

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20875) - PREFIGURING A VEGAN FUTURE IN A MEAT DOMINATED PRESENT: REINVIGORATING AND RECHARGING ACTIVISM AT THE VEGAN CAMPOUT

Annayah Prosser Annayah Prosser¹; Leda Blackwood¹; Saffron O'Neill²; Lorraine Whitmarsh¹; Jan Willem Bolderdijk³; Tim Kurz⁴

1 - University of Bath; 2 - University of Exeter; 3 - University of Groningen; 4 - University of Western Australia

Background and objectives

Many people who are concerned about the environment make immense social sacrifices to act in line with their moral values. Vegans, for example, are often stigmatised and derogated by the societal majority who continue to eat meat, and maintaining vegan activism in the face of staunch opposition is exhausting for many. To counter this, many vegans seek out prefigurative community gatherings and festivals: events that create a physical example of a fully vegan future, in the present day. However, little is understood about the meaning of these spaces to participants, and the value they might provide to interpersonal and societal activism surrounding environmental issues.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The Vegan Campout is the world's largest organised festival for vegans, hosting over 10,000 vegans over one weekend in the UK. The festival prioritises vegan perspectives: all food outlets, performing artists, speakers and retail outlets are vegan.

To explore the significance of this majority-vegan space for vegans, we conducted on-site field interviews at the end of the event, with vegans from across the UK and Europe of a variety of ages and genders.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Through reflexive thematic analysis, we examined whether the Vegan Campout acted as a reinvigorating and recharging space for vegans who attended. Our analysis demonstrated that the event empowered vegans to continue and enhance their vegan activism and lifestyle. Our themes suggest that this may be due to participants: forming new social connections, experiencing a 'vegan future' in person, expressing typically forbidden moral emotions, and (re)discovering the joy in veganism.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Our work uses interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology, sociology, politics and human geography to offer an original insight into the transformative significance of prefigurative community gatherings for environmental groups typically in the societal minority. Overall, we demonstrate the importance of these identity-centred spaces for minority-driven societal change, and imagining a greener, more sustainable future.

Palavras-chave : Vegan, Identity, Prefiguration, Activism, Festivals, Morality, Psychology, Social Sciences, Qualitative