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Master's thesis

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Let them eat waste!

A case study of a dumpster diving kollegium in Copenhagen, Denmark

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Abstract

The term “dumpster diving”, or the retrieval of food from waste containers, elicits associations with garbage, and perhaps provokes reactions of disgust and aversion. In existing literature, the term is associated with environmental and social activism, mainly in the context of the “freegan” movement. This thesis takes a grounded theory approach to dumpster diving, examining the practice in the Danish context using an exploratory case study of a group of student dumpster divers living in Copenhagen. The dumpster divers’ personal thoughts and reflections are the focus of the study, emphasizing the practice from the practitioners’ perspective. The main line of inquiry is the examination of the nature of dumpster diving, which involves questioning how the practice functions and what it looks like in practice, what the motivations are for engaging in the practice, and how its practitioners make sense of and give meaning to their practice.

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Preface

When I first moved to Copenhagen as an exchange student, I had heard a few things here and there about this thing called “dumpster diving”, namely from my studies at New York University, located in the generally liberal-leaning neighborhood of Greenwich Village in lower Manhattan. In my mind at the time, dumpster diving must have been an activity reserved either for those who had a particular social message to convey, or those who were desperate for something to eat. I could not reason another justification for the practice, which, with my limited understanding of how it worked at the time, seemed either a little unnecessary or a little disgusting. I had heard horror stories of “freegans”, people who only ate free food found in the dumpster, becoming ill from some tainted sushi they had found.

While living in Vienna, the justification of social activism grew clearer to me. Attending a university like BOKU, reducing food waste and eating in a less environmentally impactful way was always a point of discussion. From friends, I had heard about the dumpster diving community, and was invited to join a couple of times, which I declined. The stories I had heard about needing certain keys to enter the rooms where the dumpsters were kept, the sneaking around, and the seeming lawlessness of the whole thing was enough of a deterrent for me. After all, I could still afford to feed myself at a good standard on my student budget, and I didn’t need to give the police any reasons to revoke my residence permit.

The mindset I’ve just described was more of less the starting point of inquiry for this thesis. In Copenhagen, it simply seemed to me that dumpster diving performed a different social role, gave a different value, and was generally much more common, than in other cities where I had previously lived. Writing this thesis was therefore also an opportunity to explore a personal curiosity, and to talk to other people about why they decide to dumpster dive, what it means to them to dumpster dive. I also had the chance to explore the nature of the practice, and try to find out what the essence of dumpster diving is, and what this thing called dumpster diving is actually all about.

As I learned early in the study, dumpster diving is a complex and wildly diverse practice that is modified, adjusted, and adapted to fulfill the specific needs of its various practitioners. While I initially intended on doing a study on dumpster diving in Copenhagen at large, a particular group of dumpster divers caught my attention: a kollegium made up of 11 international exchange students who began dumpster diving together once they moved to Copenhagen from their respective home

countries around the world. The practice as it existed among these students was rich and interesting enough, and therefore my focus narrowed to this case study. Throughout the months of socializing, dumpster diving, and interviewing the students, I learned about their individual practice, which also ultimately spoke to the practice as it exists in a broader context. In the following pages, I try to condense everything the dumpster divers have taught me over the past six months, and all the knowledge and insights they have shared with me. Through this process, dumpster diving has become much more relatable to me, and I feel that I have come to understand it much more clearly and personally. I hope that it will be the same for you.

Contents

Introduction

Food waste on the agenda

The magnitude of food waste in countries of the western world is an issue drawing increasingly more attention on both political and public agendas. In a 2011 report on global food losses and food waste, the FAO estimated that "one-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally", and food waste produced by European and North American consumers amounts to about 95-115 kg/person/year (Gustavsson et al. 2011: v). Awareness of the food waste problem in Denmark certainly seems to exist in the political realm, as evidenced by the numerous reports, campaigns, and proposals for change, that have been published by the Ministry of Environment (*Miljøministeriet*) (*Charter om Mindre Madspild*, n.d.), the Ministry of Food (*Fodevareministeriet*) (*Madspild i Danmark*, 2011), and the Municipality of Copenhagen (*Københavns Kommune*) (*Ressource- og affaldsplan 2018: Planlægningsdel*, n.d.). From the non-governmental perspective, the Stop Wasting Food (*Stop Spild af Mad*) Movement works to reduce food waste in Denmark by increasing public awareness of the problem, thereby encouraging public action ("Stop Spild Af Mad - Danmarks største bevægelse mod madspild," n.d.). While it is not a government-operated organization, Stop Wasting Food collaborates with governmental campaigns, but maintains a focus on providing resources, ideas, and solutions for people looking for what they can do to help out as individuals. Similarly, the non-profit, apolitical, volunteer-run organization, *Fødevarebanken*, emphasizes reducing unnecessary food waste, and operates by collecting surplus food, which it uses to support social causes, such as food for the homeless, the mentally ill, and other people in crisis ("fødevareBanken | fra madspild til måltid," n.d.). The question of what individuals can do to minimize food waste is also addressed in the popular media, with articles about leftovers, doggy bags, and sell-by versus expiration dates being published in Focus Denmark (Johansen, 2014) and the Sunday Newspaper (*Søndagsavisen*) (Lundbye, 2014), and television specials about food waste being broadcast by DR ("Madmagasinet Bitz & Frisk," 2014).

With all the activity surrounding the reduction of food waste, the issue is indisputably in Denmark's public eye, with calls for change being made from both the top-down as well as the bottom-up. In the midst of this buzz, questions arise regarding the nature of food waste, how our food provision systems came to produce so much waste, and what more can and should be done. While these reports, campaigns, and proposals for change directed by governments indicate food waste's presence on the political agenda, the public has also initiated its own, smaller-scale solutions.

Within local communities, smaller movements have emerged with various concepts, but all united by the overarching goal of reducing food waste. Some examples of these movements—which are all presently active in Copenhagen—are Spisehuset Rub&Stub, a non-profit restaurant which receives food donations from local supermarkets and farmers' markets ("Spisehuset Rub & Stub," n.d.); ReGastro, a student-run collaboration with supermarkets and retailers to collect and serve food that cannot be sold but is still useable ("regastro," n.d.); and various soup kitchens (*folkekøkkenet*) which rely to various degrees on donated and dumpster dived food ("Folkekøkkener," n.d.).

Modern consumerism and environmental impacts

The argument for reducing food waste is not only economical, but also environmental and ethical. The production and distribution of food are extremely resource demanding processes. Food waste has implications for several areas of environmental interest, including climate, water, land, and biodiversity, as well as consequences for global food security. Numerically, the FAO estimates that the total global wastage of edible food amounts to 1.3 Gtonnes, out of 6 Gtonnes of total agricultural production. This amount of waste results in 3.3 Gtonnes of CO_2 equivalents emitted, due to land use change and the carbon footprint of food produced that is ultimately not eaten. This number ranks food wastage as the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases after the USA and China. Finally, food wastage also accounts for the consumption of 250 km^3 of surface and groundwater resources annually (blue water footprint), and 1.4 billion hectares of land (which is 30% of the world's agricultural land area) (*Food wastage footprint: Impacts on natural resources*, 2013). The environmental impacts of food wastage are undeniable, and the knowledge of these impacts begs the question of what drives this magnitude of wastage, and what we as consumers can do in light of this knowledge.

In order to highlight the incompatibility of modern patterns of consumption with environmental sustainability, let us briefly consider the concept of "ecocentrism", an alternative philosophy to anthropocentrism (which follows a human-centered value system, believing that the Ecosphere exists "to serve the needs of humanity" (Rowe, 1994)). Ecocentrism, alternatively, is based on the belief that "compared to the undoubted importance of the human part, the whole Ecosphere is even more significant and consequential" (Rowe, 1994), implying a need for more "appreciative, relational understanding" of nature (Gjerris & Gaiani, 2013). In their paper on food waste in Nordic countries, Gjerris and Gaiani posit that the waste of edible food can, however, elicit a different

response in a human being, compared to the waste of other objects we encounter and use in our everyday lives, such as clothing. A human being's necessity to eat is not equivalent to his or her necessity to own and use things, and food does not occupy the same role in the human existence as, for example, the latest fashion trend does (Gjerris & Gaiani, 2013). We seem, however, to have become accustomed to the ease of picking up food from the supermarket, without the prerequisite of understanding, relating to, and appreciating the food item and its journey, including where it comes from, how it was created, and where it traveled before it ended up on the shelf at our local supermarket. Our local grocery stores are anything but local, sourcing products from around the world as a norm (Stuart, 2009). When we shop at the supermarket, we nearly purchase convenience over the product itself, perhaps making it easier to forget about it sitting in the back of our refrigerator, easier to simply throw out, and easier to waste. Realizing this convenience we have as consumers then sends us back to confront the realities of its environmental consequences.

Another symptom of this convenient lifestyle, in which we seldom pause to consider the origins and life cycle of the food products we buy, is the image we have of the grocery store, a sterile place of colorful and fresh abundance, displaying rows of equally sized and shaped produce. In order to maintain this image of abundance and freshness, grocery stores must often throw away products that are still useable (Stuart, 2009). In some cases food exceeding its sell-by date is thrown away for legal reasons, and in other cases, products are thrown away to make room for newer, fresher products, regardless of whether older products are still consumable or not (Stuart, 2009). Consumers' expectations that food should always be abundant, fresh, and available overshadow any concerns for the nutritious potential and full value of the products themselves (Stuart, 2009). Regardless of the reasons why stores throw away so much food, the fact remains that a lot of still-useable food ends up in the dumpster at the end of the day.

What is dumpster diving?

Another phenomenon which is also often mentioned in the company of the food waste movements described above is dumpster diving. For the purpose of this study, I define dumpster diving as the practice of searching for and taking food discarded by retailers—usually from waste receptacles—with the purpose of consuming what is found. Dumpster divers are called *skraldere* in Danish. The practice of dumpster diving appears in existing literature, usually in the company of discussions about "freeganism". Freegans, as defined by freegan.info, a New York City-based freegan group,

are “people who employ alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources” (“freegan.info,” n.d.). Freeganism, then, is the freegans’ social movement which represents a “total boycott of an economic system where the profit motive has eclipsed ethical considerations” (“freegan.info,” n.d.). While dumpster diving and freeganism are often equated to each other, it is important, from the beginning, to distinguish between the two terms. While dumpster diving is a central, and perhaps defining practice of freeganism, freeganism necessarily involves the intention of “protesting environmental degradation and capitalism” (Barnard 2011: 419). Dumpster diving is purely the practice—the act described above of searching for edible food. It can certainly by practiced with freegan ideals, but it is important to recognize that holding these ideals is not a prerequisite for being a practitioner of dumpster diving.

Although dumpster diving can be seen as a movement supporting the reduction of food waste, until recent years have brought more media coverage, the practice itself has been shrouded in relative secrecy. Certain organized movements, for example FoodNotBombs in the United States (“THE FOOD NOT BOMBS MOVEMENT,” n.d.), may use dumpster diving as a means to pursing a cause, following a stated mission to achieve a specific goal, but no such dumpster-diving-based movements were found in the Danish context. The connection between food waste and dumpster diving, then, can be seen in the following observations:

First, taking food out of the waste stream and consuming it instead does, in fact, represent a *de facto* reduction of food waste, and implies that what stores are calling waste, dumpster divers are actually considering a resource of food.

Second, the very possibility of the existence of dumpster diving indicates that there is edible food ending up in the waste stream, which implies a systemic problem in the existing avenues by which food is transformed into waste, suggesting that changes need to be made in the processes which lead to this waste.

Problem formulation

The name “dumpster diving” itself evokes images of filth, poverty, and desperation as motivations for the practice. Dumpster diving is also often mentioned in association with the freeganism movement, in which the practice is used as an expression of an ideology held by its practitioners.

The link between dumpster diving and upholding environmental values is ostensible, given that taking food out of the waste stream and consuming it instead constitutes a *de facto* reduction of food waste. However, poverty and the expression of environmental ideologies may not be the only notable motivations that define the practice of dumpster diving. This study aims to analyze the act of dumpster diving and the meanings which surround the practice, by taking an in-depth look at a specific case study, situated in a Danish context, with the objective of providing insight into the following three intentionally broad guiding questions about the practice:

1. How does dumpster diving function, and what does the process of look like?
2. What are the motivations for dumpster diving?
3. How do dumpster divers make sense of and give meaning to their practice?

Therefore, the overarching purpose of this study will be to come closer to the nature of the practice of dumpster diving. The concrete aim is to contribute to literature about dumpster diving, exclusive of the freegan movement, by exploring the motivations of dumpster divers who are not freegans, investigating how these dumpster divers relate and make sense of their practice, and illustrating the practical specifics of the practice through the perspective of a particular group of student dumpster divers living in Copenhagen.

Delimitation

This study approaches dumpster diving with the notion that the motivations for engaging in the practice are complex and personal to individual dumpster divers, and that the practice itself is nuanced and adapted for diverse purposes. Although structural forcings, such as institutions and political climate, cannot be entirely excluded from consideration, this study will primarily focus on exploring three aims: *First*, what is the experiential nature of the practice. What does it look and feel like, from the eyes of dumpster divers?

Second, what are the motivations for dumpster diving. What kinds of internal, personal impetuses do dumpster divers describe for motivating their practice?

And *third*, how do dumpster divers make sense of their practice? What reflections do they make, which tensions do they grapple with, and ultimately, what is the nature of being a dumpster diver?

The case is also centered on the dumpster divers themselves and the experience from their point of view, and therefore does not include interviews from individuals who may be relevant to understanding the broader practice of dumpster diving overall, such as supermarket managers and workers, or local politicians and activists. Although their responses may provide context, they would distract from the focus of following the dumpster divers as they explore and make sense of what dumpster diving is, and what it means to dumpster dive.

Although the particular case studied in this thesis is situated in a Danish context, it does not, importantly, seek to make general conclusions about dumpster diving as it exists in Copenhagen or in Denmark. As expanded upon below, the study is centered on a group of international student dumpster divers living in Copenhagen, with the hope that given the existing context of the group, the focus of the study can remain on the social interactions and the impacts of these interactions on the divers' practice, meanings, and motivations.

Furthermore, the choice of a case study was a practical decision, to delimit the study to questions of "what", "why", and "how", rather than questions of "whom", "where", and "when", which would be less meaningful for such a qualitative study.

Conclusions which can be drawn from this study, therefore, will be more about dumpster diving as a social practice among small groups of practitioners, rather than broader conclusions about dumpster diving in Copenhagen, in general.

Guide to reading the thesis

The thesis will have the following six main sections, which are:

1. *Approach and methods*, which describes the epistemological approach of the study, as well as the choice of a case study approach. This section also explains the study's data collection methods, as well as data analysis methods.

2. The *case study* chapter will first give background information relevant to understanding the case and the practice, as it exists for this case.

3. The *ethnographic* chapter, which will be the point of departure for the case study, providing

an ethnographic account of the practice as experienced “through the eyes of the anthropologist”. This chapter will address the first aim, which is to reveal the experiential nature of the practice in the form of an ethnographic account.

4. The *motivations* chapter will approach the second aim, discussing the motivations for dumpster diving as described by the dumpster divers themselves.

5. An *analysis and discussion* chapter pursues the third aim, looking at the motivations presented in the motivations chapter, and attempting to make sense and meaning out of the dumpster divers’ responses by assembling them into a theory, as prescribed by the grounded theory epistemological approach.

6. The *conclusion and prospectus* will sum up the main points learned from the study, as well as consider potential directions for follow-up studies in the future.

Approach and methods

Epistemological approach

This study chooses a qualitative approach to understanding the practice of dumpster diving. The basis of this choice is the belief that dumpster diving is a complex phenomenon, which is worthy of being examined in detail, to expose the nuances of the practice, and the various meanings attributed to the practice by its practitioners. The qualitative approach therefore suits the exploratory and open-ended nature of the inquiry better, and can better fulfill the objective of understanding elements of the practice which are not explainable in terms of numbers or statistics.

Grounded theory

Specifically, a grounded theory approach was chosen, due to the exploratory nature of the studied phenomenon, as explained above. Gray (2009) explains the grounded theory approach as follows:

> "…grounded theory does not begin with prior assumptions about hypotheses, research questions or what literature should underpin the study. […] The research should commence with a defined purpose, but also with the realization that this purpose may become modified or even radically altered during the research process itself. Through data analysis new theoretical positions or understandings may emerge" (502).

This approach therefore demanded more openness and flexibility in the problem formulation and data collection methodology, meaning continuous revision and refocusing of the research objectives, sampling methods, and interview process as more data was collected. The interview guide, described below, experienced several revisions throughout the interviewing process, and the research objectives that appear above were also reformulated on multiple occasions as noteworthy data was collected. The grounded theory approach was especially appropriate due to the lack of formal literature describing dumpster diving in a Danish context, as it left space for exploring interesting issues which emerged in the research process, without being restricted to answering a specific question.

Hermeneutics

Furthermore, following a hermeneutical understanding, the practice of dumpster diving is seen as inextricable from its context; in other words, the act of dumpster diving is devoid of meaning without situating it in context (Pahuus, 1995). It is especially important to remember that dumpster diving does not exist in a vacuum, and must therefore be looked at holistically, in the context of the dumpster divers' lives, knowledge, motivations, and experiences, which color the practice and allow it to have meaning. As this particular study has no ambition of using statistical analysis to

illustrate and explain the practice, the focus will be on delving into the sampled manifestations of the practice and certain forms the practice can take in various context, instead of trying to numerically represent, for example, the prevalence of the practice or how much food is taken among all dumpster divers in Copenhagen.

Choice of the case study approach

This thesis will take a case study approach to investigating the practice of dumpster diving and the meanings and motivations of the people who practice it. Following Yin (2009), alternative research methods, such as experimentation, archival analysis, and historical accounting, were excluded from use, due to their unsuitability for researching dumpster diving as a unique, contemporary phenomenon with a specific cultural context. The survey approach was also deemed unsuitable, due to the statistical and logistical limitations of obtaining a representative sample of dumpster divers in Copenhagen as well as a full, in-depth description of their individual practice, motivations, and reflections on dumpster diving.

Instead the case study approach allowed for a more focused, personal study, which examined the dumpster divers as individuals with different backgrounds, values, and knowledge, and therefore very different experiences and motivations in their own dumpster diving journeys. The narrower, more in-depth focus of the case study approach also accommodated the social context of dumpster diving, and how the dumpster divers interacted with and were influenced by their social group.

Limitations of the case study approach

Here, I would like to establish the limitations of the case study approach. Firstly, it is important to note that this study does not aim to present the full range of motivations of every dumpster diver in Copenhagen. Not only would obtaining a representative sample of all the motivations of dumpster divers in Copenhagen be a feat in time management and recruiting of participants, it is ultimately not the objective of a case study to do so; such an objective would be better suited to a survey approach. Furthermore, the findings of a case study are meant only to be "generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (Yin 2009: 15). Therefore, the case study does not seek to draw conclusions about the motivations of *all* the dumpster divers in Copenhagen. Rather, its focus is on observations made of an intimate group of dumpster divers,

their social interactions and personal reasons for dumpster diving, and how they make sense of the reasons they share for their practice.

The observations made of these dumpster divers are furthermore limited to the six-month time frame of the thesis, and the evolution of the divers' thoughts is not recorded from before nor followed after, beyond the data collection period of the thesis. The broader dumpster diving community in Copenhagen and in Denmark are also observed by means of social media (Facebook), but only to the extent of providing a situating context and fodder for thought.

Data collection methods

Two primary methods were used to collect data for this case study: participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation

The level of participation used in the participant observation data collection method varied according to what was determined to be to most feasible, useful, and un-intrusive to the normal practice. The levels of participation used in this study ranged from passive participation to active participation, following Spradley's description of the five levels of participation: non-participatory, passive, moderate, active, and complete (1980).

Active participation was chosen to study the dumpster diving activities which I personally participated in. Having contact with two key informants who were willing to take me along when they went dumpster diving allowed me to observe first-hand what participants physically did while dumpster diving and how the process actually happened. The two key informants were also crucial in introducing me to the rest of the dumpster divers who they were in contact with, and who were also eventually interviewed for the study (see Semi-structured interviews). The goal of choosing active participation was to get as close as possible to being a real practitioner of dumpster diving without "going native", or entirely losing the objectivity necessary to conduct a formal study of the practice (Spradley, 1980). By learning the rules and spirit of the practice from my two key informants, I was able to personally engage in the act, eventually performing it alone, without their assistance. Throughout this process I attempted to maintain objectivity by asking questions of the other participants, taking reflective notes when arriving home after each time out dumpster diving, and not joining every single dumpster diving trip the informants and their acquaintances made. By asking questions during the practice, I attempted to remind myself and the other participants that I

was here to participant, but also to research and learn about the practice. Taking reflective notes gave me the opportunity to be reflexive and document my own reactions and feelings so I could look back again later to double-check my objectivity, and remember what had occurred so that I could write about it later. Finally, I chose to skip some of the dumpster diving trips initially, because I felt that when I came along, the practice became more of an event than it otherwise would have been, thereby altering the normal practice. By giving the divers some space to do diving trips on their own, without having to call me to come along, I hoped to allow them to maintain and preserve their original practice as much as possible.

Passive and moderate participation were used to observe the many dumpster diving-dedicated Facebook groups (See Dumpster diving groups in Denmark and Copenhagen). I joined five of the dumpster diving Facebook groups that were relevant to the study, beginning in a more passive role by simply following the groups, reading their posts, the groups' "About" sections, as well as the comments and replies posted by other members. After approximately two weeks of passive participation, I began gaining a better sense of the purpose of the groups, their attitudes towards various topics, and the tone of the comments and posts. Therefore, I took a more active role by posting on the groups, commenting on other members' posts, and replying to questions other members had posed. Through this moderate participation role, I did not join the members in their own dumpster diving practice, but I communicated with them via Facebook messages and Facebook comments on the topic of dumpster diving. When making a post in the groups, I identified myself as a thesis student researching dumpster diving. When replying to questions or comments, I simply answered the questions with my opinion as a dumpster diver, based on what I had learned from developing my own practice.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted either with people who were acquainted with my two key informants (their roommates and friends), or whom I had been connected with through my other personal contacts (my own friends and my supervisor). I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with nine different dumpster divers in total, and the interviews lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to three hours, depending on the flow of the conversation. Most interviews lasted from one hour to one-and-a-half hours. Interviews were held at a convenient location for the respondents—at their homes or dormitories, at the university, and in one instance, at a local café. All the interviews were conducted in Copenhagen in English. I chose to stop conducting interviews after a preliminary

review of the interview data showed that theoretical saturation had been achieved, and many of the same themes were being discussed by the different dumpster divers as it began to be possible to predict how respondents might respond or react to the various topics we discussed. The interviews were all recorded by QuickTime player on my MacBook pro, and were later converted using the free online program “media.io” into mp3 format, then imported to ExpressScribe for transcription. Interview recordings and transcriptions are available in Appendix A.

The semi-structured interviews followed an Interview Guide, which I developed to ensure basic consistency among interviews (see Appendix B). The Interview Guide contained the following contents:

1. *An introduction page*, where respondents could read about me, the study and its purpose, and basic content of the interview. This page was handed to respondents as far in advance as possible in order to give them a chance to prepare themselves for the interview. Unfortunately, it was not always possible to give the introduction page to respondents the day before the interview or earlier, so some respondents did not receive the page until just before the interview. The page also served as a business card, as it contained my contact details in case they thought of something else they wanted to discuss.

2. *Interview themes*, used to direct the interview. These themes were meant to provide a consistent starting point for the interviews, but *not* to ensure that the same interview happened with each respondent. The interview guide contained specific questions on various themes, but these questions were not always asked in the same order or in the same way. In the interviews I emphasized the conversation flow, to encourage respondents to open up about their personal experience, instead of being too rigidly restricted to only the questions I had in mind. By leaving it open in this way, I hoped to capture certain themes and responses that would not have been anticipated beforehand when writing the Interview Guide.

3. *An open-ended section*, which was intended as a free space for respondents to share any other thoughts or anecdotes they had, or raise their own topic of conversation that we did not yet discuss during the interview.

4. *A mini survey*, one-page, where respondents were asked to fill out the personal details described below, such as age, sex, nationality, and occupation/study program. Furthermore, respondents were asked to write answer where they live in Copenhagen, and where they dumpster dive.

Finally, respondents were asked to answer three questions on a five-point scale. Personal details and demographic information were used to build the alias of the dumpster divers, but the responses to the three questions printed below were not ultimately used in the final results, because respondents often reported confusion with the survey questions and felt that they could not provide a definite answer since their answers changed throughout time. This response to the following three questions ultimately lead to a new discussion, regarding evolution of the practice as it gradually developed :

- "How often do you dumpster dive here in Copenhagen?" Available responses were: "Regularly", "Often", "Sometimes", "Rarely", and "Just starting".
- "If you have been dumpster diving before, do you go more often here in Copenhagen than before?" Available responses were: "Much more", "A little more", "The same", "A little less", and "Much less".
- "How much do you feel you can affect the food waste level in Copenhagen (by dumpster diving AND/OR other activities against food waste?" Available responses were: "I feel that I can do a lot to affect the amount of food waste.", "I feel that I can do a little bit to affect the amount of food waste.", "I feel that I can't really do that much to affect the amount of food waste.", "I feel that there is no way I can do anything to affect the amount of food waste.", and "I'm not sure or I don't know how much I can do to affect the amount of food waste."

Nine dumpster divers were interviewed in total. Five of the nine respondents were residents at a kollegium (a student dormitory, see Specific background information on the Kollegium), which will be the focus of the case study, described in the Case Study chapter. Although only five were residents of the Kollegium, two others were also closely affiliated with the dumpster diving of the Kollegium, meaning that they nearly always dumpster dived with the residents of the Kollegium, although they did not live there. The remaining two respondents were not directly affiliated with the Kollegium, and had begun the practice without the influence of the Kollegium. I chose to interview the dumpster divers at this kollegium to inspect the role of the social group on beginning, developing, and sustaining the practice. The non-Kollegium dumpster divers were added later to provide some alternative context on "independent" dumpster divers, and whether the practice, culture, and perception of the practice varied without the influence of a cohesive social group

provided by residence at a kollegium or a close friendship with members of a kollegium.

Data analysis methods

Transcripts of interviews with dumpster divers were the foundational data used for analysis, while the notes I took documenting personal reflections on the participant observation and observation of the Facebook groups were used to complement my interpretation of the statements made in the interviews. The interview transcripts were read and the dumpster divers' responses were systematically coded, following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) influential grounded theory approach, as described in Gray (2009), detailed below. After coding and grouping the interview responses, four questions highlighting ways in which dumpster divers made sense of and gave meaning to their practice emerged and were subsequently summarized into four themes which were further discussed and analyzed.

The coding process involved three sub-steps of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Each step is detailed below:

Open coding is the "naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 62). According to Gray's interpretation, open coding involves "two analytical procedures" which are "the making of comparisons and the asking of questions, both of which help towards the labeling of phenomena in terms of concepts of categories" (Gray, 2009, p. 503). In the context of this thesis, relevant quotes from transcribed interviews were selected and categorized by their content, in response to the guiding questions investigating the nature of the practice of dumpster diving, and the motivations for the practice.

Axial coding then takes the disaggregated data from the open coding process and "tries to make connections between categories and sub-categories", "specifying a *category* in terms of the conditions that helped to give rise to it, the *context* in which it arises, and *actions* and *interactions* that stem from it, and its *consequences*" (Gray, 2009, p. 506). In the context of this thesis, the axial coding process involved regrouping the open codes together, to form groups in which respondents were talking about the same topic, but giving different perspectives within the same context.

Selective coding is "the process of selecting core categories from the data in order to form the grounded theory", and is, in process, "not too different to axial coding", except that "it is completed at a much higher level of abstraction" (Gray, 2009, p. 508). In the context of this thesis, the

selective coding process was completed by selecting out the four themes which were ultimately discussed in the Analysis and Discussion chapter.

Research ethics and other considerations

Anonymity

Anonymity was an especially important consideration in this project. As it was decided that revealing the identities of the dumpster divers would not contribute to the robustness of the study, they remained anonymous in the reporting of the project. Dumpster divers either were given or chose an alias for themselves, which could be considered representative of their age group, sex, and nationality. By using aliases, instead of factual designations, such as “dumpster diver #1” or “dumpster diver, age/sex”, the hope was to create a more personal tone surrounding each individual dumpster diver, as the analysis of their responses also demands that the reader consider them holistically, as human beings.

Reflexivity

Furthermore, as with any anthropological approach, it is important to consider the lens of the anthropologist when reading any analysis of the data. This lens is inextricable from the interpretation of any data collected, and it is therefore important to be reflexive about the research, acknowledging how the personal background and knowledge of the researcher affects the account. Gray describes reflexivity as “the realization that the researcher is not a neutral observer, and is implicated in the construction of knowledge” (Gray, 2009, p. 498). Furthermore, the researcher is “far from being a disinterested bystander” and should instead be seen as “someone whose observations are by their very nature, selective, and whose interpretations of results are partial” (Gray, 2009, p. 298).

Gray discusses two forms of reflexivity: epistemological reflexivity and personal reflexivity. He describes epistemological reflexivity as reflection on the “assumptions about the world and about the nature of knowledge”, in which questions are asked such as, ‘How has the research question limited or distorted what was found?’” (Gray, 2009, p. 498). As discussed above in the section about the hermeneutical approach, this thesis considered the specific context an extremely important part of the practice. Therefore, to address this context specificity, very broadly defined research questions were formulated to guide the inquiry, instead of precisely defined questions

which should be definitively answered. In terms of personal reflexivity, which Gray defines as "where the researcher reflects upon how their personal values, attitudes, beliefs and aims have served to shape the research", I attempted to be conscious about when I was making interpretations which could have been shaped by my personal values, attitudes, beliefs, and aims, noting these instances in writing up the thesis, as well as recording personal reflections in the dumpster diving diary I kept (Gray, 2009, p. 498).

The case study

Choice of the case study: A dumpster diving kollegium in Copenhagen

The focus of the case study will be a group of student dumpster divers who are all affiliated with the same Kollegium, located in Copenhagen. The students from the Kollegium are international students who moved to Copenhagen to study either their full degree, or for one to two exchange semesters. The Kollegium was chosen as the point of interest for the case study, because it was an existing social group, with relative diversity in nationalities, sex, and educational background. Choosing a group of Kollegium residents who were already acquainted with each other and had been living together for anywhere from two months up to seven months allowed for the observation of social practices within the limited six-month timeframe of the thesis.

The choice of this specific Kollegium was also practical, as I was already acquainted with two dumpster divers who were willing to serve as key informants to introduce me to the group and its practice.

Legality of dumpster diving in the Danish context

The legality of dumpster diving in the Danish context is particularly relevant when considering why the students chose to dumpster dive when they moved to Copenhagen, as well as why they decided to continue. The legality of dumpster diving varies by country, and often depends on the country's definition of what constitutes trespassing and what constitutes stealing. In Denmark, there has been an official statement made by the Ministry of Justice replying to an inquiry regarding the legality of dumpster diving. The official statement is as follows:

"Justitsministeriet kan mere generelt oplyse, at det er almindelig antaget, at straffelovens §§

276 og 277 om tyveri og ulovlig omgang med hittegods ikke finder anvendelse på tilegnelse af affald, hvortil ejendomsretten er opgivet."

This can be roughly translated as: "The Ministry of Justice can more generally state, that it is usually accepted that the criminal laws §§ 276 and 277 about theft and unlawful handling of lost property are not applicable for the acquisition of waste, for which the ownership rights are surrendered."

The Ministry of Justice also notes that it is a violation of the criminal law 264 to gain access to a foreign house or other not-freely-accessible areas. ("*Justitsministeriet skal yderligere henlede opmærksomheden på, at det er i strid med straffelovens § 264, stk. 1, nr. 1, at skaffe sig adgang til fremmed hus eller andet ikke frit tilgængelig område.*") Furthermore, it notes that if objects are destroyed or damaged, the criminal law regarding vandalism could apply. ("*Ligeledes skal Justitsministeriet henlede opmærksomheden på, at såfremt der ødelægges eller beskadiges genstande, vil dette kunne strafes efter straffelovens § 291, stk. 1, om hærværk.*")

Essentially, so long as dumpster diving does not involve destroying or damaging any property, or trespassing on private property, one would not be violating the criminal laws on theft and unlawful handing of waste by acquiring objects from a waste container, for which ownership is no longer claimed.

The language used by the Ministry of Justice in this statement can also be interpreted as being rather roundabout, given that they do not make a formal and direct statement saying that dumpster diving is legal. This openness in interpretations could be due a wide range of what people consider "dumpster diving". Individuals' practice of dumpster diving can vary, as we will see in this case study, despite the fact that many of them actually began dumpster diving together, and learned the practice from one another. The implication is that among all dumpster divers in Denmark, the practice can vary even more so than in this case study. However, we can at least say that dumpster diving as defined in the scope of this study is considered legal in Denmark, as long as trespassing and vandalism rules are not violated.

For the full statement from the Ministry of Justice on official letterhead, please see Appendix C.

Dumpster diving groups in Denmark and Copenhagen

Several dumpster diving in Denmark Facebook groups exist on Facebook. Some are specific for a certain geographic area, such as the capital region, Copenhagen, while others are for other regions or even the entire country. Many of these groups are classified as either "closed" or "secret" groups, meaning that your request for membership in the group must be approved before you can join the group, or that you have to be invited by an existing member of the group, respectively.

For this study, I joined five dumpster diving Facebook groups, one local group for the capital region, and four groups for dumpster divers all over Denmark. The groups range in size from

around 300 members (for a local group), to nearly 10.000 people (in a secret, nationwide group). The size of the nationwide group is surprising, given its "secret" membership setting, meaning that one must be personally invited to gain access to the group. Although not all the members are necessarily actively dumpster diving, the sheer size of such a Denmark-specific group for dumpster diving is notable, and speaks to the prevalence of the practice in Denmark.

The nature of the posts ranged from photographs of recent finds (Figures 1 and 2), posts seeking people to dumpster dive with or people to swap finds with, questions about whether something found is considered safe to eat or not, food safety and product recall warnings (Figure 3), requests for help with starting dumpster diving (Figure 4), as well as discussions regarding a broad range of topics, including food waste, good practice, legality (Figure 5), non-dumpster-divers' perception of the practice (Figure 6), among others.

Figure 1: Sharing a fantastic find. (*Translation: A lovely evening with a fantastic find. 12 beautiful steaks and a totally new place to dumpster dive. It can almost not be better.*)

Figure 2: Dumpster dived breakfast. (*Translation: 100% dumpster dived breakfast for my son and I. The only thing not from the dumpster is the milk in the coffee.*)

Figure 3: A dumpster diver posts a link to an article warning of a product recall.

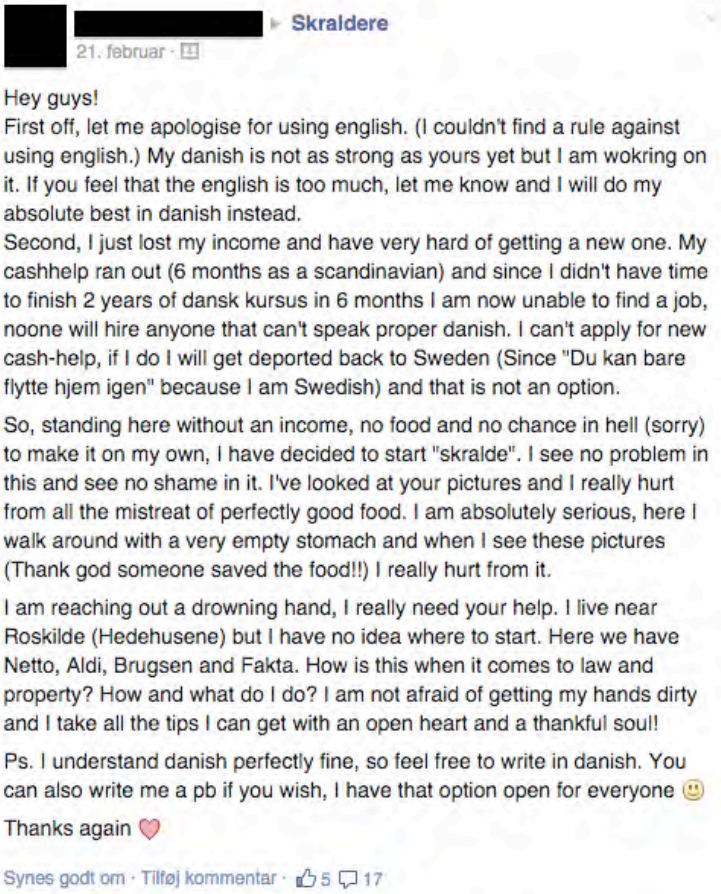


Figure 4: A new dumpster diver asks for help getting started.

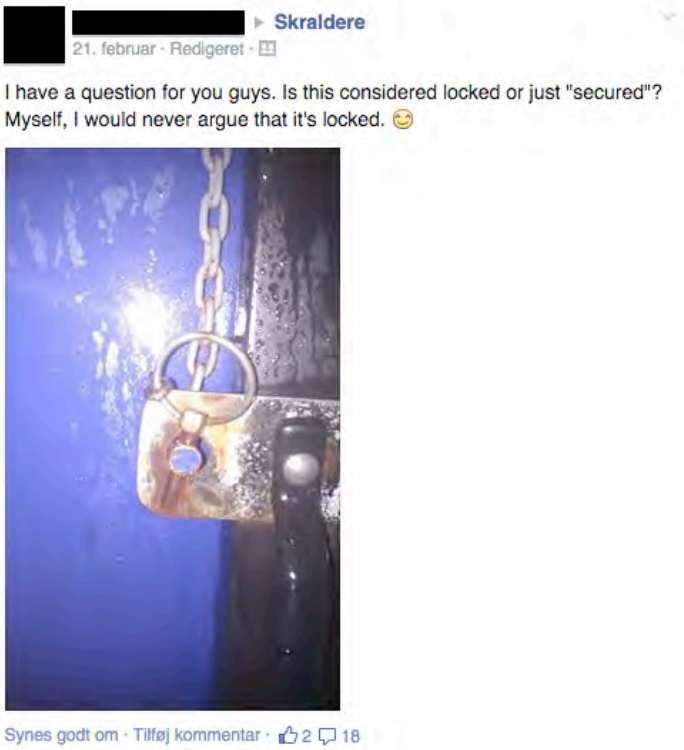


Figure 5: Is this legal? A dumpster diver asks for others' opinions on legality.

Figure 6: Dating a dumpster diver. (*Translation: Have you ever been excluded from consideration as a boy-/girlfriend because you dumpster dive? I think I will always dumpster dive, whether I'm on study support or not. To a greater or lesser degree.*)

Observing the interactions on the groups was one unique way to access the practice of other dumpster divers in the Danish context who I did not have the opportunity to meet and interview for the thesis. Dumpster divers posed similar questions I had discussed in my own practice with the Kollegium, such as regarding what is safe to take from the dumpster, and as I learned more about the practice, I found that I began to be able to engage in the discussion threads on Facebook by making suggestions or answering questions others had posted. Participating in the Facebook groups was also one way of gauging the tone of the practitioners, and their points of view regarding certain issues, such as media coverage of the practice, or food waste activism.

Through these groups, dumpster divers also sometimes revealed personal information about themselves in threads and discussions, such as why they choose to dumpster dive, their education level, age, how they started the practice, etc. This information was not considered as one of the results of the thesis, but it was nevertheless an interesting contextualization for understanding the particular case study. Although it was useful for contextualizing the responses from my interviews, the dumpster diving community online was obviously not representative of the dumpster diving community at large, and in fact very few of the dumpster divers who participated in interviews for this thesis were members of any Facebook dumpster diving groups. These groups therefore provided an interesting new angle to dumpster diving as compared to the data from the interviews.

Specific background information on the Kollegium

A kollegium is, in general, a student dormitory. The particular kollegium studied in this case consists of only one floor in a multipurpose building, instead of comprising an entire building. The

Kollegium hosts eleven residents who are all international exchange students at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. The exchange students are members of different faculties at the university, meaning that they study various subjects (See Table 1). The residents each have their own bedrooms, but share the kitchen, bathrooms, and a common room. Furthermore, by the residents' own agreement, certain foods placed on the kitchen table are shared, and some of the residents partake in a "common shelf" scheme, in which those who contribute items to the shelf are also allowed to use the items placed on the shelf by others. Shared preparation of food and eating together is common as a part of the social element of the Kollegium. Due to the amount of available common space, the Kollegium has also hosted a number of dinners and parties for residents and their friends throughout the exchange year, leading it to be, in some ways, a private social venue.

The residents of the Kollegium who dumpster dive began the practice together when they arrived in Copenhagen in the autumn of 2013. Of the nine total interview respondents, two respondents dumpster dive independently of the Kollegium, and seven are affiliated with the Kollegium. This affiliation means that they either live at the Kollegium and therefore dumpster dive together, or that they do not live at the Kollegium, but often dumpster dive together with the residents (See Figure 7). While the divers who do not live at the Kollegium may also do other activities with the Kollegium's residents, at least their dumpster diving practice is strongly tied to the Kollegium, and when they dumpster dive it is often along with the residents of the Kollegium.

Interview respondents ranged in age from 20 years old to 41 years old, with eight out of nine being 25 or under. Six of the nine respondents identified as women, and the remaining three respondents identified as men. All of the respondents were currently students studying various masters degrees at the University of Copenhagen in the following subject areas: Environmental Science (4), Food Science (1), Environmental Economics (1), Landscape Architecture (1), Psychology (1), and Law (1). Respondents were not necessarily chosen for their academic backgrounds, although it is interesting to consider the impact of their educational field on their practice and the ways in which they relate to food waste.

Eight of the nine respondents were international students, from: Austria (2), Germany (2), the Netherlands (1), France (1), India (1), and the USA (1). The non-international student was from Denmark. The diverse international backgrounds of the residents of the Kollegium added an interesting cultural dimension to how dumpster divers developed their existing relationships to food and how they ultimately learned to value food.

The interview respondents and their personal details, listed by their self-chosen aliases, are summarized in the table below. Respondents are listed in the order in which they were interviewed:

Table 1: Interview respondents by alias listed with their age, sex, country, and study program

Alias	Age	Sex	Country	Study program
Wiebke	25	F	Germany	Environmental science
Jonny	25	M	India	Environmental science
Claudia	24	F	Austria	Environmental science/Hotel management
Julien	22	M	France	Landscape architecture
Lisa	25	F	Germany	Environmental science
Elisabeth	22	F	Austria	Law
Madison	20	F	USA	Psychology
Valentina	20	F	Netherlands	Food science
Christian	41	M	Denmark	Environmental and resource economics

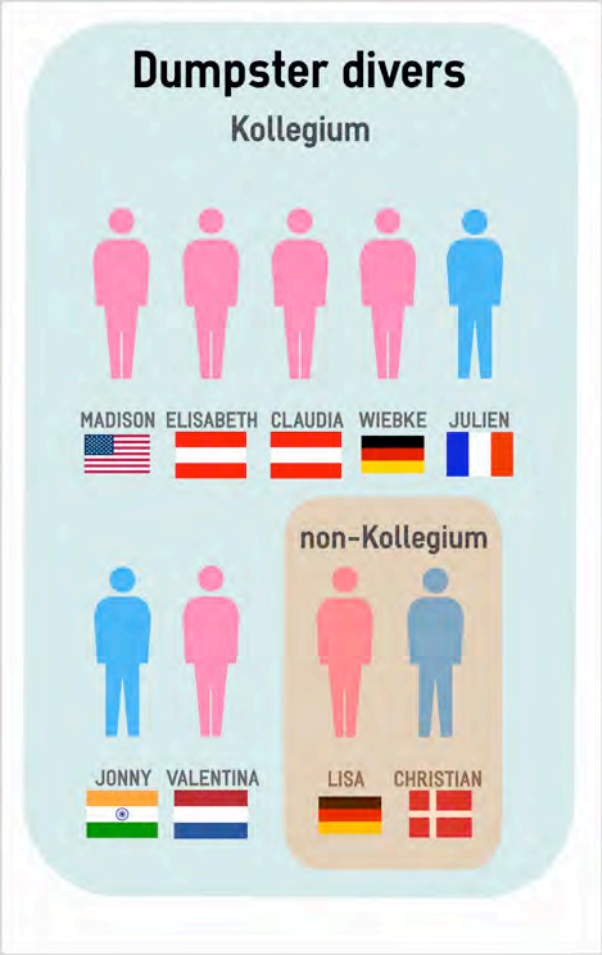


Figure 7: Visual breakdown of dumpster divers interviewed

An ethnographic account

Dumpster diving with the Kollegium: Dumpster diving tours

As described in the Approach and Methods chapter, I chose to join the Kollegium in dumpster diving, in order to learn the process and rules for the practice. I had two key informants, Wiebke and Jonny, who were able to introduce me to the practice, as well as put me in touch with the other dumpster divers at the Kollegium. I was acquainted with Wiebke and Jonny prior to commencing the study, but I felt I became much closer with them throughout the course of the study, by attending dinners at the Kollegium, and having conversations about their dumpster diving practice at least once or twice a week. We conducted a number of dumpster diving tours together, before I felt comfortable enough with it to go alone. Observing and getting advice from fellow dumpster divers were the main methods of learning the practice. I was told beforehand that I would need to dress warmly and wear old shoes, bring a flashlight or headlamp to be able to see inside the dumpsters, gloves if I wanted to keep my hands clean, and importantly, plastic bags with which we would carry what we found back to the Kollegium for cleaning and preparation.

Dumpster diving was not simply the singular act of taking food out of the dumpster. It was an involved process involving several steps, outlined below:

First, the group would discuss the area they were interested in trying, either beforehand or after meeting up. In our case, we always dumpster dived within cycling proximity of the Kollegium. A route would be planned before departing. The group usually consisted of at least three divers, and up to five. More than five divers could raise the risk of causing too much noise or drawing too much attention at the dumpster. Dumpster diving *tours* were decidedly a group activity, and although some divers mentioned going dumpster diving on a daily or weekly basis alone or with just one other companion, whenever tours were planned, at least three people would have agreed to participate, or else the tour would be cancelled and rescheduled.

Next, the group would cycle together along the route. In some cases, we would meet up at the first agreed dumpster. If we met up at the dumpster, a route would be created along the way. Participants used bicycles to transport the items that were found, in bicycle baskets and boxes attached to the bikes. The route could easily be changed, if, for example, somebody decided that they wanted to stop by and try a certain dumpster along the route, or if one of the planned dumpsters was unavailable for some reason. After each dumpster, the group would collectively decide whether this dumpster was a good enough find or not, and whether the group would continue on to the next destination. Oftentimes the group visited at least one dumpster before finding one that produced a sufficient find.

On dumpster diving tours, it is informally agreed that the group will divide up and share their finds later. Therefore, the group (as opposed to diving alone) was more indiscriminate in deciding what to take, and often took anything that was good enough to eat. It was common when finding something one diver determined to be edible to ask around in the group if anyone—or anyone they know or live with—would want the item.

Items were packed into plastic bags, and carried back to the Kollegium on the bicycles. Extremely common finds included large, double- or even triple-bagged trash bags, sealed with a knot, and full of bread, individually wrapped produce, such as cucumbers, and group-wrapped produce, such as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, apples, oranges, and salad (Figures 8 and 9). It was also possible to find less common fresh food, such as mushrooms, beetroots, avocados, pineapples, and strawberries. Rare items included prepackaged deli sandwiches, smoked salmon, pepperoni, marmalade, and even ice cream. Individual dumpster divers decided for themselves whether they took meat and dairy products. Most of the dumpster divers in the group agreed that certain dairy products, like butter, were okay to use when taken during a cold season, while fresh meats, such as packaged chicken breast, were off-limits. Preserved meats, such as sealed lunchmeats and smoked

meats, were often also acceptable.

Figure 8: A dumpster full of packaged Samsø potatoes

Figure 9: Lots of rucola, peppers, salad, and bananas

After the group decided to finish for the evening, we would cycle back to the Kollegium together, and carry all the bags of food up to the Kollegium's kitchen. In the kitchen, a "clean" and "dirty" side of the kitchen were determined. The cleaning process often happened in an assembly-line fashion. With all the items on the "dirty" side of the kitchen, one person would generally be responsible for unwrapping items with already-broken packaging or which needed to be cleaned individually, disposing of rotten items within the packaging, and passing the items to be cleaned on in the assembly line. The next person would then be responsible for washing up the items (in the case of produce and individual items), or cleaning up the packaging (if the item was to remain

sealed in the original package). The cleaned products would be set onto the “clean” side of the kitchen. One person would then be responsible for drying up the products and setting them out on the kitchen table for distribution later (Figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10: Cleaned tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, and celery, ready to be distributed.

Figure 11: Cleaned oranges, apples, lemons, parsley root, and strawberries. Someone has already gotten a head start on the strawberries...

Once all the items were separated out, cleaned, and set out, the group would come together and

decide who wanted which items. There was not a methodological system for dividing up the items, and people more or less simply took what they wanted, and split items as evenly as possible if more than one person was interested. It was common for there to be too much food, especially in the case of finding large quantities of the same item. Remainders would be left at the Kollegium for the other residents who did not participate in the tour. Occasionally, the group would decide to sit together and enjoy some of the finds right away. One example of this is sitting together with strawberry-banana milkshakes to celebrate finding many boxes of strawberries (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Making a strawberry-banana milkshare to celebrate

Going solo: Dumpster diving alone

During the course of my fieldwork, I relocated to a new neighborhood in Copenhagen, where I had heard through my dumpster diving network was an excellent location for dumpster diving. After moving, I began exploring my new neighborhood alone, since it was not always possible to arrange for everybody to meet up there. Diving alone was an experience of its own. While my experiences were still very exciting—perhaps even more exciting than going with a group, due to a heightened feeling of vulnerability and danger—the experience was much more truncated and took much less time than the dumpster diving tours with a group.

Within walking distance from my apartment, there were two discount supermarkets, both with open dumpsters. Generally I would wait for the shops to close down for the evening. One closed at 22.00, and the other at 23.00. After closing, I would wait and check out the window of my apartment to see if the lights inside the store were turned off or not. By about 23.00-midnight, both stores were usually dark. I would then take some plastic bags and go searching through the two dumpsters. If I found anything there, I would bring it home. Otherwise, I would get my bike and cycle to another supermarket with an open dumpster, located about a five-minute bike ride away. Occasionally if I came home after closing time, I would stop by and check if there was anything to take in the dumpsters on my way home.

I continued dumpster diving solo one to two times a week, for about three weeks. Each time I found at least one item which I deemed useable and took home. The types of items I found when dumpster diving alone were similar to what I found when diving with the Kollegium (mostly produce, such a peppers, root vegetables, etc.), but the practice was different. When dumpster diving alone, I often took heavier items, such as potatoes and large bags of root vegetables, or larger quantities, due to the relative ease of transporting the items a shorter distance. At home, I followed the same process I had learned from the divers at the Kollegium:

First, I would open the packages of produce, throw away rotten or molded pieces, cut off salvageable pieces of produce and bread, and thoroughly wash other pieces in the sink. Once everything was washed, I would pack it up in containers to be used for cooking another day, or eat a snack if something was ready-to-eat. Finally, I would arrange my finds on the counter and photograph them before storing them away.

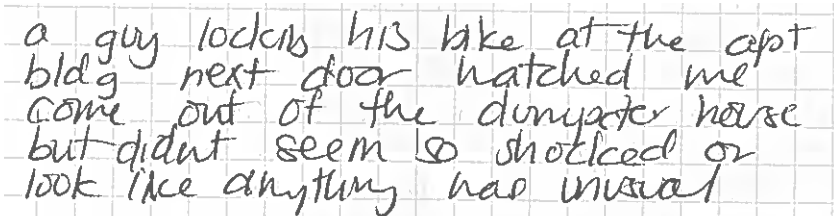
Figure 13: Some finds from dumpster diving alone, including a cucumber with the end cut off so that the rest could be saved and used.

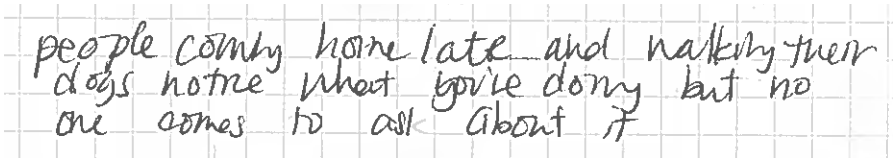
Figure 14: More finds from dumpster diving, including some special items such as asparagus, pepperoni, and juice

Reflections and personal experience: Dumpster diving diary

In order to keep track of my personal reactions to the experiences of dumpster diving and my reflections after each trip, I kept a dumpster diving diary, where I recorded my thoughts after returning from each experience. Sometimes these recordings were merely practical, about what I found and where, and sometimes, especially if there was a memorable experience such as finding a lot of something, meeting other dumpster divers at the dumpsters, etc., the entries were more reflective. Some general reflections are summarized below, with excerpts from the dumpster diving diary. For the full diary, please see Appendix D.

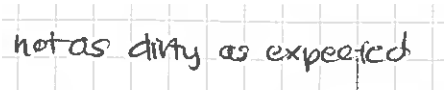
While the experience diving alone felt more dangerous and risky, the feeling afterwards was less exciting, as there were no others in the room to talk and reflect on the evening with. I also felt very conspicuous when diving alone, and often felt painfully aware and conscious of people staring at me. The excerpts below are reflections from the diary in which I recorded people watching me while dumpster diving, and feeling an uncomfortable response to their curiosity.



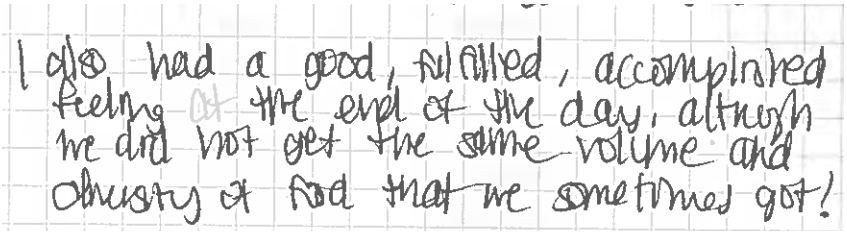


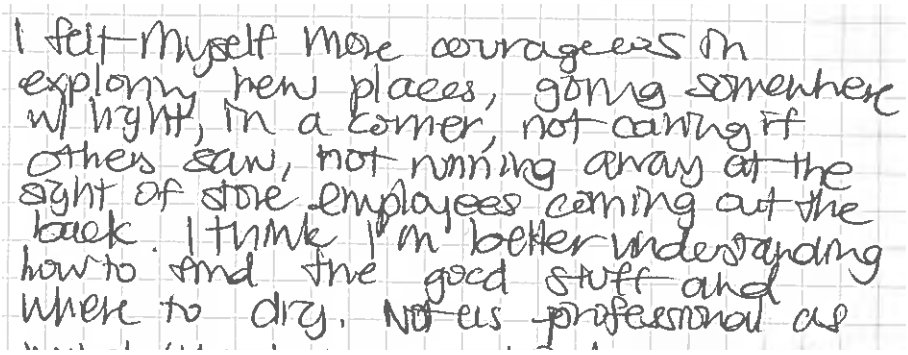
This feeling of conspicuousness was surprisingly foreign, as with the group it felt more socially acceptable and I paid less attention to whether others were noticing. While dumpster diving alone, I often had the feeling that I was lurking, waiting for shopkeepers to leave for the evening, and staying hidden until the lights turned out inside the stores. I often kept my practice rather short, taking visible items from the top of the bin, instead of reaching deeper into the waste containers. The reasons for this were both social and practical: social, as I felt very conscious of being watched and therefore searched through the waste containers and tried to get the food and leave as soon as I

could, and practical, since it was rather difficult to both hold open the bin, shine the light into the bin to search for food, and reach into the bin and feel it to determine if it was still edible or not. Observations about the general atmosphere were also recorded, such as the excerpt below, in which I write about the experience not being as dirty as I had expected it to be.



An especially satisfying part of keeping a diary was being able to see the progression of my own practice, and how it developed throughout time. Below are two excerpts in which I express gaining courage and confidence in my practice, as well as describing feeling accomplished for what we had found that night.





Motivations

Why dumpster dive?

Studies on dumpster diving from around the world have recognized a range of interesting motivations driving people to dumpster dive. Poverty and desperation is one practical motivation. Lack of financial stability, homelessness, sickness, and mental illnesses could all contribute to a person deciding to obtain food from a dumpster (Miewald, 2009). Others do not necessarily depend on dumpster diving for survival, but do it by choice, in order to make a political statement. Freegans, as described above, embrace an entire lifestyle of reduced or no dependence on the capitalist system, which, as a basis, involves dumpster diving for food. In a study on alternative agrifood movements (freeganism and back-to-the-landers) conducted in rural Western Oregon, Gross describes freegans as those who "prefer to opt out of the economic system entirely, living 'in the cracks of society' as they say, consuming only what society throws away, or what they can gather in other people's gardens, along roads, or in the wild" (Gross 2009: 69). Furthermore, they sometimes consider shoplifting of smaller, hard-to-find items "perfectly acceptable, though they prefer to steal from corporations, rather than small businesses" (Gross 2009: 69). The informal rules followed by the freegans described in Gross's study imply a politically motivated, conscious intention. An Australian study describes dumpster diving as one of the many activities falling under the "DIY-punk movement", which "correlates with freegan philosophy, activities and politics by advocating for people to live outside the capitalist system and hence not support environmental exploitation or social injustices embedded within capitalist power structures" (Edwards & Mercer 2007: 283). Here, the activity of dumpster diving continues to be associated with a discourse of anarchy, anti-consumerism, anti-corporatism, and anti-bureaucracy, followed by a demographic of people mostly in their early 20s. Their purpose, Edwards and Mercer conclude, is to respond to threats on "free speech, the physical environment and social equality", by allowing Australian youth to find "alternatives for greater social equality and environmental sustainability", and to seek "change whilst symbolically illustrating the excesses of the West" (Edwards & Mercer 2007: 293). An ethnography of freegans in New York City paints the movement as a "New Social Movement", rather than a unified subculture using dumpster diving to construct an identity (Barnard 2011: 437). The "New Social Movement" label characterizes dumpster diving not simply as "one practice among" many, but rather "the central activity around which the group comes together to create" the social movement (Barnard 2011: 437). The practice is therefore a uniting, common factor for the freegans, as well as a means of expressing the ideals of their movement. The activity of dumpster

diving also serves as form of political theater, with the intent of making a point to others in a visual format, and supporting a "'post-socialist' redistribution, appropriating 'private' garbage for shared 'public' consumption (Barnard 2011: 439).

Most recently, a study on motivations for dumpster diving in Vancouver showed motivations spanning "biological, practical, ideological, and social purposes" (Carolsfeld & Erikson 2013: 256) among an "eclectic group" of divers from age 19 to over 40, students and workers alike, with low- to middle-class lifestyles (Carolsfeld & Erikson 2013: 252). Although it mentions "awesome food activism" as one motivation for engaging in dumpster diving, it also documents motivations such as "the fun of the hunt and just feeling good", "territoriality", and "habit", thereby providing the broadest survey of motivations for dumpster diving among existing literature (Carolsfeld & Erikson, 2013: 262).

In general, existing studies about dumpster diving paint the practice either as performed out of need, or in relation to environmental, political, and social activism. Literature examining the practice of dumpster diving and the motivations for dumpster diving, exclusive of its affiliation with activism and movements, was not found. Likewise, literature which provided insight into the practice and its motivations within a Danish context were not found.

Motivations for dumpster diving

Being an activist on food waste issues

Activism is a relatively dominant motivation in the existing literature on dumpster diving, with its focus on freegans and their environmental and social activism. The dumpster divers interviewed in this study also articulated motivations of activism underpinning their practice. While the opinions expressed in interviews did not center on a particularly visible form of activism, such as protest, they did demonstrate certain feelings associated with the activism discussed in the literature above, such as balancing out perceived injustices (Lisa, 9), trying to live sustainably (Jonny, 15-16), and having a sense of social responsibility (Christian, 8).

Balancing out perceived injustices

When asked when she becomes an activist for food waste, Lisa replies:

> *Either if there was just an event, like this food waste event, or I read an article about food waste or about how big the environmental impact is of our food consumption*

> *generally and how we are unequal and how not fair it is that we throw out so much and other people suffer hunger... So kind of this inequality you feel like you have to make up for it a little bit. And in trying to save this precious food that has a certain ecological footprint of each food product… at least that you consume it. If it's burned you get some energy out of it, okay, but it's always worth more if you eat it. So it's kind of like this a little bit, that you try to balance out this injustice. (Lisa, 9)*

Lisa expresses her discontent with the "injustice" that "we throw out so much and other people suffer hunger", and says that by dumpster diving and thereby being an activist for food waste, she is able to "make up for it a little bit", and balance out this injustice. She also points to the higher value of eating food compared to throwing it away—"it's always worth more if you eat it"—which would likely result in it being used as incinerator fuel. Although the amount of energy contained in the food product is presumably the same whether it is eaten or incinerated, Lisa places a higher value on feeding somebody than producing energy or warmth at the incineration plant. This value judgment foreshadows a moral argument: that there is some inherent characteristic of food, leading Lisa to describe it as "precious", and which also makes it somehow wrong to waste.

Living more sustainably

Even without the ethical argument, some dumpster divers still express the desire to be more sustainable, which is enacted through the practice of dumpster diving. Explaining that dumpster diving is not all about saving money on food expenses, Jonny says, "It's not about I don't have money to grab the food. But I consider little bit factor of environment in my life. How I could be more sustainable towards my environment" (Jonny, 15-16). To Jonny, the motivation for dumpster diving is more personal than free food or smart finances. The desire to live more sustainably is its own motivation, which Jonny has a strong personal connection to:

> *I believe in it. Because I see the impact. I see the things why I'm doing dumpster diving. There is a reason that I'm doing dumpster diving. It's helping out some way, somehow, to make a little bit, a small opportunity for making a better world actually. So for me it's important to have a look in that way an in that point of view.* (Jonny, 22)

Although he is aware of how small his impact is in a global food waste sense, he states rather poignantly how important the practice is to him, and how he understands the practice as, in fact, "a small opportunity for making a better world".

Having a sense of social responsibility

Some of the dumpster divers also expressed a sense of social responsibility as a reason for dumpster

diving. Christian expresses his belief that there is an aspect of environmentalism in dumpster diving: “In my belief, [dumpster diving] has some kind of environmental issue to it. That instead of generating too much waste, then take back some of the waste. Efficiency mentality with a more kind of activist, idealistic issue to it” (Christian, 8). Part of dumpster diving, Christian says, is addressing what he sees as an environmental issue of “generating too much waste”. It is of course efficient to reduce the amount of food waste being produced, but he also notes an “activist, idealistic” aspect to the practice, which gives it meaning beyond the economically practical reason of saving money on food expenses, and reducing food waste. Although it is efficient to reduce waste instead of generating too much waste, Christian also believes that his practice involves an activism mindset, although he does not seem to have found a place to express these thoughts. He says, “I would be more than happy to work in an organization and live out the spirit of donations and dumpster diving that way rather than just do it myself” (Christian, 8). He names this activism mindset as the “spirit” of dumpster diving, saying that the practice has a charitable aspect that he would like to be more involved in if possible.

Lessons from your upbringing

Experiencing poverty

The life lessons in which dumpster divers learned about the value of food through various past experiences also emerged as a motivation for the practice. Jonny speaks extensively about experiencing poverty firsthand while living in India in his youth. When asked about why he dumpster dives, and if there is anything more to it than just being something to do, he replies, “I think I understand the importance of the food actually. As being Indian and staying in some developing countries by myself I see how many people are hungry. Someone get only one meal of total food” (Jonny, 5). He explains how his experience actually seeing people going hungry helps him to understand the importance of food:

> *I've seen the hunger; I've seen the poverty in people. I've seen one person goes to work in the morning, earn some money, and come back to the home, and then only family can eat the food. Like, I've seen such kinds of families. So for me, I feel really shocking when someone just throw away the food. It's really bad. (Jonny, 14)*

His experience is unique among the other dumpster divers, as he is able to give a firsthand account of what poverty looks like, which likely brings him closer to the reality of poverty than the divers who have grown up in Europe or North America. He also uses the word “bad” to describe seeing

people throw food away, implying a negative value judgment of wasting food. Jonny further points to the differences in the relationship people in Europe have with food, when compared to the relationship people in India have with food:

> *I don't believe they have the same kind of relationship… One person is throwing away this much amount of food. And my parents also taught me the same thing: throwing away food is not a good thing. And I believe they are really right because still we have almost one billion population in the world who are starving for hunger. They probably get just only one time meal. So I believe one of the reasons for me for doing dumpster diving is probably looking after environment as well, because it's not about money, it's not about social life, it's about understanding things towards the environment. Because why do you throw away such a huge amount of good quality food? (Jonny, 13-14)*

Jonny asks the question of *why* we throw away so much still-edible food, pointing out that it is "not a good thing", and that there is a certain injustice in the food waste generated by our society, especially when juxtaposed against the immense level of poverty and starvation that still exists in other parts of the world.

Lessons from family

This incongruence in our society's values towards food—and therefore our relatively high levels of food waste—compared to the values towards food in places where levels of poverty are higher, is also echoed in the responses of other divers. Besides the injustice of wasting food despite problems with poverty elsewhere, the injustice of using resources—and perhaps even inflicting suffering on other human beings—to create a product which is wasted, is also pointed out: "There was so much pollution in making this product, and maybe suffering of other people or the environment and then now it's just gonna go to waste? And all we get out of it is maybe some energy?!" (Lisa, 9) Lisa seems to express disbelief or exasperation for the impact of a product which ends up in the waste stream, incinerated for energy. She then continues in the conversation to reflect on the root of this reaction, and where she learned the knowledge that eventually led her to have such a reaction. Lisa expresses feeling shame for throwing food away, as a result of the lessons her father taught her when she was younger: "[My father] always told me, 'You cannot throw this! This is too *schade*! Such a shame to throw it away!' So I kind of had this idea always, and it's still with me a little bit I guess, so this is maybe what influences me as well" (Lisa, 11). She uses the German word, "*schade*", meaning "pity" or "shame", to describe wasting something she perceived could still be used.

Cultural values

Other than learned family values, Elisabeth also points to a broader cultural value, which dictates that food should not be wasted if avoidable.

> *I don't know if it's common in the whole world, but in my family or in Austria it's like, 'Eat what you have on your table, because our--at least my--grandparents are really into this thing. You should not waste food--you can be lucky to have so much food. And food is not for you to play with or throw away. In Austria, they are more, 'Eat what you get,' and, 'You can be lucky.' Also when I have something on my table, I feel like I have to eat it because it would be a waste to throw it away and that's something I really don't like, to throw my food away" (Elisabeth, 10).*

Elisabeth's perspective that "food is not for you to play with or throw away", and her opinion that "that's something [she] really [doesn't] like, to throw [her] food away" is especially interesting, given that in the rest of the conversation, she explicitly states that she does not particularly identify with environmental values, and that environmental values are not her primary motivating factor for dumpster diving. She says, "I'm not a person who is like the other people here who study environmental. That's really their passion and it's not my passion" (Elisabeth, 11). Despite not having a "passion" for environmental causes, she still finds it unacceptable to waste food, implying that there is perhaps a dimension beyond concerns for impacts on the environment, which makes it uncomfortable for people to waste food or even to see food waste.

Saving food from being wasted

The simple fact of saving food from being wasted is another motivation dumpster divers expressed for dumpster diving. By taking food out of the dumpster which would otherwise be wasted, dumpster divers are performing a *de facto* reduction of food waste. Wiebke explains that when she used to purchase most of her food from a supermarket, she would choose to buy organic products and produce which was in-season, if possible. Since she has begun dumpster diving, however, she no longer eats organic or seasonally, but instead just takes what she finds from the dumpster.

> *I just accept the offer from the dumpster, and I wouldn't refuse to take the conventional broccoli from the dumpster just because, and then go and buy the organic. Organic for me is something not about quality, and not a health issue too much. It's more the way it's produced. So in the dumpster it doesn't matter for me. The carrot is more or less the same for me. Yeah, so at the moment I don't care, if it's from the dumpster it's better.* (Wiebke, 13)

Wiebke says that "if it's from the dumpster, it's better", meaning that she believes that eating the

food she finds in the dumpster makes a more significant impact through its reduction of food waste than buying and eating organic and seasonal products. To her, buying organic food is about making a statement of her values, and leveraging her purchasing power as a consumer to support more environmentally-friendly food production methods, rather than out of concern for her own health or for concern about the quality of her food. To her, the product itself is "more or less the same", so if in the context of its lifespan it has the smallest possible impact, she is satisfied as a consumer of the product. If by dumpster diving she can prevent food products from being wasted by consuming them instead, she can then at least ensure that the impacts made during the production of the food were not made in vain.

Madison agrees with Wiebke's statement that taking food out of the dumpster is "better" than buying organic or seasonal products. She says:

> *I like to buy organic produce. And when I take it from the dumpster... it's like this halfway thing between buying organic produce and buying from the store. Although it's not organic—I'm not supporting, a local farm or whatever—it's still helping in some part of the system. Yeah, well, it's better. Because it's eliminating food waste. For me, it's kind of helping. I think it's better than buying organic produce.* (Madison, 8)

After some reasoning, Madison decides that taking food from the dumpster is actually a "kind of helping" which is even "better than buying organic produce", "because it's eliminating food waste". She is saving food from being wasted when she dumpster dives, and supporting this cause is, in itself, a motivation for the practice.

Valentina echos Wiebke and Madison's thoughts, that eating food from the dumpster is good for the environment resource-wise. She says:

> *I think it's good to eat from the dumpster from a point of view from the environment, because you're really saving some resources by just eating what you get from the dumpster. I'm not a vegetarian, but I hear some vegetarians--oh I'm generalizing now--I hear some vegetarians, "If I get meat from the dumpster then I do eat it!" Because they're gonna throw it away anyways.* (Valentina, 3)

Valentina understands the food they retrieve from the dumpster as a resource, not as waste, as she says that "you're really saving some resources by just eating what you get from the dumpster". She continues by sharing an anecdote she heard: that certain vegetarians are even willing to eat meat, as long as it is found in the dumpster, because it would otherwise be wasted. By using the discarded meat, the vegetarians both ensure that the animal which gave the meat did not do so in vain, and

that the environmental impact of raising and producing the meat product are not wasted. Her anecdote about vegetarians eating meat as long as it comes from the dumpster therefore makes a strong point about how important it is to prevent food from being thrown away and wasted.

Although the food found in the dumpster is perhaps no longer a resource for supermarkets and grocery stores, because they cannot sell it anymore, to the dumpster divers, the dumpster is still clearly a source of food, and arguably even a source of purpose, as they express feeling that they are making a positive difference by contributing to the reduction of food waste.

Perceived societal value of food

The dumpster divers often expressed shock or disbelief when learning of the quantity of food waste that occurs. Elisabeth explains that, “I think it's just that you as a person don't throw things away. But when you don't see it, how much the supermarkets throw things away, then you're not aware of this. I told my father and mother about this and they were really shocked. Like, how can someone throw so much food away?” (Elisabeth, 10) Going dumpster diving made it clearer to Elisabeth how much food ended up in the dumpsters behind supermarkets. Although we may be otherwise informed about the level of food waste and about the environmental implications of food waste, such as through the media, it is perhaps not as shocking until one has had the opportunity to physically confront this waste, and to come into contact with it by dumpster diving. Elisabeth says that when one does not see how much is wasted, one is not aware of the fact. When she communicated the awareness she gained through dumpster diving to her parents, she describes them as being “shocked” that someone could throw “so much food away”.

Claudia shares this feeling of frustration and disbelief as she tells an anecdote about working as a waitress in a catering company:

> *I also worked in a catering company. It would be such a disaster if you ran out of salmon for the last person who wants to go there. Which I know the feeling of, but to avoid that worst case, that maybe one person doesn't get, they just over-calculate so much that this is never, never, never, gonna happen. So that means that you have at the end of the day, tons of awesome cooked steaks, and salmon, and all this kind of high-end stuff. And yes we just throw it away. And often me as a waitress, I wasn't allowed to eat it.* (Claudia, 11)

Claudia’s story reveals insight into how we tend to value food as a society. Her specific experience working in a catering company may be a special case, but the fact that the food is over-ordered in such an exaggerated way, and the fact that it is thrown away at the end of the day, without finding

another purpose or use for it, is an analogy to supermarket ordering practices. As described in Stuart (2009), supermarkets actually have an economic incentive to order more than they can sell, because the profit or marginal revenue of selling just one more of the product is approximately equal to the marginal cost of ordering three of the item. In other words, a shop can throw away up to three items before they are no longer making a profit off the sale of only one of the items. Since sales can fluctuate unpredictably, it even makes economic sense for retailers to over-order items instead of under-order items, as there is a lower risk for losing profit.

Beyond her impressions from working at the catering company, Claudia also expresses surprise with the fact that so much food is thrown away from supermarkets:

> *I was really surprised by the fact that actually there's not another system that they have created from the ethical, from the economic point… From so many points of view it would make sense to maybe have a [store name redacted] second sale store. Not any business models have evolved of this, or any more advanced structures. Nobody picks up the bread, not even for farms to feed to the animals. I don't know if that's possible. Any kind of use—that would be good.* (Claudia, 5-6)

Here, Claudia raises an important personal value: That "any kind of use" of the food, even "for farms to feed to the animals" would be better than nothing. Any kind of use "would be good". This preference not to waste food if there is any possibility for it to be used for any other purpose implies that there is perhaps something inherently wrong with wasting food that can still be used. The words Claudia uses also give a value judgment that any use for food is "good".

Jonny shares a similar reaction when he shares his experience visiting Russia, and how this experience in Russia influenced his thoughts regarding dumpster diving and our standards for food quality. He says:

> *I have a really strong connection with dumpster diving now. As I said, [going to] Russia was really a changing point for me to look after dumpster diving because I've seen the people buying the food which is having not better quality, and then I go to the dumpsters see some better quality food there as compared to in Russia. So for me after Russia it makes my point of view towards dumpster diving very strong--very, very strong.* (Jonny, 22)

In his opinion, the quality of food he finds in the dumpster in Copenhagen is of a better quality than what he could find in the supermarkets when he was in Russia. This is Jonny's personal observation and opinion, but it makes a strong statement regarding his motivations to continue dumpster diving. He explains that after returning from Russia, his point of view towards dumpster diving became

“very, very strong”, and he became more convinced and motivated to continue the practice after realizing that the standards for the food we put in the waste containers in Denmark are, in fact, relatively high in comparison to what he has experienced in other countries. The strong feeling he developed towards dumpster diving can also be interpreted as a disagreement with the way supermarkets choose to determine whether food is good or bad. By means of dumpster diving and promoting the practice, he uses his consumer choice to express his personal belief that the food he finds while dumpster diving in Copenhagen is still worth eating, and that it is, in fact, of comparable quality to what one would find available for purchase inside the supermarket in other countries.

The language used in the reactions described above—Elisabeth’s parents being “shocked” that someone could throw “so much food away”, Claudia saying, “And yes they just throw it away”, and how she describes herself being “surprised”—show a feeling of incredulousness about both the level of food waste, and the fact that as a society we have already wasted an immense quantity of food and continue to do so.

It’s a social activity or event

It’s a group activity

A common observation made by the dumpster divers about their practice was the fact that it was a social activity, often coupled with other social events, like dinners. Divers repeatedly stated that dumpster diving was a group activity and not something they would usually choose to do alone. Jonny explains:

> *I think I never went dumpster diving alone. It's kind of a social activity we sometimes organize together. For me, I would say it's a social activity to go and get some food, and go and meet some people. Before going for dumpster diving you have a dinner together and you talk and discuss what is happening in the week. It's a very much social activity.* (Jonny, 5)

Jonny describes dumpster diving as a community event that is organized collectively. In his description, he mentions the dual purposes of getting food from the dumpster, as well as to meeting others and socializing. His sentiment is reflected by the other dumpster divers, like Wiebke, who says that, “It's more like the social event, adventurous... I never go by myself. Only with other people. I've never dared to go by myself. I'm too afraid, but also because that's part of the fun, to do it in a group" (Wiebke, 1). Wiebke points out that it is “part of the fun, to do it in a group”, showing

that the dynamic of the group and going dumpster diving together is a significant motivating factor in her case. She continues describing the process of dumpster diving as follows: “Then it was like this big, big party and we were happy together about what we found, and we made up recipes already and start discussing what we can do. You invite people over to dinner” (Wiebke, 2). She describes dumpster diving as a “big, big party”, where the Kollegium divers were “happy together”, making up recipes, discussing what they would do with the food they found, and inviting others over to share dinner with them. This description paints an especially convivial picture of the process, but also emphasizes the importance of the group’s cohesion in carrying out the practice. In the interviews, Kollegium dumpster divers mostly agreed that the cohesion and fun of dumpster diving in a group was a core motivating factor. This is in contrast with many of the other motivations, which varied for different divers depending on their own knowledge and values.

It’s connecting

Furthermore, the Kollegium dumpster divers described the practice as “connecting”. Julien described his first-time dumpster diving experience together with Wiebke as follows: “We had this first very thrilling experience together, so it's sort of tied us up a little bit more. It's so cool because it's valuable memories. I mean, as much as going on an excursion is. It was really an experience. So that was also good to form the group together” (Julien, 16). He describes the “first very thrilling experience together” as “really an experience”, giving them an opportunity to bond with the others in the group, and to make memories together. Elisabeth also describes the experience similarly, saying that, “I like it because it's connecting. When you do it, it's an activity you do together. It's connecting when you go there together with people” (Elisabeth, 7). She emphasizes the importance of going there “together with people”, and that dumpster diving is “an activity you do together”, underlining the role of the group and other people in carrying out the practice. Julien and Elisabeth, who are both Kollegium dumpster divers, both seem to describe the *practice* as being the connecting element within the group. Lisa, who is socially connected to the Kollegium, but does not dumpster dive with the Kollegium, echoes a slightly different sentiment when asked about talking about her practice with other dumpster divers:

> *I feel a bit more connected to other people who also do it, but only if we talk about these issues. Not so much if you talk about anything else. You're not better friends with someone just because he dumpster dives, than someone who doesn't dumpster dive. But it's kind of one of the things that joins you together as a community or friends or something.* (Lisa, 17)

In her opinion, it is not the practice itself which connects you with somebody, but rather the fact that dumpster diving also gives you a unique topic which can potentially connect you to another person with similar interests. She seems to agree, however, that dumpster diving, whether directly through the practice or indirectly through the issues it raises for discussion, can "connect" a group of people together.

It's exciting and fun

Aside from the element of connection and social cohesion that motivates dumpster diving, there is perhaps a more primal element of fun and excitement. Christian shares an anecdote of finding a large quantity of Christmas cookies and being simply overwhelmed by the joy of his find:

> *I have my kitchen stuffed with Christmas cookies. Because we were three guys who found a whole dumpster of Christmas cookies. And we just took it all and we didn't even like them. But the excitement and thrill of the finding, the whole thought of it just took us.* (Christian, 18-19)

Christian describes a funny scene involving three grown men being overtaken by the "excitement and thrill" of finding a dumpster full of cookies. The men even forget their sense of logic and reason, carrying home as many cookies as possible and stuffing Christian's kitchen cabinets full, although they do not even care for the cookies. It is an endearing story which illustrates the lighthearted joy dumpster divers can get from the practice—and one perhaps less-serious motivating factor.

Lisa describes this feeling of excitement by comparing it to finding "treasure": "Everything that you get for free is kind of a gift and you feel like, 'Oh, I found a treasure and I saved money!'" (Lisa, 8) She describes finding free food as a "kind of gift" which is exciting both because you saved some money, but also because of the pure pleasure of finding "a treasure".

Wiebke captures in one sentence the essence of her practice as follows: "I see myself as this adventure tourist that does wild things" (Wiebke, 7). She is not exactly an activist, nor purely interested in saving money on her food expenses. Rather, she is an "adventure tourist" doing "wild things", pursuing that sense of joy and excitement that comes the novelty of each diving experience. Wiebke's frequent diving partner, Julien, agrees in his own, separate interview, describing his motivations for dumpster diving as being "40% of adrenaline" (Julien, 4).

Saving food is becoming trendy

The image of dumpster diving being a thing for homeless people is changing…

Claudia makes a series of salient observations regarding how saving food and stopping food waste seems to be becoming a rather trendy topic. When discussing the social image surrounding dumpster diving, she disagrees with the notion that dumpster diving is still an activity reserved for the poor and desperate. In fact, she believes that the image surrounding secondhand things—whether they be food, or even belongings such as clothing—is changing. She says:

> *I think that [this social image] comes with all the times when only the beggars and super outsiders of the city would actually go to the dumpster. Like the poor Indian people in the slum or something like that. And I think that's a hard image to get rid of. And I think that's changing now. Also just generally with giving things away. Secondhand shops are suddenly trendy. They used to be like, don't do it, don't even do it if you have to do it, because that would ruin your image. That was the statement. But also swapping on the Internet and those things.* (Claudia, 11-12)

She observes something like a gentrification of the concept of accepting and using used or unwanted things. The image of dumpster diving being something for "beggars" and "super outsiders" is outdated, she believes, but it is nevertheless a difficult image to shake. She remembers that using secondhand items used to be something that could "ruin your image", but now seems to be taking on new life with the ability to swap items on the Internet, and with increasing social acceptance of using items others have decided they no longer want.

Claudia also discusses this resistance to accepting a new idea of what is still useable. Using the advent of organic products as an example, she says:

> *I can still remember when we say about ecological products. That was like, super hippie—all ecological products. And people said that it tastes like shit, and tofu is awful and all these kinds of things. And now a large majority of people buy ecological products. And that's totally normal.* (Claudia, 9)

She seems to point out an element of social "drag", common between the movement to use more organic foods and the dumpster diving movement. She remembers organic products being frowned upon as being "super hippie", and criticized for "tasting like shit", but explains that she no longer feels the social resistance to organic foods, implying that dumpster diving might have the same path in store.

Portraying a certain image of yourself to society

Dumpster divers also seem to use the practice to portray a certain image of themselves to society. In the interviews, divers often used language which distanced themselves from other people whom they perceived as having too-high expectations, or unnecessary standards of perfection for their food. Lisa explains, “They think of the gastronomy part and often people have very high standards and they think very low of food which is not perfect, and they don't feel at all. They don't feel this shame when they throw things away, but you just see that everything needs to be perfect” (Lisa, 12). Lisa dissociates herself with these people when she says that they do not “feel this shame” that she feels when they throw food away. She seems to understand these people as being more concerned about having “perfect” food, than they are concerned about wasting food that could still be edible. She continues, “I guess some people really have high standards, or are not so easily pleased. They don't only just want some food to eat. They want something particular, and then they have to throw out things more because they don't plan so well, and they are not so easily satisfied by just making use of the things they have and have to be eaten” (Lisa, 15). These people are described as eating more for the experience or pleasure of eating, and having the luxury of choosing what in particular they want to eat. If the purpose of eating is more driven by the gastronomic experience, rather than by the need to sustain oneself, one’s valuation of food seems to naturally decrease, allowing food to be more easily wasted.

Since the Kollegium dumpster divers come from many different countries, they also shared interesting insights into how dumpster diving is perceived in their home countries. Julien explains that in France, the mentality is along the lines of, "’It's better in my garbage than in your plate. I don't want—even though I get rid of it myself—I don't want you to use it.’ It's very not sympathetic" (Julien, 1). He observes a certain attitude surrounding giving food away that he describes as “very not sympathetic”. Although from a utility point of view, the person getting rid of his or her extra food probably does not lose anything from allowing someone else to use the food, he or she choses to throw it away anyways. This reaction could be explained by confounding factors, such as health and safety concerns, or even by a certain social image surrounding those would give away food, or those who would receive the food. Julien’s statement can even be interpreted to imply that the people who would rather throw the food away than give it away believe that those who would receive it are somehow undeserving of the food. Whatever the explanation is, Julien’s observation speaks volumes about the mentality towards giving food away, as well as about those who accept given-away food.

In the case of Germany, Wiebke explains that dumpster divers as, “It's only really green, organic people, who want to fight against food waste” (Wiebke, 7). Wiebke paints the practice in the German context as a rather radical, niche activity, only practiced by the “really green, organic people” with more extreme opinions about “fighting against food waste”. Wiebke’s observation about German dumpster divers also echoes the observations made in existing literature about dumpster diving and freeganism. Freeganism and the beliefs that are affiliated with the freegan movement are more steeped in social and environmental activism than the stand-alone practice of dumpster diving itself. Wiebke also sets up a contrast between dumpster divers in Germany and her experience of dumpster diving in Denmark with her choice of language, in which she sets herself apart from the “really green, organic people” who practice dumpster diving at home in Germany.

Claudia shares that at home in Austria, her parents’ home shares a yard with a supermarket, and there is a dumpster which is accessible through this yard. She says that, “There is a dumpster from the supermarket [in my parents’ yard]. I've just never opened it and looked at it. But the super poor people on the streets come in there and check. My grandma gets really angry” (Claudia, 20). She describes her grandmother being “really angry” when the “super poor people on the streets” come into the yard to look for food in the dumpster. While Claudia’s grandmother may very well be angry with these people because they are trespassing into the yard, Claudia also describes them as “super poor people on the streets”, which distances them from normal, every day people whom we understand, in an Austrian social context, would not bother to go dumpster diving.

Valentina brings insights into the practice and its practitioners as they exist in the Netherlands. She describes trying to get in touch with local dumpster divers after going home to the Netherlands after her semester abroad in Copenhagen. She explains that she has not succeeded in continuing to dumpster dive after returning to her home country, and describes her experience interacting with a local dumpster diver in her university town as follows:

> *He has weird looks, so it was easy to find his Facebook account. And he is doing very many things with green food, like trying to reduce food waste, so I could easily via Facebook get in contact with him. And he also has this other webpage about food sharing, where you have some food left over. For example, he would have some food left over from dumpster diving sometimes. He is really less picky than me, obviously. He has lots of bad quality foods. I wouldn't eat it anymore, but he still eats it. I would never go with him because he’s just... he smells so bad. He looks so bad. I think it's still some underground world.* (Valentina, 7)

Describing him as “weird” as well as associating him with “green food” movements and “food

sharing", she also seems to disagree with the specificities of his practice, citing that "he has lots of bad quality foods", and "he is really less picky than me". From a personal observation, Valentina was one of the dumpster divers who was most immersed in the practice at the Kollegium, and often referred to as an expert who was friendly with security guards and quite familiar with the "trade secrets" of dumpster diving in the area nearby the Kollegium. The fact that Valentina found herself unable to relate to this dumpster diver she managed to contact at home in the Netherlands means first of all that the practice does, in fact, vary widely, not only within Denmark, but also internationally. Second of all, it also implies—like the images of dumpster diving from various countries shared above—that the nature of the practice in Denmark seems to be unique, and associated with a different social image and social context, as compared to the social image and context of dumpster diving in other western European countries.

It's part of my routine and habit

Dumpster diving can also, simply, be a part of the divers' daily routine and habit. Wiebke describes it "part of her lifestyle here" in Copenhagen: "It's also kind of a touristic thing, too. If you have friends visiting, we almost all the time take them out for dumpster diving, because it's part of our lifestyle here" (Wiebke, 8). Wiebke illustrates the practice as a kind of tourist attraction—something you would take your visiting friends to see. She implies that dumpster diving in Copenhagen is somehow unique and is something worth seeing as a visitor in town. But she also describes it as being part of her routine and the way she lives in Copenhagen—something a friend visiting you abroad in Copenhagen might also be interested in.

Julien describes the practice as something that has *become* more routine over time. He says, "It's not for excitement anymore, because it really became something daily" (Julien, 4). He goes on to say that, "[Dumpster diving is] partially social, in a way that we actually go sometimes together, like once a week, three times a month or something. And then, just by that I really need some supply for every day, I go when I go back from school and I check it" (Julien, 6). His statement describes the practice as being "partially social"—both social and individual, depending on the needs of the practitioner. He describes his current practice (at the time of the interview) as "something daily" that he does on his way home from school when he needs some everyday supplies. In this sense, dumpster diving has almost become as routine to him as stopping by the market on your way home from work or school would be, picking up items at a convenient time during your day. He also describes how the group still goes together occasionally, doing a dumpster diving tour, as described

in the Ethnography chapter, for the sake of social activity

Free food! It's economical

One practical motivation is the money dumpster divers can save from getting their food for free from the dumpster. Free food—or at least the prospect of free food—was repeatedly given as one of the first and foremost reasons for dumpster diving. As Valentina describes it, "It's good for my wallet and the environment and it's fun" (Valentina, 12). She continues explaining: "When I'm tired and don't feel like going dumpster diving, I never think, 'Oh c'mon Valentina. It's so good for the environment!' I think, 'C'mon, think about your wallet!' When you are tired, you don't think, 'Oh it'll be fun.' You think, 'No I want to sleep.' When you are there finally, then it's fun" (Valentina, 13). She is very clear about her wallet, or saving money, as being a strong motivating factor for her practice. She explains that when she is tired and does not want to go anywhere, she is able to convince herself to get up and go dumpster diving by thinking about all the money she will save, not by thinking about the positive benefits for the environment, or about how fun the experience will be once she is getting there. This economic, utility-maximizing attitude is perhaps rooted in survival and her need to cope with feeding herself on a limited, student budget. In this case, free food is more of an incentive than a motivation. Wiebke explicitly says that one of her main motivations—or even her primary motivation—is saving money: "I would say most importantly it's my own economy. That's mainly the case. And second is the fun. Maybe they are more or less equal. And then comes this waste reducing" (Wiebke, 12).

If we were considering *only* the incentive of free food, dumpster divers would not be very likely to confront any personal values they have regarding food waste. This is not, however, the case, as incentives and various motivations can exist alongside each other. As Madison describes it, dumpster diving is only logical and simply makes sense to do. She says, "It's just so logical in my mind to [dumpster dive]. Very efficient. It makes sense. According to my finances and my values" (Madison, 13). If one knows one can get free food, it is a "why not" decision to dumpster dive. The food is free, and by taking the free food, you are also preventing food waste. Barring other complicating factors such as the social image surrounding the dumpster diving, the time investment, etc., there is no marginal cost to dumpster dive. There are no negative drawbacks, and therefore there is no reason *not* to dumpster dive, especially because it is legal to a certain extent in Denmark.

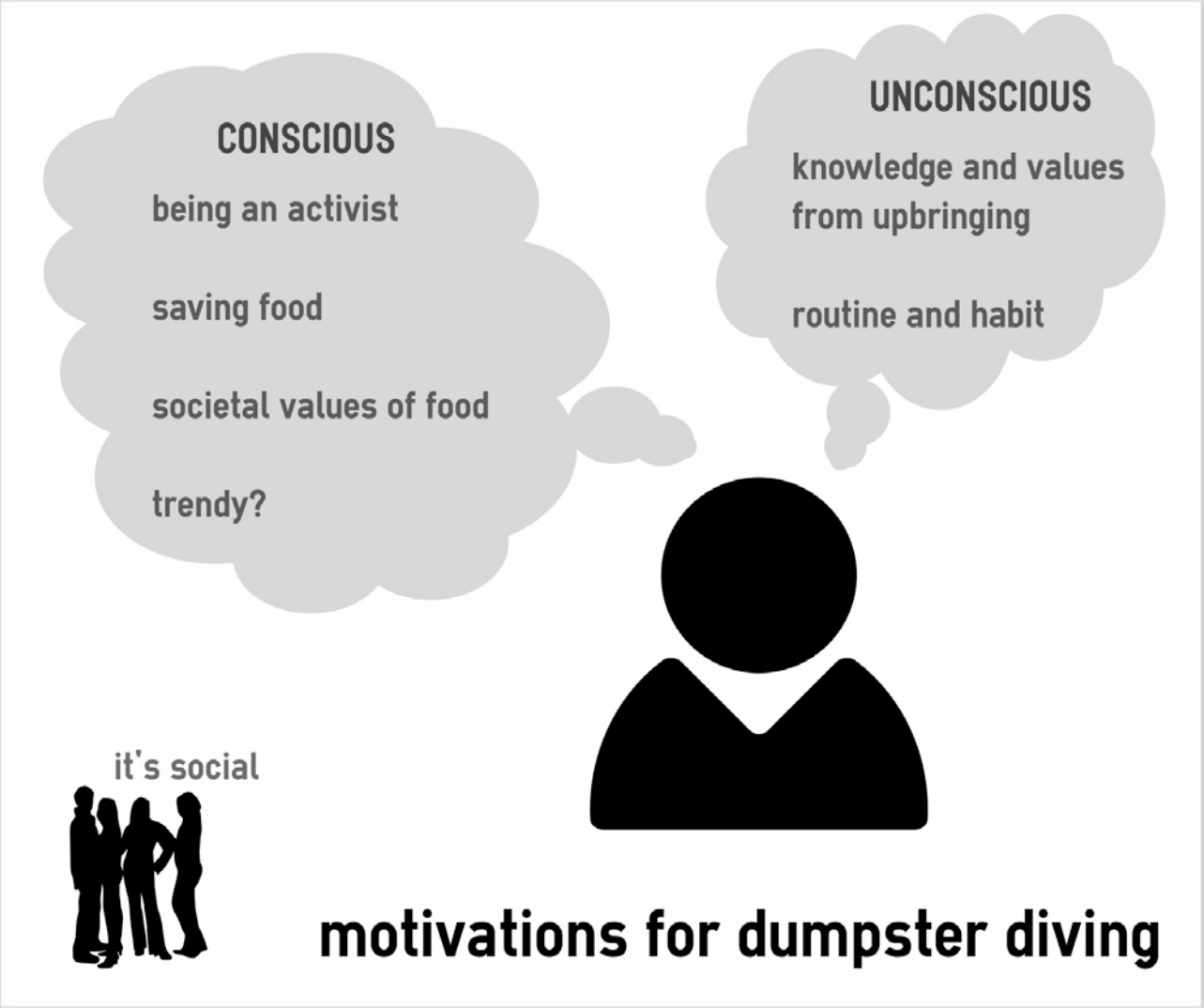


Figure 15: Visual summary of motivations for dumpster diving, discussed further in the text below

Evolution of motivations: Starting up and sustaining the practice

Getting started dumpster diving

As was stated by the dumpster divers, the motivations for dumpster diving are not static. They change and evolve, depending on factors such as the diver's own mindset, economic state, as well as with more time and experience. In the case of the Kollegium, divers learned how to dumpster dive from each other. Wiebke explains how a friend who had previously lived in Copenhagen visited her and encouraged her to dumpster dive. When asked how she started dumpster diving she says:

> *It was more by chance. It was a friend who came over who lived here before and she was like, "Oh in your area there are such good supermarkets! You should check that out!" And I wasn't a big fan of that idea. I wasn't sure of how to do it, mostly because coming from Germany where it's really illegal, it was something to me where you really risk something and I didn't plan on taking the risk. Then she went with me and we were so successful the first time and it was so easy. Why not? It was more of a why not drive into it.* (Wiebke, 7)

She admits that at first she was not "a big fan" of the idea of dumpster diving, and was apprehensive to do it since it was illegal at home in Germany. She describes starting dumpster diving as "more by chance". This chance encounter with the practice also implies that she did not come to the practice with the objective of expressing a certain idea she already had in mind, but rather fell into the practice by being introduced to it by a friend. She describes it as being a "why not drive" to dumpster dive, pointing to the fact that they were "so successful the first time and it was so easy". Other dumpster divers also gave similar reasons for how they started dumpster diving. Julien describes learning about the practice from Wiebke: "I started with Wiebke. It was in autumn, very beginning of autumn, I think, and I don't remember how many people were there, but one evening it was about going to [Supermarket name redacted] to check the garbage. And she explained me the concept" (Julien, 1). The practice appeared to be spread throughout the Kollegium by word-of-mouth, and seemed to eventually take hold as part of the culture of the Kollegium. Elisabeth, who arrived at the Kollegium in the spring semester, one semester after Wiebke and Julien began dumpster diving, credits the Kollegium for her practice: "I think this Kollegium is the reason why I am dumpster diving" (Elisabeth, 5). Likewise, Madison, another dumpster diver who arrived at the Kollegium in the second semester also points to the Kollegium as the reason for her practice, saying, "I don't think I would have gone--well, I might have--but that was the reason I started going. Because the people here were going. [Living here] is an integral part of my dumpster diving experience" (Madison, 9). Madison describes living at the Kollegium as an "integral part" of her dumpster diving experience, demonstrating the influence of the group in initiating the practice. Madison continues by pointing out the element of social cohesion in participating in dumpster diving while living at the Kollegium:

> *If you're living in an apartment with everyone else dumpster diving, it's gonna be the path of least resistance just to join them. Instead of being like, "I'm not gonna do it." But it's really social. I never would have been like, "Oh, I'm in Copenhagen, no one I live with does it, but let me see, the conditions are right, It's cold, It's legal. I looked up all this stuff by myself on the Internet, and now I'm gonna go by myself." That's not gonna happen. I don't think anyone in the history of dumpster diving--that's the way they started!* (Madison, 12)

She describes joining in with the other Kollegium residents as “the path of least resistance”, and also suggests that it is unlikely that someone would be able to figure out how dumpster diving works just by looking up all the information on the Internet, then simply starting to try it out themselves, without someone else with experience to show them how. In this way, living in the Kollegium and being a part of the social group there was a natural psychological impetus for beginning the practice.

Developing and sustaining the practice

Beyond learning about the practice and starting the practice together, being part of the group also helps the individual divers develop their practice and learn more about it. Wiebke describes consulting other divers and discussing with them whether something was still okay to eat or not: “In our group we learn from each other. Sometimes you're not sure—would you still eat this tomato? And we start discussing whether it's edible or not” (Wiebke, 10). In this way, the practice involves combining knowledge from multiple sources, teaching each other, and learning from each other. Julien also describes the process of dumpster diving as being very “coactive”, especially at first, when the divers were getting acquainted with the practice: “For sure at the beginning it was very coactive. At least three persons going together” (Julien, 1). The group of at least three people could go together and support each other in making decisions about where to go, what to take, and other parts of the process. Wiebke says, “That's one thing I really was surprised of. It's so much an open conversation and try to teamwork and really if you need anything. It's really social and you share” (Wiebke, 3). She notes being surprised at the level of teamwork and open conversation involved in dumpster diving, saying that the dumpster divers help each other and share.

Although there are “sole agents”, like Christian, who began the practice alone and continue to practice it alone, it seems that dumpster diving is inherently a social practice. In Christian’s case, although he figured out how to dumpster dive independently and often dumpster dives on his own, he still expressed a desire to share his findings and have a social circle he could be a part of: “It was also the idea of sharing the treasure with each other and sharing that experience. The wish of sharing is still strong when dumpster diving” (Christian, 18-19). Christian describes “sharing the treasure with each other and sharing that experience” of finding the treasure as being a strong desire for his practice. He also mentions that if he were able to dumpster dive with a group, it would be more practical in the case of large finds. Describing finding a large quantity in the dumpster, he says, “I didn't have anyone to call, I didn't have anyone to share it with. In that case, I would really

have loved to have been in a dumpster diving community or group. Or in a network that you could call sometimes whenever somebody finds a big party" (Christian, 5). While he has not joined a dumpster diving group or community, he says he has always had a desire to share both his finds and his experiences with his friends and family: "But way behind and where it all started, the idealizations for doing it is still with me in some way. And whenever I can, and whenever I see the opportunity, I share it with friends and family" (Christian, 8).

The community would be a practical means of distributing a large quantity of saved food, but we can also see from Christian's responses that the experience of dumpster diving together with other people forms an integral part of the experience, even for divers who usually go dumpster diving alone. This observation recalls the description of the dumpster diving Facebook groups, which dumpster divers use to come together and share knowledge. The seemingly natural progression towards working in a group to dumpster dive is a notable finding which suggests that it is, in some ways, a social practice.

Analysis and discussion

”Diving into” motivations: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations

While conducting this study, it became clear that the different motivations expressed by the dumpster divers could not be considered and understood in the same way. The various motivations dumpster divers discussed were sometimes very serious and personal, and were at other times much more lighthearted. For example, Lisa described dumpster diving as a reaction to a perceived societal injustice, while Christian shared a funny anecdote about the thrill of finding a dumpster full of Christmas cookies. Similarly, when dumpster divers attempted to articulate their motivations, certain motivations emerged rather quickly in the conversation, and were easily justified using simple logic and reason. Other motivations emerged later in the conversation, after some further thinking and reflection on their practice. As the interviewer, I occasionally did not even recognize what the divers said as motivations—reasons for them to dumpster dive—until transcribing the interview and doing a closer reading of the text.

Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, I will roughly differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The purpose of this differentiation is to try to recognize the difference between the extrinsic motivations which could, generally, even be categorized as incentives, and intrinsic motivations which I felt deserved a more in-depth nuanced analysis. *Intrinsic motivations* I understand as coming from a more internal, personal, individualistic idea—something that is born of thought and reflection, and results in an action expressing these thoughts. Expressive motivations take root from deep within the individual, and are based on an idea he or she has formulated from within and ruminated upon.

Extrinsic motivations are more based on rational logic, and are more of a reaction using economic, utility-maximizing thinking. It is important to note, however, that economic, utility maximizing thinking, does not necessarily mean that the dumpster divers are only concerned with financial benefit. Along that same line of thought, I also include value of social cohesion to be a utility, as well as the value of fun and excitement, among other things we consider necessary for life in a modern society.

I see intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations as two sides of a continuum ranging from most internal and intrinsic, to most external and extrinsic, respectively. This understanding also implies that motivations are not statically intrinsic or extrinsic, and can even be both intrinsic and extrinsic,

falling in between the two rough categorizations. Depending on the thought process of the individual dumpster diver, various motivations can fall on different sides of the spectrum. In this thesis, I will refer to them as intrinsic and extrinsic based on my own interpretation of the responses (See Reflexivity).

We can see in Figure 15, which summarizes the motivations that emerged from the interviews, that the motivations preemptively referred to as “conscious” eventually became those called “intrinsic” here.

In this chapter, I will discuss and analyze four themes that I felt emerged from the interview process. These themes seemed to emerge when discussing with dumpster divers the motivations on the more intrinsic side of the intrinsic-extrinsic continuum. By delving into the process of reflecting and questioning that the dumpster divers shared with me in our conversations, and by adding my own interpretation, analysis, and suggestions, I hope that this chapter will be able to give more insight into the practice, its nature, and the very layered and complex motivations for engaging in it.

Making sense of motivations: Questioning and reflecting

After conducting interviews with dumpster divers regarding their motivations, it became clear that the process of developing deeper, more intrinsic motivations involved a process of sense making, and of the divers giving meaning to what they were doing, why, and what the implications of their actions were. In this sense-making process, divers were confronted with the tensions and conflicts that existed in their practice, by, for example personal reflection during their interviews, which resulted in several interesting questions regarding the nature of their practice arising for discussion. These questions gave way to four themes which stem from the discussion and reflection on the divers’ intrinsic motivations, and which provide a basis for understanding the more nuanced meanings the practice holds for its practitioners.

What is activism, anyways?

In discussing whether they understood their dumpster diving practice to be, in fact, a form of activism, there was a degree of ambiguity among the divers regarding what, exactly, constituted activism and being an activist. For some, activism had to be an organized, institutionalized method, which could systematically change the status quo. For others, making as much of a difference as

possible as an individual could be considered activism. Simply speaking about their practice with others, or spreading the word was another definition of activism.

Raising awareness

One form of activism could be simply talking about dumpster diving, and spreading the word, discussing the ideas behind it and the justification for doing it. When asked if through dumpster diving she can be an activist in some way, Madison responds:

> *Oh, of course. I think every time you tell someone about it, you're saying something about yourself and your beliefs too. Because I wouldn't--if it was just about money, I wouldn't tell people about it as much. They can do it on their own if they want, if they so choose to, to save their money. But if you talk about it, it's more, like, a social movement. I think the more people do it, the more it becomes an issue or discussion. Like, why are they throwing away all this food? The impact of what I do—I think it's more about the word of mouth, like social movement that it relates to or induces or is a part of. So I think it's just if people talk about it, it's helpful. (Madison, 9-11)*

Madison says that her practice is about more than just money—it's about spreading the word, and telling people about dumpster diving, thereby sparking a discussion and perhaps even inducing change via a social movement. Claudia agrees, saying that dumpster diving *can* make a difference by "the fact that you keep discussing that issue [of food waste] a lot more" (Claudia, 14). She continues, "So I changed my mind in the view that I think [dumpster diving] *is* useful to make a change, but not through protesting, but more through awareness raising" (Claudia, 14, emphasis added). Protest, although it might be the traditional form of activism, does not seem to be a method used by the dumpster divers interviewed in this study, despite the fact that they express social or environmental sentiments that are in line with other dumpster divers around the world who consider themselves protesters. This refusal to identify with protesting does not, however, mean that the dumpster divers are not activists in a more relaxed way.

Would you call yourself a dumpster diver?

When asked if they would call themselves "a dumpster diver", the dumpster divers were sometimes reluctant, despite the fact that if they had been dumpster diving, they could, for all intents and purposes, be called dumpster divers. The question was intentionally fraught, implying that identifying with a dumpster diver was something more than simply having gone dumpster diving before. In response to the question, Claudia answers:

> *Yes and no at the same time. I do dumpster diving, so I am a dumpster diver, right? I*

> *couldn't imagine it before at all, and I don't actually publically speak. Like, I don't convince others or something. So um, no I would not see myself as a dumpster diver.* (Claudia, 15)

Claudia understands "being a dumpster diver" as having a prerequisite of speaking publicly and convincing others of her practice. Her reluctance alludes to a hesitance with conspicuous protesting, which raises the question of why there is a lack of commitment to activism when the dumpster divers have already articulated their agreement with the social and environmental ideals behind the activism affiliated with dumpster diving. It is possible that they have simply not reached enough of a critical mass to form a proper movement. It is also possible that there is a barrier preventing them from expressing their ideals publicly. The reason why cannot be concluded from this set of interviews, although the issue of feeling a lack of agency against the situation of food waste was often raised, and is discussed further in the section below.

Lack of agency

Dumpster divers expressed an acknowledgement that by dumpster diving, they were probably not making a very significant difference in terms of food waste. They described the necessity of doing something more than dumpster diving to change the larger patterns of food waste which were enabling their practice. Julien says, "Well, of course it's good to avoid that waste, but it's not gonna change [the system]. I don't think I'm going to force the supermarket to, because it's another logic" (Julien, 4). He acknowledges that it is of course better to eat the food than throw it away, but he does not believe that the practice itself has the power to change supermarket practices. Madison expresses a frustration with being a single individual whose solitary voice is limited in impact simply due to the its small scale. She says, "I struggle with this, too. You're one person, what are you going to do?" (Madison, 11)

Julian and Madison express feeling a lack of agency by themselves, but Christian also believes that political change—environmental taxes and price caps—are not problem solvers in themselves either. He says,

> *I don't think the environmental taxes or price caps will do the job themselves. I think we need some kind of practical regulation of the way the stores are distributing their groceries and the way they are having their businesses. Ideally it's about constructing the trade cycle as a recycle. But I mean, as logical as it seems, it's difficult to practice, I think. Otherwise we would have done it. So I think it's very important environmentally and resource-wise to avoid food waste. And whether prices have to change or whether the stores have to have smaller stocks on the shelves or the way the*

> *organization of the distribution has to change or the people's habits have to change--probably it's a bit of everything.* (Christian, 18)

He points to a change in food distribution processes, and a rethinking of product life cycles. Ultimately, however, he also acknowledges that his suggested changes are difficult to put into practice, "otherwise we would have done it" already. He furthermore points to action at a "greater organizational level", meaning action "earlier in the cycle and the system"—at the distributor, instead of at the grocery store (Christian, 7). At this higher organizational level, he says, the food can be distributed to people who are in need of food, and this is when "the whole activism, and whole political meaning to dumpster diving actually gets more serious" (Christian, 7).

The lack of agency is an important consideration in questioning the nature of activism, and whether dumpster diving in this case can be considered even a passive or unconscious form of activism. Dumpster divers express the importance of raising awareness of food waste by means of talking about their practice, but given a feeling of helplessness in the face of reforming an overwhelming system of food distribution, is it realistic to expect them to throw caution to the wind, proclaim themselves as dumpster divers, and protest vociferously for their cause? Perhaps as dumpster divers, they do not occupy a particularly strong leverage point to change the system. Perhaps they do not feel strong enough about the cause to protest more visibly. Perhaps they are already being as active as possible, given restraints from the social image associated with dumpster diving. As potential consumers, however, promoting widespread awareness of the food waste problem, and having a willingness to change habits are the first steps in the direction towards less food waste.

Where is the limit between food and waste? Ethics, values, and cognitive dissonance

The practice of dumpster diving forces us to question when something should still be called food, and when it should instead be called waste. It also begs the question of when that transition occurs and where that threshold exists between resources—something we still consider edible food—and waste—a no longer useable item to be disposed of.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines waste as, "Unwanted or unusable material, substances, or by-products"("Definition of waste (British & World English)," n.d.). The word "waste" has an arguably negative connotation, implying that the object is a nuisance, or something that needs to be got rid of because it cannot be used. If we assume that by means of placing food products into waste containers, supermarkets are stating that these particular food products are now waste, it appears

there is a discrepancy between the supermarkets' definition of unusable waste, and the dumpster divers' definition. The dumpster divers interviewed in this case study willingly eat the food they find in the waste containers, which means that the objects they find the waste containers, determined to be waste by supermarkets, is also, by the dumpster divers' standards, considered a food resource.

What is *edible?*

Part of the process of dumpster diving for the dumpster divers seemed to be using their existing knowledge regarding food to determine whether the food they found was edible, meaning safe to eat. The responses in the interviews conveyed a sense of disagreement with the standards for edible food portrayed by the image of the supermarket. Divers learned their knowledge of what "edible" was from various sources, but regardless seemed to disagree with the image of what food *should* look like, and the degree of perfection it seemed to have when purchasing it from a supermarket. Lisa explains how, by growing up in an area surrounded by farmers she learned what food direct-from-the-farm looked like, and that it did not look like the food that came from the supermarket:

> *You lose to be afraid of food which is not so perfect, which of course has some dents. And we also had fruit from the garden, and fruit and vegetables from the garden don't always look perfect as from the supermarket. And around us were farmers, so you kind of have a different relation to the food a little bit. That it doesn't always look shiny and perfect. And you know that it has some dents but you can still eat it. And if there's a worm in it you don't have to throw it away, you just cut off the part that is not so nice. So that's why I am not so afraid of vegetables or fruits that are not perfect looking. And also if it's gone bad a little bit then I know kind of that it's still okay to eat. (Laughs) (Lisa, 10)*

Through her experience of living in an agricultural area, Lisa learned that food "doesn't always look shiny and perfect", and that "fruit and vegetables from the garden don't always look perfect as from the supermarket." She also realized that she does not need to be "afraid of vegetables or fruits that are not perfect looking." Although Lisa notes that she has personally learned not to expect her food to look as perfect as it does in the supermarket, to those who may not have the same experience with food, and who have not developed the same kind of relationship with food, it could be difficult to differentiate what is edible and what is not. Wiebke states, "I grew up in the countryside on a farm. I am able to judge off myself if something is good or not. But I think not everyone might be able to go dumpster diving. He has to be able to judge on the status of the food" (Wiebke, 10). As we increasingly depend on the supermarket to provide our food, we may not as often need to

determine whether our food is edible or not. Determining whether food is still edible is a necessary skill in order to successfully dumpster dive. Without the relevant experience in judging whether food is edible, it may be more difficult or even dangerous to dumpster dive.

With this increasing dependence on and trust in the supermarket to decide whether our food is edible, the question arises regarding what the consequences of this dependence are. Claudia observes that:

> *I usually take vegetables and fruits. I'm not so suspicious because usually as soon as there's some little brownish thing on an apple and it's all wrapped up in a package of six apples they already throw the whole package out. Because when you enter the supermarket they are always perfect. Perfect. Nothing wrong, ever. (Claudia, 3)*

Supermarkets are understandingly cautious of selling food that is potentially no longer safe to eat. Food products—especially produce and other fresh items—are perishable, and therefore there is likely to be some food waste from supermarkets, whether because of health and safety concerns or for other reasons. But as Claudia observes, when she goes into the supermarket, the produce she sees is “perfect”, without any blemishes or marks. The question then becomes: when is the supermarket simply looking out for the health and safety of its consumers, and when does this cautiousness become perhaps too conservative and wasteful? As Lisa previously stated, she learned that fruits and vegetables from her family’s garden did not always look shiny and perfect, although they were still edible. Claudia seems to reflect Lisa’s sentiment when she says that she is not so suspicious of taking fruits and vegetables while dumpster diving, since “as soon as there’s some little brownish thing on an apple”, the whole package of apples gets thrown away. This image of perfection in the supermarket that Claudia describes, in which everything is “perfect”, with “nothing wrong, ever”, could be understood as supermarkets being extremely cautious, setting standards of perfection for the food they sell. These standards, however, are probably set in response to consumers’ expectations.

This image of perfection is perhaps a façade, and not an accurate reflection of what food is—what food truly looks like. Produce grows from the earth and is often imperfect. Why, then, do we maintain this expectation that the food we purchase from the supermarket should be clean and perfect? Is this image of perfection the means we as a society use for determining the edibility of our food? Are we, on average, still capable of determining whether our food is edible without the help of the supermarket?

It's an ethical dilemma?

Oftentimes, dumpster divers explicitly said that saving money and looking out for their own economy was, very simply, their motivation for dumpster diving. One example is Elisabeth, who repeatedly describes how her motivation to dumpster dive is "for herself" (Elisabeth, 5), and not to "save resources and do something good for the environment and don't support supermarkets" (Elisabeth, 12). Although her explicit statement may be that "[these] motivations don't fit to me", she also, in contrast, spoke about how, she was always taught that "food is not for you to play with or throw away", and how she does not like "to throw [her] food away" (Elisabeth, 10). (See Cultural Values section). Elisabeth seems to oscillate in her interview about talking about dumpster diving being a selfish practice and being a reaction to knowing edible food is being throw away. She states outright when asked for her motivations to dumpster dive, that the purpose or her practice is to get free food for herself and save money as an exchange student (Elisabeth, 5). Minutes later, in the same interview, she expresses the belief that she does not like to see food being wasted (Elisabeth, 10), before saying again that she is actually not motivated much by the environmental argument for dumpster diving (Elisabeth, 12).

This raises an interesting question regarding the nature of Elisabeth's motivations. She has expressed that she dumpster dives "for herself" and not as a form of activism, yet she discusses a specific value she places on edible food. The value she places on edible food is beyond the value of food's environmental impact, it seems, as she is decidedly not concerned with the topic of environmental impacts when she goes out dumpster diving. This duality raises the question of whether food has a certain value in and of itself—perhaps a more philosophical meaning in our lives? Gjerris and Gaiani's survey of household food waste in Nordic countries asks whether a heightened appreciation of the environment and nature, and an improved understanding of where food comes from and what it takes to grow food, could be a valid, philosophical approach to reducing food waste, and therefore the environmental impacts of food waste (Gjerris & Gaiani, 2013). This ecocentric approach holds a "view of humans as embedded in a more-than-human lifeworld that demands our respect and love"(Gjerris & Gaiani 2013: 17). Gjerris and Gaiani argue that by transforming the way we look at food into a "more appreciative food culture", and by giving individuals the personal responsibility to rectify the damage they personally cause, food waste and the environmental impacts of food waste can be more effectively reduced (Gjerris & Gaiani 2013: 20). We find a similar attitude in their discussion about the "taboo of wasting what is quite literally

the foundation of human existence" (Gjerris & Gaiani 2013, p.16–17). They then offer a quote by Tom MacMillan in a food ethics paper called "What is wrong with waste?" giving us the insight that: "The fact is, wasting food just feels wrong. Whether this is moral intuition or simply habit is an open question" (Gjerris & Gaiani, 2013, p. 17). Perhaps Elisabeth's dislike of wasting food is an inherent "moral intuition", or a habit learned from her grandparents when she was younger, or due to another reason. An intrinsic ethical motivation is hinted at by this study, but we cannot jump into saying whether or not dumpster divers have intrinsic ethical or moral motivations for their practice. The possibility of such a motivation existing, however, should not be excluded.

Dumpster diving teaches you to value your food

Overwhelmingly the dumpster divers stated that through dumpster diving they had come to have a higher appreciation for their food. Julien mentions that although he was informed about food waste through the media, by dumpster diving he was able to see food waste first-hand: "I already knew it before, by movies and articles that are talking about food waste. So I knew it before, but getting into the practice now I can really see that, yeah it's true. It's not just over exaggerating. It's true" (Julien, 16). Not only was he able to personally see the waste, seeing the waste also caused him to ask himself why it happened, and what was wrong with the picture he was seeing:

> *It makes you also open-minded quite a bit. Because obviously this kind of practice leads you to think about what is a supermarket? What is our food? Where does it come? Like, you have some kind of conscious-raising about what is it, why is it there? It's not what can I do against that. It's more like, do you understand the world we are living in to get that in the garbage?! (Julien, 15-16)*

In Julien's mind, dumpster diving seemed to be a reality check of sorts, to help him come to realize that what he read in the media about food waste was not an exaggerated dramatization, but a reality. He poses the rhetorical question, "Do you understand the world we are living in to get that in the garbage?!" expressing surprise and perhaps even disappointment.

Wiebke experienced a similar mind-changing event early in her dumpster diving, when seeing a container full of bread. She says that when you go dumpster diving, "you see the amounts. Like, if you see it, it changes your view on supermarkets to see a whole container filled with bread" (Wiebke, 2). Her opinion of supermarkets was revised after being confronted with the reality of a dumpster full of bread which would inevitably go to waste. To Lisa, dumpster diving is about learning how to value and appreciate food. She says, "I feel like people treat food differently when they go dumpster diving", because it "influences how you treat the food you buy—how you

generally handle your food" (Lisa, 14). She believes that by dumpster diving, people learn to "value [their food] more", "appreciate it more", "treat it differently" and not "throw so much out anymore" (Lisa, 14).

In the sense that dumpster diving serves as a sort of "excursion" for its practitioners to see food waste first-hand, the experience of dumpster diving is educational, and gives perspective into our original question of where the border lies between something that is called food and something which is called waste. There seems to be a fear that arises once that threshold is crossed, once something has been "in the dumpster" or "in the trash". Once it has crossed that line into being inside the waste receptacle, it is automatically condemned, labeled as no longer edible.

One personal anecdote involves an experience I had speaking with a volunteer at Rub and Stub, a restaurant in Copenhagen which serves donated food and contributes their profits to charity. As I ate my dinner, the volunteer talked passionately about the concept of the restaurant, the positive response they received from the community, and how they plan to continuously expand their donations network to save more food from being wasted. He spoke about opportunities to get involved, and asked if I would be interested in joining their volunteer team. At the end of our conversation I mentioned that I was writing my thesis about dumpster diving and food waste, after which he immediately adopted a very serious facial expression, tensed up, and responded that absolutely *none* of the food they served at the restaurant had ever touched a dumpster, and they did not dumpster dive any of the food they used. I was surprised by his response, and actually expected quite the opposite response, especially given that he had spoken so enthusiastically about ways of reducing food waste just a few minutes before. It was understandable that he was so adamant about the restaurant *not* affiliating itself with dumpster diving, and his reaction caused me to wonder what happens in my own mind once I put something in the trash, and whether there was, after all, some kind of psychological barrier, in which I was telling myself that something simply *being* inside the garbage meant it was no longer edible. This was an amusing thought to entertain, given that I had just spent several weeks eating food out of dumpsters without qualms.

Similarly, the dumpster divers reported negative reactions, seemingly to the word "dumpster" itself. Madison says that when she first heard about her roommates at the Kollegium dumpster diving, she associated it with homeless people: "I just thought it was something that, you know, homeless people did. Because they used the word "dumpster dive". I think at first I was a little turned off, but then I adjusted to the idea and it was fine. But at first I was like, I would never do that" (Madison,

1). She admits that she was “turned off” and that her first reaction was that she would “never do that”, but opened up to the idea later once she learned more about it. Lisa likewise associated the practice with homeless people, although she reflects that perhaps there is nothing much to be disgusted about something merely entering the trash, especially if it is your own trash. She says:

> *You see bums or homeless people doing it, and you kind of pity them. Or you're disgusted. You know, dirty, you have to get your hands dirty. Other people throw away, and you think it's gross. Even many people feel it's disgusting that in your own trash you reach in and you take something out again. It's like, "OK, well, it just fell into the trash. And it's my trash, why should I be disgusted about it?"* (Lisa, 6)

She makes the connection between feeling “pity” or being “disgusted”, and the people who are forced to handle waste, but then points out that perhaps you would have the same reaction to dig through your own trash. Is this reaction simply because we have labeled the contents of the waste container “waste” and therefore untouchable? Of course it depends on the contents of the waste container, as it could very possibly be quite unsanitary to touch something which truly belongs in the trash. But in the example Lisa gives, where something falls into the trash accidentally and you feel disgusted to pick it out, perhaps it is still necessary to question where the border lies between food and waste—is it a physical border between inside and outside the bin?—and how our current valuation of food affects this threshold. Lisa also mentions that in dumpster diving one has to accept getting their food from a dumpster, and eating the food they find in the dumpster, saying that, “The only thing is then this kind of feeling that you’re… that it’s below your standards. That you look in dumpster for food or something” (Lisa, 4). This statement points to the influence of social image in determining the threshold between food and waste and also begs the question of whether it is possible that we are preemptively condemning edible food as waste before it actually becomes inedible, because of its association with trash and dumpster and dirtiness.

Cognitive dissonance

There is, however, another psychological aspect to dumpster diving: the reality that dumpster divers, upon seeing the magnitude of food waste described by Julien above, must confront, and how they can reconcile this new knowledge with their own personal values and morals. Claudia describes her process of coming to terms with the reality she learned from dumpster diving as follows:

> *Once you did dumpster diving, at least with yourself you have to really think through the whole concept of food waste. You have to deal with it. You automatically deal with*

> *this, whether you actually use it at the end for something, or whether you do any job with this. But at least for yourself you have to deal with this once. And most likely you also discuss it with other people at some point, and so if a lot of people are actually seeing that, reflecting on that, discussing with somebody, out of maybe 100, one comes up with some solution or some idea or some concept to make something out of this.* (Claudia, 10)

Claudia describes having to "deal with" this concept of food waste, at least to come to terms with this new knowledge on a personal level. She seems to describe a kind of cognitive dissonance, a feeling that something is wrong—generated by the feeling that this new piece of knowledge somehow does not fit into the puzzle constructed of your values. Whether the discomfort caused by this cognitive dissonance motivates action and change, Claudia says, is another story, but in her opinion, everyone has to deal with this reconciliation process at least once, and if maybe one person out of one hundred who experiences it can create a solution, she would be satisfied.

This discomfort or cognitive dissonance recalls the discussion of ecocentrism in Gjerris and Gaiani's (2013) paper. Perhaps we are simply not aware enough of the reality, and are therefore able to avoid it, circumventing the discomfort that comes with it. When we are forced to physically confront it in some way, such as by dumpster diving, where we have a sensory experience with the food, and see, smell, touch, and eventually taste it, we are drawn closer to it somehow and made more aware and appreciative of its value. This emotional and physical experience is perhaps, as Gjerris and Gaiani suggest, one key to the reduction of food waste.

Secret or shared practice?

While the Kollegium dumpster divers seem to agree that the practice is social, involving learning from and supporting the group, this may not be the case for dumpster diving among other groups. Observing the Facebook dumpster diving groups shows that there is, in general, some tension between dumpster divers who share the desire to speak about the topic, and those who would rather keep the practice a secret to protect their own possibility for dumpster diving. Below are screenshots of one such conversation from one of the Danish dumpster diving groups.

Translation:

Original poster: *Hi dumpster divers! I am arranging an event at my school, and in connection to that we are looking for inspiring people of different kinds. If there is anyone who might be interested in doing some workshop, for example a walk-n-talk about dumpster diving, please write to me for details! Thanks. PS: it is in Copenhagen.*

Replier in red: *No thanks. No more focus on it.*

Replier in orange: *No*

Replier in green: *no*

Replier in blue: *What is it about? What are the focus points? I would like to help, if it could contribute.*

Replier in orange: *Focus on dumpster diving doesn't benefit us.*

Replier in blue: *No, but focus on society benefits us all ;)*

Replier in purple: *If we focus more on dumpster diving, then we will of course focus more on the background for dumpster diving = food waste, waste of resources, overloading nature, people's*

economy, etc. Therefore in this way, people will be forced to take a stand about the changes that should be made. My dream scenario is that you can no longer dumpster dive anymore, because the stores don't purchase more than they can sell, then the world would be a whole lot better. So I am also voting for focus on it. I am well aware that some people don't want there to be more focus on dumpster diving, because then it could be that they can't dumpster dive anymore.

Original poster: *The focus was meant to be on society, and I just thought some would have a perspective like [Replier in purple]'s. Thanks, [Replier in blue], but it was actually yesterday, so it isn't relevant this time around*

Replier in blue: *Ahh [Original poster]! Sorry I was too late! And [Replier in purple], we have an excellent solution to the problem, namely planned economy! ;)*

In this Facebook post, the original poster asks dumpster divers to help out with a school event by telling about their experiences dumpster diving. The post quickly elicits three negative responses, in which repliers say that they do not want to increase the attention to dumpster diving. Following the negative responses are some positive responses, in which other dumpster divers argue that by increasing the focus on dumpster diving, we can raise awareness of societal issues, such as food waste, and overuse of natural resources. This conversation is a classic example of the tension which exists between those who strive to share the practice and those who strive to keep it hidden and secretive. It points out an interesting contradiction in the practice itself: if one's motivation to dumpster dive is to be an activist about food waste issues, then dumpster diving is necessarily a "self destroying" practice, since if your goal were fulfilled and food waste were minimized, the possibility for dumpster diving would likely also decrease significantly. If, however, your motivation to dumpster dive comes from a more utility-based point of view, it makes sense to keep the practice secret and not talk about it as much as possible, so that the possibility to dumpster diver remains available.

On the online Facebook groups, dumpster divers share intelligence among themselves regarding relevant information, such as warnings against tainted foods that may have been recalled and could be found in dumpsters, and even photographs of particularly impressive finds (See Case Study chapter). Some groups offer lists, where you can connect with other dumpster divers in the area to dive with. As there are likely many dumpster divers who are neither online nor part of a social

dumpster diving group, it cannot be determined for certain that the practice is solely individualistic or social, but it is important to note the diversity of the practice in this dimension, as well as the tension created between the two ends of the spectrum regarding whether it is right or proper for dumpster diving to be social or individual.

Dumpster diving with my iPhone5: Social acceptance, the image, and trendiness

After completing interviews with all of the dumpster divers, I realized that many of the dumpster divers I interviewed were not particularly shy or secretive about their practice, and certainly did not seem to feel any shame for being dumpster divers. In fact, the dumpster divers seemed to take pride in their practice, feeling proud for the achievement of figuring out the practice, and actually obtaining food from the dumpster, saving money for themselves, having fun with each other, and preventing the food they took from being wasted. My initial impressions of dumpster diving before starting the project, as described in the Preface, were that it was either a practice reserved for homeless people—an act of desperation—or for activists—an act of extreme dedication to a cause. The attitudes towards the practice of the dumpster divers I interviewed were in complete contrast to my presumptions, raising a question of why dumpster diving was so acceptable here in Copenhagen, even practiced by the average, law-abiding university student.

Christian observes that, despite my personal observations, supermarkets likely do not want to have a social image of being affiliated with dumpster divers. He says that stores do not want to be seen as being "surrounded by low trash people who live off garbage", and that "that statement is not appealing to the shopping people, that would like to have their store appear inviting and nice, which it's not if it's surrounded by dumpster divers" (Christian, 5). In this observation, there is nothing remotely trendy about dumpster diving. He does not describe "low trash people" looking through dumpsters with the latest iPhone in hand. His opinion of dumpster diving remains affiliated with people "who live off garbage" and are "not appealing to the shopping people".

Despite knowing the social stigma surrounding dumpster diving, it seems that many of the dumpster divers chose to dumpster dive anyways. Perhaps it is because they simply do not care about what others perceive them as, or because they are assured by the security of the group. Or is there some kind of a transcendent understanding of dumpster diving which makes its association with waste, homelessness, and a lack of cleanliness irrelevant to the Kollegium dumpster divers?

In my interview with Madison, she makes an astute observation about class differentiations, and how the image one portrays of oneself to society could, in fact, be enabling the practice and its acceptance. She says, “If me and Elisabeth are there, we're there with my iPhone 5, looking in there. Then they're just like, ‘These kids...’” (Madison, 15) Madison uses the example of looking into the dumpster with the flashlight function of her iPhone, which demonstrates her and Elisabeth’s belonging in a certain social class. She explains that by having this “badge” certifying their social class, they do not have to worry too much about getting in trouble with store owners for dumpster diving. While this study did not record the race and income of its participants, we do know that all of the dumpster divers interviewed were highly educated, studying at either the Bachelor or Master level in a university. This high level of education perhaps made it more possible for the dumpster divers to take risks regarding their social images, in a way which may not be as comfortable coming from a low-education, low-income, or minority background. Having the level of education and knowledge to understand the implications of the practice, as well as having the image of a university degree to back it up, somehow makes it more acceptable to incorporate an element of rebellion into the practice, and an air of not caring what society thinks about you. Definitive conclusions cannot be made regarding whether there is a racial or class element involved in the prevalence of the practice, although it is an interesting observation, which gives insight into how the practice is tolerated and continues to exist in this particular context.

Conclusions

Ultimately, three general insights can be taken from the study, which illustrate the nature of the practice, including how it functions, what it looks like, what are the motivations for engaging in it, and how its practitioners make sense of and give meaning to it. These are:

1. **Dumpster diving is not just an act—it's a process comprised of a series of acts.**

   Dumpster diving is not simply the singular act of taking something out of the garbage. It is a highly involved process, involving preparation beforehand, and work afterwards. Dumpster diving can be adapted to being a routine, day-to-day practice, but in general it is time consuming to practice, and takes dedication.

2. **Dumpster diving is very personal, and the motivations for doing so are extremely complex.**

   Dumpster divers may learn how to dive together or from each other, but on an intrinsic level they develop different motivations for continuing, using their individual backgrounds to make sense of their actions in vastly diverse ways. Dumpster divers often have many motivations simultaneously, and these motivations are dynamic and continue to evolve with experience.

3. **Actions trigger motivations more so than actions are motivated by preconceived motivations.**

   Dumpster divers came to the practice by coincidence, often choosing to sustain it for social reasons. After reflection and questioning, their intrinsic motivations emerged, suggesting that unlike the picture painted in existing literature about dumpster diving, in which divers are already motivated by a certain idea or thought, then play out an action in order to express their ideas, the practice of dumpster diving should be looked at from a more phenomenological perspective, in which acting and sensing precede perception and sense-making.

Prospectus

In light of the above insights into the practice of dumpster diving, the next steps will be to consider the implications for food waste policy and the theory of dumpster diving, and to make suggestions for potential follow-up studies.

Regarding food waste policy, one important facet of dumpster diving was its ability to help practitioners learn how to value their food, beyond the knowledge they already had about food waste through the media. This learning implies that the way we should be addressing food waste should perhaps be more visceral, allowing people to physically and emotionally confront what food waste looks, smells, feels, and tastes like, in order to make closer connections to it and its negative consequences. Going beyond traditional media, such as news articles and films could be a start. One such example was conducted very recently in Copenhagen (October 2014) in which food was handed out at the City Hall Square in Central Copenhagen for free, to show the magnitude of food waste in Denmark. A follow-up study could involve investigating psychological reactions to food waste.

The realization that a more phenomenological approach was needed to understand dumpster diving also has implications for the future study of dumpster diving, as well as other social movements. Dumpster diving has by-and-large been studied starting with the understanding that it is practiced by activists. In this study, it was observed that people who did not necessarily even identify as activists shared the same foundational ideals regarding the relevant social and environmental issues as those vocalized by activists and protesters. This learning suggests that there could be an untapped method of approaching social change and motivation by reaching the average person, who may otherwise be alienated or scared away by the association of activism and protest with radicalism and extremism.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview recordings and transcriptions

Please see audio files and documents on the enclosed CD. Contents of the CD are confidential and not to be viewed, except by the author, supervisor, and examiner.

Appendix B: Interview guides

There were two editions of the Interview Guide. Most changes between the first and second edition occur in the section “Conversation”, in which questions were rearranged from a list into a conversation by themes.

Dumpster divers: insights and motivations

To give you some background on who I am…

My name is Vicki, and I am a masters student studying at KU in Frederiksberg. I was born and raised in southern California, and have been studying in New York City, Houston, and Vienna before I ended up here in Copenhagen. I am now writing my thesis about dumpster diving, and more importantly, Copenhagen’s dumpster divers. I became interested in this topic because I kept having some very interesting conversations with many of my friends, as well as new people I met, about their experiences with dumpster diving, and their thoughts on it. I wanted to know more about this popular activity, and to try to turn these interesting conversations into a digestible insight. I am a newbie dumpster diver myself, but have now been out a few times and have seen the kinds of things one can find that are supposedly waste. I really look forward to an interesting conversation, and to hearing about your perspectives and personal motivations.

About my project…

My thesis is foremost about the motivations of dumpster divers in Copenhagen, and about the experience of dumpster diving here. So many people are dumpster diving every day in this city—maybe you have even met some of them yourselves. My project approaches these goals in two ways: firstly, I have been participating in and observing the practice of dumpster diving. Secondly, I would like to have a conversation with the people who do this (you!) about what the experience is/has been like for you, why you choose to take part in it now, and how you feel you can relate to the practice and the other people participating in the practice.
I would like you to know that this conversation will be about you, and your personal perspectives. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers, only insight. I will try to direct the conversation by giving us some starting points for discussion, but please feel free to bring up anything you think could be relevant. Likewise, if there is something you don’t feel comfortable talking about, please let me know.
The conversation should take about one hour, and you will be anonymous in my thesis, identified with an alias + factors that distinguish you from other dumpster divers (fx: age/sex). I would like to record the audio of our conversation, so that I can refer to specific quotes in my writing, so please let me know if you don’t feel comfortable with this.

Contact details

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, or if you come to think of something else you’d like to speak about:
Vicki
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First edition of the Conversation section:

Conversation

The experience (phenomenology)

What it is like to go dumpster diving—the process, the steps, how often
Things that can be found—most surprising thing found vs. typical items
What does it look like—darkness, visual experience, identifying places, characteristics of a good dumpster
What does it feel like there—smell, cold, sneaky, scary, quietness, dirtiness/cleanliness
Emotions—how does the act of dumpster diving make you feel? Liberating, righteous, confident, sneaky, cool, weird…?
Grossness, edibility, and deciding on those factors when dumpster diving
Afterwards—how do you feel when you are finished? Accomplished, fulfilled, naughty…?

The motivations (personal motivations)

Getting started/into dumpster diving—when, alone/with someone, where you heard about it first
Goals when going out dumpster diving—what is getting accomplished
Why do you want to get the above goals accomplished?
Value that dumpster diving provides to you
Personal beliefs—how the practice fits in with personal values
Consistency with social image
Symbolic—does engaging in the practice symbolize anything for you
Descriptive—descriptive explanation of motivation for dumpster diving

Context (surrounding motivations, or, non-personal motivations)

Food waste—knowledge of level of food waste, what it makes interviewee think, and how it makes them feel
Desire to create change, and why
Role—what role does the interviewee feel he/she plays in the processes which create or reduce food waste? (in the system of growing, moving, distributing, eating food)
Environment—impacts of environment from food waste, and how knowledge of those makes interviewee feel
Ecocentrism
Popularity in Denmark—compared to other places you've been?
Trust level in Denmark

Specific questions

The experience

- Can you tell me something about yourself? What your interests are and what you like to do in your every day life?
- How often do you go dumpster diving? What role does dumpster diving occupy in your life? Is it a big part of how you get your food, or just a fun thing…?

- What kinds of things do you find? Have you found anything surprising or unusual? How do you decide what is edible and what you take?
- Can you describe what it looks like at the dumpster when you go dumpster diving? How is the physical atmosphere and the emotional atmosphere? What do you see, sense and feel?

The motivations

- Do you have some goal in mind when you go out? What is it? When you walk out the door, what are you setting out to get accomplished?
- Why do you want to accomplish this/these goals you just described?
- Do you consider dumpster diving a meaningful thing you do? Or perhaps you do it more for fun, or the social aspect of it?
- What do you get out of it (just free food, or does it provide fulfillment or something else…?)
- Is practice consistent with your beliefs and image of yourself? Do you care?
- Is there something you want to prove or to say when you do this?
- Does dumpster diving symbolize anything to you? Does it serve as a way of showing something about yourself to the world or to society?
- Could you please try to describe your motivations for dumpster diving?

Context

- What do you know and what have you heard about food waste as a societal and environmental problem?
- How do you feel the action of dumpster diving might relate to the bigger problem of food waste? Does it relate somehow beyond just reducing the amount of food which ends up in the landfill?
- What do you think should be done? What should be changed, either in terms of rules or regulations, or in terms of society and its thoughts towards food waste?
- What does knowing about this make you feel?
- What do you dislike about food waste?
- Do you feel some kind of gut reaction to food waste? Does that negative reaction influence you to dumpster dive? Or do other things?
- I think people are beginning to show a desire to be closer to their food in that they want to know what they are eating and where it comes from, and that it is “natural”, whatever that means to them. Would you agree with this or not? Why?
- I think the popularity of dumpster diving in Denmark has to do with both the food quality and standards in Denmark, as well as the level of trust in society. Would you agree? Why?

Open-ended

Is there anything else you think could be relevant that we haven’t discussed yet?

Second edition of the Conversation section:

Conversation

The process and experience

- Can you tell me something about yourself? What your interests are and what you like to do in your every day life?
- What it is like to go dumpster diving—the process, the steps
- How often do you go dumpster diving? What role does dumpster diving occupy in your life? Is it a big part of how you get your food, or just a fun thing…?
- What kinds of things do you find? —Have you found anything surprising or unusual? Typical finds? How different is it in different dumpsters/areas?
- What does it look like—darkness, visual experience, identifying places, characteristics of a good dumpster
- What does it feel like there? Smell, cold, sneaky, scary, quietness, dirtiness/cleanliness
- Emotions—how does the act of dumpster diving make you feel? Liberating, righteous, confident, sneaky, cool, weird…?
- Grossness, edibility, and deciding on those factors when dumpster diving: How do you decide what is edible and what you take?
- Meeting others at the dumpster—is it friendly, competitive, scary, awkward? Types of people you meet, if you keep in touch with them?
- When do you decide you are finished for the day? Feeling of satisfaction, too much to carry, just tired?
- Afterwards—how do you feel when you are finished? Accomplished, fulfilled, naughty…?

Compared to other places

- How is diving in Copenhagen different from where you have done it before? How so? What was surprising when you came to Denmark?
- How often do you dumpster dive? [Regularly, often, sometimes, rarely, just starting]
- Is this more often than before? [Much more, a little more, the same, a little less, much less]

Personal motivations and personal image

- Getting started/into dumpster diving—when, alone/with someone, where you heard about it first.
- Goals when going out dumpster diving—what is getting accomplished
- Why do you want to get the above goals accomplished?
- Value that dumpster diving provides to you--What do you get out of it (just free food, or does it provide fulfillment or something else…?)
- Personal beliefs—how the practice fits in with personal values, consistency with social image. Do you care about being consistent to a social image? Explain?

Social motivations, others-concerning motivations

- Do you consider dumpster diving a meaningful thing you do? Or perhaps you do it more for fun, or the social aspect of it? Do you think other divers have the same ideas?
- Is there something you want to prove or to say when you do this? Would you say by diving you are trying to create a change, and what is it you want to change? Do you think it is the same for other divers?

- Symbolic—does engaging in the practice symbolize anything for you. Is it a way to show something about yourself to the world to society? How do you *think* it is for other divers?

Context (surrounding motivations)

- Role:
    - What role does the interviewee feel he/she plays in the processes which create or reduce food waste? (in the system of growing, moving, distributing, eating food).
    - Are you doing something besides reducing the amount of food that ends up in the landfill or incineration plant?
    - What do you *think* should be done? What should be changed, either in terms of rules or regulations, or in terms of society and its thoughts towards food waste?
    - How much do you feel you can affect the waste level in Copenhagen? [Can do a lot, can do something, can do a little, neutral, can't do much, there is no way to do anything about it]
- Ecocentrism:
    - Do you find yourself having a gut reaction to food waste? Can you describe it? What do you dislike about food waste? If you get this, do you think this reaction influences you to do something to create change or make an improvement? (dumpster diving, or something else, for example)
    - I personally feel people are beginning to show a desire to be closer to their food—consciously or unconsciously—in that they want to know what they are eating and where it comes from, and that it is "natural", whatever that means to them. Would you agree with this or not? Why?
- Trust level in Denmark:
    - I think the popularity of dumpster diving in Denmark has to do with both the food quality and standards in Denmark, but also—importantly—the level of trust and the value of transparency in society and businesses' operations. Would you agree? Why?
    - How much do you trust the business operations of the markets where you dive? [really trust them, pretty much trust them, trust them a little, neutral, kind of don't trust them, pretty much don't trust them, really don't trust them]

Open-ended

Is there anything else you think could be relevant that we haven't discussed yet?

Appendix C: Statement from Ministry of Justice regarding dumpster diving

JUSTITSMINISTERIET
Politi- og Strafferetsafdelingen

Jan Ravn
jerravn@me.com

Dato: 15. februar 2013
Kontor: Strafferetskontoret
Sagsbeh: Mette Halmø Rasmussen
Sagsnr.: 2013-734-0050
Dok.: 686197

Ved e-mail af 21. januar 2013 har De rettet henvendelse til Justitsministeriet vedrørende lovligheden af at skralde.

Justitsministeriet kan oplyse, at ministeriet modtager et stort antal henvendelser. Af ressourcemæssige og principielle grunde kan ministeriet ikke give et detaljeret svar på alle henvendelser. Justitsministeriet håber, at De har forståelse herfor.

Justitsministeriet kan mere generelt oplyse, at det er almindelig antaget, at straffelovens §§ 276 og 277 om tyveri og ulovlig omgang med hittegods ikke finder anvendelse på tilegnelse af affald, hvortil ejendomsretten er opgivet, jf. Vagn Greve m.fl., Kommenteret straffelov, Speciel del, 10. udgave, 2012, siderne 514 og 523.

Justitsministeriet skal yderligere henlede opmærksomheden på, at det er i strid med straffelovens § 264, stk. 1, nr. 1, at skaffe sig adgang til fremmed hus eller andet ikke frit tilgængelig område. Ligeledes skal Justitsministeriet henlede opmærksomheden på, at såfremt der ødelægges eller beskadiges genstande, vil dette kunne straffes efter straffelovens § 291, stk. 1, om hærværk.

Med venlig hilsen

Ketilbjørn Hertz

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Appendix D: Full dumpster diving diary

Please see scans of the full dumpster diving diary on the enclosed CD. Contents of the CD are confidential and not to be viewed, except by the author, supervisor, and examiner.

Appendix E: Charts from interview coding process

Being an activist (on food waste issues)	Showing people how easy and accessible it is
	Balancing out perceived injustices
	If you want to make a difference, be an activist
	Even on a small scale, at least it's something Believing in making an impact, however small
	Trying to live sustainably
	Feeling empowered to spread the word
	NOT wanting to protest
	Telling about it can be considered a form of activism Talking about it makes it an issue that should be openly discussed and questioned Biggest impact is from talking about it
	Actually, radicalism IS the mechanism by which activism can create change. Otherwise nothing really happens
	DD can express an idea, but it doesn't in her case
	Activism comes into play at a higher organizational level. Begs question of what is considered activism
Growing up taught never to throw things away /Family lessons	Having a person close to you that you trust as an example
	Having someone close to you who has experienced poverty or near poverty
	Feeling shame for throwing things away
	Cultural values towards food
	Lessons from family makes the idea of dumpster diving totally make sense
	Lessons from family about wasting things, food and other belongings
	Throwing away food is not a good thing
	Not learning from upbringing, but from education about food
Not having a fear of imperfect foods /Having knowledge about food waste	Standards of perfection for food
	Not afraid of expiration dates
	Studying something related to environmental issues or food
	Seeing unrealistic perfection in the supermarket
	Raising awareness of the food waste issue
	Awareness of what you can do
	Understanding of what food can be dumpster dived

Dumpster diving influences how you value your food	Higher appreciation for the food you have due to dumpster diving and less waste
	Dumpster diving gives you an environmental conscience
	Dumpster diving lets you see food waste first-hand
	Dumpster diving causes you to question why food is thrown out
	Dumpster diving helps you realize the value in the dumpster
	Dumpster diving forces you to confront a reality of food waste
	It's unimagineable before you actually see what they throw in there
	DD causes reflection on food waste problems
	Being proud of the practice; having a positive feeling for saving food
Apart from people who have high standards for their food	Others expect perfection from food
	Others are not easily pleased or satisfied by what they have
	High quality standards of life
	Consumer expectations are high
	Perfection in food has increased
	Despite knowledge of what "real food" looks like, still has expectations of the perfect product
Also apart from people who are too hippie	Not that common for homeless people in CPH, even though it seems like a hobo activity
Opinion towards dumpster divers in other countries	In France
	In Germany
	In Netherlands
The environmental/food waste motivation is NOT primary	adrenaline and economy
	economy
	group dynamics and free food
	saving money
	It's just logical to-- the practice agrees with pockets and morals
	the environment is only one factor in this case
	not really an environmental practice. it's more of a secondary thought.
Lack of agency to cause change	I can't change the system
	DD is not a solution in itself; need something bigger
	Need to reach a critical mass to make a difference
	The signal from DD is not strong enough to constitute protest
	It's frustrating that it doesn't seem the stores get why they are doing that?

Stores' responsibility for managing their stock	Understanding that the waste is due to poor planning
	Influencing stores through dumpster diving
	stores' regulating practices need to be rethought and restructured
Seeing the big picture	Frustration: Understanding the issue by stepping back to see the big picture, and understand your impact on the entire system
	Understanding the global picture of the things you buy
	How DD fits in with circle economy
	The inefficiency of it all is frustrating
Saving food from being wasted	more important than other food issues, like organic food or seasonal food
	wouldn't mind sharing as less food waste is still better, despite being motivated by own economic benefit
	Is a compromise between buying organic and going to the supermarket
	dumpster diving is a de facto reduction of food waste, and is therefore environmentally sound, because it is saving resources
There is an ethical reason not to waste food	It is unethical to throw food away, any use would be "good"
	Food is somehow undervalued in society today
	It's an ethical dilemma to waste
	Wasting food just doesn't make sense
	There are these deeply ingrained values surrounding food people can't even articulate, because they're so normal, but somehow they make it unimaginable to be able to throw food away.
The spirit of dumpster diving	dumpster diving has a charitable aspect to its spirit
	dumpster diving also has an environmental aspect

IT'S A SOCIAL EVENT	Going together as a group
	It's a group activity/never go alone
	Socializing afterwards
	It's a social event
	It's a bonding experience
	DD connects people with similar interests

	Just follow along
	It's part of the vibe of the kollegium
	Practicality of being part of a DD community or network
	Desire to share the idealizations that originally motivated the practice
IT'S EXCITING AND FUN	Adventure tourist
	Funny story about being scared of being caught while out diving
	Eva's story about getting all the chicken?
	More about the novelty than the necessity
	More for the fun of it than the necessity
	Taken by the thrill of the finds
DEVELOPMENT/EVOLUTION OF THE PRACTICE	Evolution from social drive to... something else?
	Started because of group dynamics
	It was so exciting at the beginning she couldn't sleep
	The practice evolves and develops
	Your motivations change and you can adapt the practice to what you want, depending on what you want to achieve. Free food? Activism? Socializing?
	Realizing the value that's in the dumpster
	It's more of a spontaneous thing now
HAS BECOME A HABIT	It's become a part of the lifestyle in CPH
	Became a part of daily practice
IMAGE OF SOCIETY	Being observed by other people
	Social implications brought by the word "dumpster" don't bother him much
	Being affiliated with DD changes others' perception of you (but how it does depends on your social status?)
	Thought it was disgusting before starting--stigma around it
	The group validates the practice and makes it less socially awkward
	Contradicting social stigma: cool and hip vs. desperate and disgusting
	Can be hip, if you come from the right social strata

	It's an annoying thing for homeless people to do
	Social image aspect (stigma) doesn't affect everyone the same way...
	Perception of who DD is for changed. Not only for homeless people or hippies, neither of which she identifies with.
	What homeless people did
	The image of it and its association with "waste" and "dumpsters" prevents people from seeing the value that's actually in the dumpster
	student social group implies they are open-minded? parents are apprehensive about the practice and its legitimacy
	Not illegal means people have fewer hurdles to get over
	Threshold of trash, and association with dirtiness--more of a psychological block than a logical reason?
	Don't worry about getting judged if you already have a privileged image
	Overcoming your own barriers
	Stores associate DD with poor shop image
	there's a stigma
	People think it's gross until they are able to understand the value in the dumpster
SOCIAL LEARNING	Social learning of the practice
	The process is collaborative
	Following the "rules of the game"
	Started more by chance encounter with friend who showed the way
	The group was the impetus for initiating the practice
	Group is a natural psycholgoical impetus for starting, unless you have some kind of deeper-seated motivation already
	Excitement gives way to practicality in practice
	SOCIAL COHESION

	DD rules
SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	Practice has some meaning in a social good sense
	society is also the avenue for making a change
SAVING FOOD IS BECOMING TRENDY	Appealing to a certain demographic
	Organic products used to be frowned upon, but now they're normal. Maybe it'll be the same trend with DD
	Local food used to be common, but now it's hip
	Expectations of perfection surrounding food have increased
	Trendiness of second-hand stuff