideological control of consumers, who dominate and oppress animals by choosing to buy meat from factory-farmed animals.

The research method entailed locating discourses in the debate and following the debate over time, considering how the discourses help frame animals and animal welfare, when and how the
discourses have an impact on the debate (due to which actors are using them), and what forms of affected ignorance the actors with the help of the discourses seem to produce or discourage.

The critical discourse analysis of the newspaper articles entails studying the texts in which the journalists present the actions and statements of various actors. When analysing the texts, I searched for how the actors talked and presented their views of animal welfare and factory-farmed animals. I analysed the kinds of discourses recognizable in their statements from interviews presented in the articles and from materials used by the journalists in describing various actors and their views. In the texts produced by the actors themselves, I also searched for how they talked about animal welfare when presenting their cause and how they used different discourses in texts such as advertising and campaign materials. The discourses I recognized in the various texts related to the actors’ views of animal welfare, which I interpreted as either discouraging or producing affected ignorance among the readers of the articles and advertising campaigns.

The discourses that emerged in the texts were the animal rights, economic rationale, nationalistic, sustainability, and health discourses. The animal rights discourse focuses on animal welfare and the importance of allowing animals to behave naturally and not be treated cruelly in factory farms. It presents animals as sentient creatures that share with humans a capacity to suffer, meaning that they, like us, have interests (Singer 1975, 2003). The economic rationale discourse sees the animals in factory farming as effective and productive ‘workers’ (Porcher 2011): chickens grow very fast and need little feed, cows’ milk production increases, etc. The nationalistic discourse constructs solidarity with one’s own national group as well as a readiness to exclude the other from this constructed collective, as national identity concerns stereotypical notions of other nations and their cultures, history, etc. (De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999). This discourse highlights one’s own country as superior to others. The sustainability discourse draws on arguments such as the need for solutions and changed behaviours in order to solve environmental and societal problems. Finally, the health discourse focuses on human health in relation to what we eat, but also on animal health in relation to disease. In the analysis, I discuss how the actors’ use of discourses frames their views of animal welfare and how that relates to the production of various forms of affected ignorance or to resistance to affected ignorance.

In the next section I present several examples from the animal welfare debate in the Swedish media from 2003 to 2013, illustrating how the actors contributed to the production of affected ignorance or tried to encourage people to resist it. The story is organized according to the kind of animal in focus and according to themes related to the critique and to how actors defended and responded to the critique, influencing the direction of the debate. First, however, I give some background and present the development of animal rights organizations in Sweden.

The Swedish animal welfare debate, 2003–2013

In Sweden, campaigning for animal rights started in 1882 when the organization now known as Animal Rights Sweden (Djurens rätt) was founded (djurens rätt. se/”om djurens rätt”). Its policy is to work within the boundaries of existing law, engaging in awareness-raising campaigns and lobbying regarding animal experimentation, fur farms, and the meat industry (Jacobsson and Lindblom 2012, 2013). In the 1980s, the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren was engaged in public debate regarding factory-farmed animals, and in 1987, on her 80th birthday, the Swedish prime minister presented her with a new Swedish Animal Welfare Act (1988) that emphasized animals’ rights to behave naturally and move around freely, for example, by requiring that cows graze outdoors in the summer and that laying hens not be kept in cages. In the mid 1990s, the public debate on animal rights in Sweden became more heated, mainly as a result of a series of attacks by animal rights extremists calling themselves Militant Vegans (Militanta Veganer). These attacks were part of a new style of violent campaigning focusing mainly on fur farms, meat delivery trucks, and restaurants. The Militant Vegans of today can be found within the Animal Liberation Front (Djurens befrielsefront, founded 1985) and the Animal Rights Alliance (Djurrättsalliansen, founded 2005), organizations that also take
illegal actions and conduct undercover investigations of fur and food farms in the name of animal rights (AnimalRightsExtremism 2012).

The chicken debate
In May 2003 (Svenska Dagbladet, 13, 14, and 16 May) and November 2008 (Svenska Dagbladet, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 21 November) the conditions of chickens were debated in the Swedish media in a series of articles in the Swedish morning paper Svenska Dagbladet (SvD). These articles did not refer to any specific SMO campaign; instead, SvD presented the newspaper’s own investigation of the food industry.

Critique: mistreated chickens
The media coverage, based on research papers, manuals from chicken companies, and interviews with researchers, veterinarians, and chicken industry representatives, framed the chicken industry as cruel with a view to raising readers’ awareness and encouraging them to resist the second and third forms of affected ignorance, in which readers do not investigate or inform themselves. The coverage told how the increased productivity of fast-growing chickens led to suffering for the chickens. Their selected-for rapid growth results in chickens that cannot stand on their legs because their cartilage does not ossify fast enough to support their rapidly increasing weight. Feed that stimulates very fast growth is used. Injuries are also caused by insufficient exercise due to crowding and by the process of loading machines for slaughter (Svenska Dagbladet 13 May 2003, 14 May 2003).

Two large American breeding multinationals, Ross and Cobb-Vantress, that dominate the chicken industry and sell chickens to Swedish farmers were also profiled. Quotations from their manuals were cited to illustrate how the two companies inform farmers and market their chicken breeds, Ross 308 and Cobb 500.

The farmer will achieve maximum broiler growth efficiency through adjusting appropriate combinations of stocking density, light, feed, atmospheric humidity, and temperature for each type of chicken. (Svenska Dagbladet 14 May 2003, own translation)

The adaptability of Ross 308 allows it to maintain its excellent performance even when the circumstances are unfavourable for other strains. … producers value the speed of growth, food efficiency, and the robust behaviour of Ross 308 … reaches 1741 grams in 35 days, food costs are low. (Svenska Dagbladet 14 May 2003, own translation)

These two quotations are from documents not intended for the public but for farmers in the meat industry. The language of the texts illustrates the focus on profit maximization in the chicken industry, where the chickens are seen as a production factor with little consideration given to the fact that they are animals with certain needs for natural behaviour. The animals are made into objects, dissolving the connection between meat production and animal suffering (Williams 2008). The chickens are commodified and de-animalized since their identity is erased (Hamilton and McCabe 2016). On the other hand, the statement that ‘the adaptability of Ross 308 allows it to maintain its excellent performance even when the circumstances are unfavourable’ acknowledges that chickens can suffer in this industry, but that these chickens are robust and nevertheless manage to deliver what the farmers want despite poor treatment. This relates to the first form of affected ignorance (Williams 2008), whereby the chicken industry helps produce affected ignorance among the farmers, who refuse to acknowledge the connection between their actions and the consequent suffering of their victims. Internal communications to farmers in the meat industry encourage them to disregard pain and suffering for the sake of profits (Stibbe 2001), implying that moral values must be sacrificed in the name of productivity (Porcher 2011). By presenting these documents to the readers of the article, the newspaper revealed how the large companies, Ross and Cobb-Vantress, were directing farmers to maintain an attitude framing the chickens as production factors or commodities and not as sentient creatures.
Response: protecting the chickens

Three days after the articles appeared in SvD, one of Sweden’s largest food retailers, Coop Konsum (a division of the corporation Coop, with 477 stores), started a large advertising campaign to show that they were taking a stand for chickens and would not support the cruelty involved in egg production in which hens are kept in cages:

We have stopped selling eggs from hens in cages. Take 21 fellow passengers with you in the subway cab and you will understand why. (Metro 17 May 2003, own translation)

Coop Konsum also set up seven installations in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö in which people were placed in large cages and passers-by were invited to join them in order to feel how cramped it was to be a hen in a cage (Coop press release 19 May 2003; Svenska Dagbladet 20 May 2003). This campaign was lauded for its originality and creativity, winning awards for best consumer advertising in both Sweden and the USA (Coop press release 1 November 2004). With this campaign, Coop Konsum’s framing strategy in the animal welfare debate was to assume the role of an SMO. It hired people from an agency to act as activists, in order to attract attention and get consumers to resist the second and third forms of affected ignorance by informing them about cruel factory farms. In this case, we see the opposite to the de-animalization of chickens with the people in the cages being animalized. The aim of the campaign, according to a Coop press release (1 November 2004), was to promote organic eggs and eggs from free-range hens, since Coop Konsum had decided in 2002 to stop selling eggs from caged hens. It was not until 2014 that this decision was completely implemented in all 665 Coop stores in Sweden, including in its discount supermarkets; in 2015, Coop received the Good Egg Award from the organization Compassion in World Farming (Coop press release 10 June 2015).

In June 2003, Coop continued the animal welfare campaign and used humorous print and TV advertisements featuring happy anthropomorphized animals. For example, one ad showed a hen driving a motorcycle in a beautiful landscape accompanied by the text ‘Choose organic food and allow more animals to have a better life’. All of the advertisements in the organic food campaign included the tagline ‘Coop – a little step towards happier animals’. In promoting organic meat, Coop this time framed the animal welfare issue in humorous terms, presenting an idealized view of animal farming. They did not explain the problems in conventional animal factories or how organic animal production is better for the animals. This framing strategy could produce the second and third forms of affected ignorance, since the addressed consumers would not need to worry about either the suffering of factory-farmed animals or how animals in organic production are treated. Although Coop seemed to be on the SMOs’ side in the debate, trying to sway public opinion towards more humane treatment of animals and influence people to resist affected ignorance, Coop also contributed to affected ignorance with this campaign. Marketing activities do this by removing industrially farmed animals from the sight of consumers, to ensure that the animal is engineered to fit changing consumer demands (Desmond 2010).

Redirecting the debate: Swedish chickens are healthy and climate smart

In the following years there were some articles regarding chickens but no extensive debate (Dagens Nyheter 5 January 2004; Mora Tidning 19 April 2004; Sydsvenskan 29 June 2004; Expressen 31 October 2005; Göteborgs-Posten 16 June 2005; Västerbottens-Kuriren 24 June 2005; Svenska Dagbladet 2 March 2006; Svenska Dagbladet 15 March 2006; Sydsvenskan 8 January 2012). In a new series of SvD articles in 2008, the Swedish chicken industry and farmers reacted to the criticism expressed in the earlier articles, assuring consumers that their chickens are free of salmonella and not fed with antibiotics, and pointing out that breeding and slaughtering practices are more strictly regulated in Sweden than in any other country (Svenska Dagbladet 16 November 2008). By using these arguments to frame animal welfare, the chicken industry could produce the fourth form of affected ignorance (Williams 2008), inducing people to accept industry practices as better for their own health and for the welfare of chickens in Sweden.
The chicken industry also reacted to and tried to redirect the debate in their marketing, claiming that
eating chicken is climate smart and a way to save the planet. The climate claim was related to the chick-
en’s high feed conversion (1.75 kg of feed gives 1 kg of chicken) and low emissions of methane compared
with beef and pork (Svenska Dagbladet 16 November 2008). In the same article, Jimmy Samuelsson, the
CEO of one of Sweden’s largest chicken farming operations, said, ‘The climate threat affects us all. We may
have a small chance, but only if everyone is pulling in the same direction’ (own translation). His con-
tribution is the production of climate-smart chickens (Svenska Dagbladet 16 November 2008).

Taking up the climate issue – a new angle in the sustainability debate at that time in Sweden –
seemed to be a strategy for shifting the focus away from animal welfare issues and standing up as
a responsible company. In the CEO’s anthropocentric view, the factory farming of chickens was
related to the first form of affected ignorance (Williams 2008), as he emphasized productivity and pol-
lution prevention and seemed to imply that the chickens should sacrifice something in the struggle
to save the world. The chicken industry thus tried to reach consumers who were worried about the
climate and environmental issues by counterframing chickens as a climate-smart meat alternative.
This could give people an excuse to continue buying factory-farmed chickens as they could feel
like responsible consumers doing something for the environment. Here I recognize Williams’s
(2008) second form of affected ignorance, in which the consumer does not want to be informed
of the cruel treatment of chickens but instead prefers to accept the chicken industry’s shift in
focus from animal welfare to the task of saving the planet. The chicken industry’s framing strategy
is also connected to Williams’s (2008) fourth form of affected ignorance, wherein the chicken industry
wants people to uncritically accept the industry’s stance in the climate debate and not question their
ideological construction of being climate smart at the expense of the chickens’ welfare.

Redirecting the debate: trust the Swedish animal welfare act
The poultry expert Lena Lindström, from the Animal Rights Alliance, presented her views of the pro-
blems with intensive chicken breeding in an article. She too seemed to rely on Swedish legislation:

According to the Animal Welfare Act, it is prohibited to conduct breeding that could cause suffering to animals, so
today’s fast-growing chickens would have been banned if they had been bred within the borders of Sweden. I
think we should put pressure on the multinational breeders. Imports should not be allowed, but just like with
the monster Belgian Blue bull, you cannot because of the free trade rules. (Svenska Dagbladet 18 November
2008, own translation)

She tried to break through affected ignorance by attacking the breeding companies (such as Ross
and Cobb-Vantress) and saw the impossibility of changing free trade rules and stopping the
import of the chickens. I also see, however, that as a spokesperson of an SMO, she risked producing
the fourth form of affected ignorance (Williams 2008), defending the Swedish Animal Welfare Act and
relying on Swedish farmers to follow the law and not breed ‘monster animals’.

Despite the animal welfare debate, the consumption of factory chickens has increased and the
chickens still suffer from health problems, although certain conditions have improved, according
to veterinarian Muayyed Jamil. He said that the 2003 articles and the attention they drew to animal welfare issues in the chicken industry started an important process, and that today conditions for chickens are much better (Svenska Dagbladet 16 November 2008). This statement from an expert
could also help to redirect the debate and produce the fourth form of affected ignorance among
readers relying on his judgment.

The cow and pig debate
Critique: mistreated cows and pigs
The animal welfare debate about the Swedish food industry also included pigs and cows. In April
2003, Svenska Dagbladet focused on mistreated animals, lengthy transportation to slaughterhouses,
and farmers accused of animal cruelty (Svenska Dagbladet 1 April 2003, 4 April 2003, 5 April 2003).
Response: well-treated cows and pigs in Sweden

These articles prompted a reaction from the meat company Swedish Meats/Scan. In May 2003, Scan started an SEK 10 million (EUR 1.1 million) advertising campaign in the largest Swedish newspapers at the same time as a prosecutor was investigating the mistreatment of animals in some of Scan’s slaughterhouses (Svenska Dagbladet 18 May 2003). The headline of the advertisement was, ‘Our four holy cows – and a pig’ (my translation), and the following text stated:

- We sell only Swedish meat from our own farms, from fillet of beef to sausages.
- We raise animals in line with their natural behaviour: the cows are allowed to graze outdoors and the pigs can move around freely.
- We will be the best in animal transportation in Europe: for that reason we demand more than the law does and conduct an additional inspection of our trucks, and our drivers are trained to prevent cruelty to animals.
- We will never give antibiotics to healthy animals: it would make the animals grow faster, but we are not in a hurry.
- Our pigs will always have a curly tail, even if Sweden follows Europe and allows tail docking. (Metro 19 May 2003; Svenska Dagbladet 17 May 2003, own translation)

The advertisement makes various statements, including claiming that Scan exceeds Sweden’s strict legislation, which is better for the animals, and referring to the problem of antibiotic resistance in humans. Scan also hijacks (Welford 1997) the SMOs’ arguments, claiming that Swedish farmers take good care of their animals, allowing them to behave naturally.

Response: mistreated pigs

The SMO Animal Rights Sweden criticized the campaign and the statement that pigs were able to move around freely: ‘The pigs are not moving outdoors, are unable to dig in the mud, and never leave their boxes before slaughtering’ (Svenska Dagbladet 18 May 2003, own translation). The SMO also criticized Scan’s tactic of comparing their practices with the worst examples from the meat industries in other countries, in order to mislead consumers. Since their critique was based on a different understanding of animal welfare, this SMO views Scan’s type of factory farming as antithetical to animal welfare.

Redirecting the debate: Swedish pigs are well treated

Hampe Moberg, the information director at Swedish Meats/Scan, commented on the SMO’s criticism in the same article, saying, ‘If we let them [i.e. the pigs] move outdoors they would die. They are not raised for digging, they have their boxes’ (Svenska Dagbladet 18 May 2003). With this argument, he counterframed animal welfare by claiming that the pigs would suffer more under the SMO’s definition of animal welfare than under the methods used by the Scan farmers. He continued, by stating that pigs are allowed to move more freely in Sweden than in other countries where the sows are tethered or caged.

When asked why Scan was spending so much money on this campaign, the information director replied, ‘It is important to inform consumers about what we are doing for the animals – otherwise Scan will be ruined’ (Svenska Dagbladet 18 May 2003, own translation). This argument illustrates the power of the critical newspaper articles, as the scandal they unleashed could threaten the whole business. Scan seemed to be using the advertising campaign to muddy the waters in order to restore its legitimacy, accusing meat companies in other countries of using cruel methods and stating that such methods were not used by Swedish farmers, whose practices were best for the animals and should not be questioned. Scan emotionalized the issue (Hellgren et al. 2002) to the consumers, claiming that the meat industry and animal welfare legislation in Sweden were superior to those in other countries. Scan’s buffering strategy was to defend the status quo and try to
delegitimize the SMOs by attacking their cause (Guérard, Bode, and Gustafsson 2013), producing the fourth form of affected ignorance and endeavouring to gain the consumers’ trust and the power in the debate.

**The pig debate**

During the years 2005–2007 a few articles focused on mistreated pigs (Borås Tidning 28 September 2005; Aftonbladet 1 February 2006; Kvällsposten 10 December 2006; Götteborgs-Posten 23 August 2007). In 2006 the SMO Animal Rights Sweden recognized the castration of piglets (Kvällsposten 22 December 2006). But, not until 2007 some articles were taken up the issue (Expressen 10 November 2007, 27 December 2007; Svenska Dagbladet 21 December 2007; Sydsvenskan 9 November 2007). In 2009 the animal welfare debate changed direction: the SMOs were more active in starting the debate, which now concentrated mainly on pigs. More actors were involved, including more media actors, such as several newspapers as well as television (Svt) and radio broadcasters. The debate started in late November 2009 when the Animal Rights Alliance illegally entered barns at night to film the suffering of pigs on Swedish farms. The action took place some weeks before Christmas, a time when Swedish consumers traditionally buy ham for the Christmas season.

**Critique: mistreated pigs**

The organization had filmed about 100 pig farms over two years, and they accused 92 of the farmers of contravening the Swedish Animal Welfare Act, reporting them to police (Aftonbladet 25 November 2009; Dagens Nyheter 28 November 2009; Svt.se 24 November 2009). The videos and photographs showed pigs eating dead pigs and pigs with open sores, furuncles, and bitten-off tails; many of the pigs lived in the dirt, in their own manure, or on concrete floors without straw (Aftonbladet 26 November 2009; Borås Tidning, 24 November 2009; Dagens Nyheter 3 December 2009; Svt.se 24 November 2009). This campaign’s method of telling the naked truth relates to Derrida’s concept of animal malaise, wherein we as humans are seen naked by an animal that judges us from its point of view (Desmond 2010). The consumers not only felt sorry for the pigs, but also felt ashamed at being complicit with this industry when they saw the videos in which the pigs looked into the camera. With the videos of suffering pigs, the SMOs tried to kill the myth of well-treated factory-farmed animals in Sweden. The videos showed practices of which the public had little knowledge, since animals are raised in factories in the distant countryside. In a TV news report, Malin Gustafsson of the Animal Rights Alliance referred to and criticized the economic rationale of the pig farming industry:

> What is important to say is that this farm is no exception. There is systemic error. The entire pig industry is structured to be as efficient as possible, to make as much money as possible. (Svt.se 24 November 2009, own translation)

With the help of the media, the SMO was using the campaign to influence people to resist affected ignorance, informing them of the situation so they would not accept the meat industry’s framing of animal welfare and encouraging them instead to protest as responsible consumers by not buying meat.

**Response: the scapegoat resigns**

One of the farmers, who was the Board Chair of Swedish Meats and a board member at Scan, the Farmers’ National Association (LRF), and the Swedish Animal Health Service (a veterinary company), was identified by the SMO as mistreating his pigs, and he resigned after facing massive media criticism (Aftonbladet 26 November 2009; Dagens Nyheter 28 November 2009, 3 December 2009; Svt.se 28 November 2009). He said:
I believe that in the current situation I cannot fulfill my duties … I disassociate myself from any mistreatment of animals – it is simply unacceptable. I also understand the reactions to the pictures shown; they have damaged the entire agrarian movement. (Svt.se 28 November 2009, own translation)

Here we see the power of the media and how a small SMO, using the media, was able to influence the debate. It questioned the factory farming sector in general, and specifically the chair of Swedish Meats, who was identified as a villain and made a scapegoat. This illustrates how losing legitimacy in the symbolic field of interaction can weaken economically strong organizations, giving small organizations advantages in the debate (Tsoukas 1999). The SMO was disappointed, however, because even though the chair resigned, he would still continue pig farming and continue mistreating his pigs (Svenska Dagbladet 1 December 2009).

Response: consumers buy more organic ham
Consumers reacted and the demand for organic Christmas ham increased: it was already sold out by mid-December (Norra Skåne 17 December 2009). The large food retailers in Sweden did not notice any decline in the total sales of Christmas ham, but that year the demand for organic ham was greater due to the pig debate (Norra Skåne 17 December 2009; Svenska Dagbladet 22 June 2010). In an opinion poll conducted by Sifo (a Swedish public opinion research organization) in mid December 2009, one-third of respondents said they were considering buying organic ham or no ham at all for Christmas. However, only 6% of all Christmas ham sold was organic, so instead of not buying ham once the organic ham was sold out, consumers resumed buying the conventional ham. Richard Tellström, an ethnologist, stated that this was because the food we eat at Christmas expresses social pressure and expectations, making it too difficult for people to refrain from eating it (Svenska Dagbladet 28 December 2009). The consumer reaction shows that individuals have opportunities to stand, if only for a moment, ‘outside’ conventional attitudes and practices (Williams 2008) and resist affected ignorance. The consumers reacted briefly, but after a while chose or were compelled to buy the conventional ham due to cultural norms. So the fourth form of affected ignorance (Moody-Adams 1994; Levy 2003; Williams 2008) remained as the consumers accepted animal suffering, since the inclination to uphold expected Christmas rituals was so strong.

Redirection of the debate: SMOs are blamed
Of the 92 farmers who were identified by the Animal Rights Alliance and reported to police in 2009, only one was prosecuted for mistreating his pigs, and in November 2010 the court acquitted him. The SMO saw this as an indication that the law was weak and that the juridical system was allowing the mistreatment of pigs. While the farmers went free, two of the activists were fined for filming (Svt.se 17 November 2010). The punishment of the activists and lack of legal sanctions against the farmers delegitimized the SMO campaign in favour of the farmers and the LRF and weakened the SMO’s influence in the debate. This illustrates how normative structures limit what are considered appropriate practices of social movements and that regulatory structures limit the range of tactics that movements can employ (Campbell 2005). This was also the case in 2013 when the SMO illegally made new films at 15 pig farms; this time, however, they did not report any farmers to the police due to their prior experience of being punished (Svenska Dagbladet 5 December 2013; Svt.se 4 December 2013). The SMO claimed that to encourage resistance to the second and third forms of affected ignorance (i.e. people not knowing or not wanting to know), ‘our main idea is to get the pictures out to the public. We believe that people have the right to see how pigs are farmed’ (Svenska Dagbladet 5 December 2013; Svt.se 4 December 2013, own translation).

Redirection of the debate: denial and increased controls and certifications
The LRF defended the farmers and criticized the videos for not showing a true and representative view of Swedish pig farming. Helena Jonsson, Chair of LRF said,
Pictures of sick, injured, or dead animals are always unpleasant to see, whether you work with animals or not. Swedish pig farmers work hard to maintain and improve animal welfare. Abuses can never be accepted. For that reason, the images that were shown on TV do not give a true picture of pig production in Sweden. (Svenska Dagbladet 5 December 2013, own translation)

The denial of the videos’ validity was to discredit the SMO’s version of reality (Benford and Snow 2000) in the framing contest of animal welfare in order to protect Swedish pig farmers. In an article (Svenska Dagbladet 5 December 2013), the LRF cited animal welfare inspections carried out by the Swedish Board of Agriculture, which noted fewer contraventions than previously. The LRF emphasized that Swedish animal welfare legislation was among the most comprehensive in the world and that independent auditors certified that Swedish pig farms upheld Swedish standards. This relates to the fourth form of affected ignorance, in this case encouraging people to rely on and accept the pig industry’s new practices and framing of animal welfare.

Veterinarian Johan Beck-Friis, information manager at the veterinary association, stated that despite the defence from the LRF, the pig debate did result in a minor revolution in the pig farming industry, with stricter certifications and controls. However, he also stated that economic forces prevent rapid change (Göteborgs-Posten 21 February 2011). Other veterinarians commented that, though the videos showed many mistreated pigs, the situation was not alarming (Svt.se 14 December 2013), thereby discrediting the SMO’s critique as exaggerated.

The animal welfare debate: a framing contest

The animal welfare debate in Sweden as presented in the media became a framing contest (Benford and Snow 2000) between participating organizations. The debate followed the norms of a narrative form, with its strong tendency to reduce controversy to two competing positions and frame news stories in terms of conflict (Gamson 1988; McNair 1998; Arpan et al. 2006), constructing protagonists and antagonists (Gamson 1988). The journalists juxtaposed the actors’ divergent views and divergent framings of animal welfare as for or against factory farming. Since the journalists identified the meat industry as the villain, the meat industry could only defend themselves in subsequent articles, and the only way to communicate with their consumers via the media was to conduct their own advertising campaigns, as Scan did. Scan also started a blog in 2009 to have direct dialogue with consumers on social media after the pig debate in 2009 (Svenska Dagbladet 1 December 2009). Since the meat industry actors had little control over the stories covered by media organizations (Entman and Rojecki 1993; Baylor 1996), their own communication activities and framing of animal welfare became an important strategy, which could produce the fourth form of affected ignorance. In later years, some meat industry actors were interviewed in the press, making it possible for them to contribute to affected ignorance with the help of journalists as, for example, the chicken company did when inviting consumers to take a moral stand in relation to climate change.

What the media presented in the debate were only selected slices of reality that become publicly known, and as such they formed the information basis of actors’ evaluation of the effects of their actions, and of other actors’ decisions on how to react to them (Koopmans 2004). This was recognized in the debate when Scan reacted to the critical articles and launched an advertising campaign in 2003 and when the Scan chair resigned in 2009, both in response to bad media publicity due to the videos taken by the Animal Rights Alliance. This news logic illustrates the power arising from the assumption that the media offer a description of reality that matters and has consequences for those described (McNair 1998), making the journalists powerful actors in the debate.

The debate illustrated how SMOs also depend on the media to generate public sympathy for their causes (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993), otherwise the public will not know about their campaigns. SMOs try hard to generate moral shocks through their rhetorical appeals by using condensing symbols (Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Jasper 1997) or employing extreme moralistic appeals that demonize their opponents (Jasper and Poulsen 1995) in order to break through affected ignorance. This was a successful SMO strategy when the Animal Rights Alliance illegally filmed the pig farms and
attracted considerable attention from the media and consumers. The result of this first video campaign was that consumers legitimated the SMO’s fight (Benford and Snow 2000) for animal rights since they were upset over the treatment of the pigs. The consumers briefly resisted affected ignorance when the organic Christmas ham was sold out shortly after the campaign, due to consumer participation in a collective action frame defined by the SMO (Benford and Hunt 1992). However, since meat consumption still increased, this public awareness of the factory-farmed animals’ situation apparently faded shortly after the campaigns. This forgetting is related to the fourth form of affected ignorance in which people, for cultural reasons or due to human fallibility, persist in consuming meat from factory-farmed animals despite knowing how they are treated. This could also be the case with the newspaper opinion poll related to the articles about suffering chickens in 2003, in which most readers said that they would not stop buying and eating chicken.

To generate moral shocks (Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Jasper 1997) was also the purpose of Coop Konsum’s 2003 campaign featuring people in cages. To raise public awareness of caged hens and promote organic eggs, Coop Konsum framed animal welfare the way an SMO would by announcing that they had stopped selling eggs from caged hens. Coop Konsum even won prizes for their creative and innovative marketing campaign that hijacked the SMO frame. Coop Konsum could also be criticized for decoupling (Meyer and Rowan 1977) or hypocrisy (Brunsson 2003), however, since it took 12 years for the food retailer to ban the sale of eggs from caged hens in all Coop stores.

In the debate, I also recognize that the SMO strategy of framing the animal welfare issue as a legal issue, i.e. a crime of contravening the Animal Welfare Act, was unsuccessful in the first campaign. The SMO interpreted the legal system as discrediting the SMO accusations, since it supported the factory-farming system as upholding the Swedish Animal Welfare Act. The legal system’s counterframing could have contributed to the fourth form of affected ignorance among the public, since this system could be deemed more trustworthy than the SMO. As a result, the collective action frame was reconstituted (Benford and Snow 2000) in the next campaign, but with no legal accusations levelled against farmers. Instead, the SMO stressed that the aim was to inform consumers and try to counteract affected ignorance.

**Producing affected ignorance in a discursive battle**

To better understand how the actors’ frames and framing strategies were constructed and why they could contribute to producing affected ignorance, the importance of the actors’ use of discourses in the media debate will be discussed. Discourses illustrate the power of language as they affect people’s perception and actions (Van Dijik 1993; Hardy, Palmer, and Phillips 2000). Consequently, the actors’ framing strategies of invoking different discourses could be seen as producing different forms of affected ignorance, which also depended on which organization or actor was using a given discourse. The power involved in this framing contest is an ideological power: the power to signify events in a particular way and construct a subject to which the discourse applies, translating a discourse to fit an actor’s own interests (Hall 1982/2005). The SMOs’ framing of animal welfare using the *animal rights discourse* was challenged by their opponents. In the framing contest (Benford and Snow 2000) it was instead the opponents that made tactical choices, such as using the SMOs’ *animal rights discourse* for their own purposes in order to gain legitimacy and support from the public. It was necessary to convince the readers and consumers that the industry’s meat production practices and the animals’ conditions were not cruel, while the journalists and SMOs claimed the opposite. The meat industry actors speaking in the debate were large and represented the largest part of Swedish farmers, so their farming practices could be uncritically accepted. This led to the fourth form of affected ignorance (Williams 2008) when these actors talked, in their advertising campaign, about Swedish pigs living a good life. In such a framing process, Scan’s advertising campaign represented a tactical innovation, becoming a new weapon in the debate (Skillington 1997). Scan’s drawing on a ‘foreign’ discourse could be an important strategy (Fairclough 1992) for averting criticism, as the meat industry actors seemed to hijack the *animal rights discourse* to discredit the SMO’s
critique, seize control of the debate, and continue their business. This counterframing undermined the SMO’s version of reality (Benford and Snow 2000).

This was also the case with the chicken industry’s reference to climate-smart chicken using the sustainability discourse. Relating the chicken industry to the sustainability discourse, which was dominant in public discussion at that time, could have been decisive in determining the framing strategy’s success (Baylor 1996). This strategy could also be interpreted as an intention to shift the focus of the debate and hide the animal welfare issue in order to produce affected ignorance (of the second and third forms), as was also the case in the Coop’s marketing activities featuring fictional animals in TV commercials. The Coop’s framing strategy was also to invoke the animal rights discourse in an SMO-like campaign in order to promote their organic eggs. The Coop’s actions could be interpreted as contradictory in the context of the animal welfare debate, as Coop Konsum, in their campaign using fictional de-animalized animals and animalized humans, invoked the animal rights discourse in marketing, both contributing to affected ignorance and trying to make people resist it.

The meat company Scan, the farmers’ organization LRF, and the chicken companies all referred to the animal rights, nationalistic, sustainability, and health discourses in their advertising campaigns and in newspaper interviews. These were attempts to frame their version of animal welfare in relation to popular discourses of the time, such as the sustainability and health discourses. Using these discourses could give the companies legitimacy as responsible actors taking care of the environment and people.

The farming industry actors used different discourses depending on whether they were communicating internally to farmers or externally to consumers (Stibbe 2001). This was recognized when the chicken companies Ross and Cobb-Vantress used the economic rationale discourse in their manuals and marketing activities targeting farmers. In the debate, this economic rationale discourse was cited by the journalists mainly to discredit the chicken companies, in order to break down the readers’ affected ignorance and illustrate how the companies used this discourse in internal communications with farmers, not intended for the public. The quotations from Ross and Cobb-Vantress illustrated that the power of language is systematically related to underlying ideologies that help maintain and reproduce the domination and oppression of animals (Stibbe 2001), producing the first form of affected ignorance (Williams 2008). In contrast, Scan’s external communication with consumers in their advertising campaign instead illustrated the use of the animal rights discourse in an attempt to modify the action frame (Gamson 1992) and to forestall criticism that could produce the fourth form of affected ignorance, in order to continue their business.

The Swedish Animal Welfare Act states that animals should be able to behave naturally, but the SMO and industry actors frame this principle differently. The SMOs frame it in relation to scientific reports of how pigs, cows, and chickens would behave if they were not domesticated by humans (cf. Mille and Diesen Frejadotter 2009), basing their frame on a romantic/agrarian worldview that stresses the freedom of individual animals (Fraser 2008). The conventional meat industry organizations frame the principle as allowing for large indoor factories, based on a more rational/industrial worldview treating high productivity as evidence that the animals are doing well (Fraser 2008). When both the SMOs and meat industry organizations use the animal rights discourse to frame animal welfare in this framing contest, this blurs the debate and could produce affected ignorance, since members of the public could choose to rely on the meat industry instead of on SMOs in order to continue their meat-eating behaviour.

However, even an SMO, the Animal Rights Alliance, contributed to the fourth form of affected ignorance when their spokesperson challenged their own animal welfare frame (Benford and Snow 2000) – although the opposite was intended – by invoking the nationalistic discourse, relying on the Swedish Animal Welfare Act to prohibit the breeding of ‘monster animals’. Veterinarians as experts on animal welfare, though otherwise critical of factory farming, contributed to the fourth form of affected ignorance when they invoked the health discourse to declare that animal welfare had improved due to the debate.
Conclusions

The Swedish media depicted the animal welfare debate as a battle or framing contest, of which they were part, about what constitutes a good or bad life for factory-farmed animals. The SMOs fought for animal rights and the journalists wrote articles to encourage people to resist affected ignorance, whereas the meat industry actors needed to produce affected ignorance in order to continue their business. I also recognized that the SMOs could contribute to affected ignorance, while the food retailer Coop Konsum could act to induce people to resist affected ignorance.

Williams (2008) has called for an extended animal welfare debate, to discourage people from affecting ignorance, but the Swedish experience shows that, despite the existing debate, meat consumption has continued to increase. Through following the animal welfare debate in the Swedish mass media over ten years using critical discourse analysis as a method, it was possible to recognize how the actors, both meat industry organizations and SMOs, expressed themselves using various discourses and how some even hijacked and exploited their opponents’ discourses.

This paper has illustrated how powerful organizations can try to maintain affected ignorance. In the Swedish case, they did this by tactically invoking multiple discourses in their communications while taking certain practical actions (e.g. letting the scapegoat resign and implementing new standards for monitoring and controlling farmers) to meet SMO demands. By analysing texts in relation to these discourses, I illustrated how frames and framing strategies were based on the deliberate use of discourses; for example, meat industry actors exploited discourses mainly used by the SMOs to take control of the debate, while the SMOs also used discourses that challenged their own framing of animal welfare, possibly making them lose control of the debate.

By discussing various forms of affected ignorance identified by Williams (2006, 2008), Moody-Adams (1994), and Levy (2003) and by relating these to actors’ varied use of discourses, I demonstrated that affected ignorance can be deliberately created, depending on how people interpret information about the actions and reactions of SMOs, meat industry organizations, and other organizations covered in the media. Since discourses are important for our social construction and perceptions of reality, they are powerful tools for producing affected ignorance.

Williams (2006, 2008) and Moody-Adams (1994) observed that we all are culpable of eating meat from factory-farmed animals and that we all should take responsibility for our actions. What this paper has demonstrated is that this responsibility is complex and difficult to take on, since the media debate itself could produce affected ignorance when presenting the views of various actors, such as SMOs exposing the cruel treatment of factory animals and meat industry organizations claiming that at least Swedish animals have a good life. These contradictory views blurred the debate, confusing people so that they did not change their behaviour (Austgulen 2014). As the actors in the debate hijacked their opponents’ discourses to blur the terms of the debate, people did not stop eating meat from factory animals because they did not know who was right and who was wrong.

These two opposing views were presented in the media by the journalists themselves, who gave voice to actors from both sides in articles and in TV and radio programmes, allowing both sides to influence people and produce affected ignorance. However, the media also constitute an important arena for advertising, and the meat company Scan and the retailer Coop Konsum were both able to pay for advertising campaigns in the same media channels as carried the debate, spreading their messages by using the animal rights discourse for two purposes. Scan to produce affected ignorance and Coop Konsum to discourage affected ignorance. The SMOs were more dependent on media coverage of their campaigns, however, making the journalists important for them. This illustrates how inequality in wealth and power influence access to the media (Herman and Chomsky 1988/2002), as both sides needed the media debate to be able to tell their stories about animal welfare in the meat industry and to convince the public. This paper has demonstrated that affected ignorance was produced in the media debate and that all actors involved contributed to greater or lesser degrees to affected ignorance, since a range of discourses were used throughout the debate by both sides to confuse people.
There has been a small increase in organic meat production and in the number of vegetarians or vegans in Sweden, which could be signs that affected ignorance is being resisted by at least some people who are taking a moral stance. But the process is slow and most animals in the food industry are still kept in factory-like conditions. Since consumers’ voices were absent from almost all articles and only commented on by other actors, further research is needed into how people as consumers react to and interpret the animal welfare debate in the media and in the campaigns of both SMOs and the meat industry. This will help us understand how consumers perceive the production of affected ignorance.

Notes

1. Annual meat consumption rose from 80.7 kg/person in 2003 to 87.7 kg/person in 2013 and 87.3 kg/person in 2015 (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2016).
2. The share of organic food was 2.2% of total food sales in 2005 and 7.3% in 2015, while the share of organic meat was 1.1% of total organic food sales in 2005 and 2.9% in 2015. The share of organic meat was 1.5% of total meat sales in 2013 (Konsumtionsrapporten 2010; Statistics Sweden 2014, 2016; Ekoweb/LRF 2012, 2013).
3. The share of vegetarians was 1.5% in 2001 and 6% in 2014, and the share of vegans was 2% in 2009 and 4% in 2014 (djurensratt.se 10 May 2014; Dagens Nyheter 22 March 2014).
4. These are Svenska Dagbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Göteborgs-Posten, Sydsvenskan, Expressen, and Aftonbladet.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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