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Dynamic Press Discourses of School Meal Reform in Poland: from Expertise Implementation to Resistance and Rejection

Abstract: The implementation of school meal reform in Poland in 2015 has been withdrawn in because of vast social resistance. The analyses of press discourse in daily newspapers reveals how the critics and resistance has been shaped. The use of content analysis and critical discourse analysis helps to identify how power relations and ideologies connected to the anti-junk-food law has been contested and redefined. The changes were manifested by abandoning healthist framing in favour of construction of new discursive worlds. In the discourse of resistance, cultural food symbols such as hunger and satiety, the ceremonial nature and pleasure of eating, economic freedom and consumer freedom were employed, and the status of taste in consumption among children was highlighted. Historical and cultural context has given the basis for such redefining and provided cultural meanings for undermining expert narrative, which has been reform's rationale and hegemonising frame.

Keywords: school meal reform; consumption among children; public health policy; social resistance; press discourse; food education

Introduction

In the 2015/2016 school year, an unprecedented change was implemented in Poland concerning the availability of various types of food in schools. The amendment to the law on food safety and nutrition that came into effect, as well as the accompanying decree of the Minister of Health, met with a strong reaction and triggered a debate on the school food environment and the role of schools in food socialisation.

The objective of this study is to present the dynamic of the discursive processes and semantics associated with the introduction of the anti-junk-food law in Poland. The starting point for the study was the unexpected and strong resistance towards new regulations that emerged from the very first weeks of implementation of the reform. The main research questions that arose were: Why was the reform rejected? How did the discussion on the anti-junk-food reform change throughout the successive phases of its implementation? How did the critics of the reform frame their responses, and what discursive resources were used to question the most common justifications of the reform?

By studying changes in the discourse on the anti-junk-food law, we can better understand the process of implementation of food and health policy. The objective of the food reform was to modify eating habits of children, thus making a far-reaching intervention in everyday social practices. The reaction to the reform was at first not negative, yet with

time such strong opposition formed that modifications were made. This study aims to point to the processes in the realm of cultural meanings, ideologies, conflicts, and symbols that changed the field of discourse on food in schools. In order to answer research questions, three different methodological perspectives has been applied: content analysis, text-world theory inspired by semantic analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Press articles from five selected nationwide Polish daily newspapers forms the textual corpus and is considered here as main research material.

This study follows the model of critical discourse analysis, focusing on changes in ideologies and power relations (Wodak and Ludwig 1999: 12). The research concerns press discourse, but the critical, qualitative part of the analysis also refers to the legal, political, cultural and historical context.

Legal Context: Rationales for Food Policies

The political transformation of 1989 in Poland and accession to the European Union in 2004 are milestones of transferring from a shortage economy with limited food supply in the communist era, with its cyclical provisions crises, queues and food rationing, to an economy of the abundances of Western capitalism. Opening to highly industrialised food markets and the processes of globalisation transformed lifestyles and the associated nutrition challenges—including the diet-related health threats related to obesity and overweight (Piekarzewska et al. 2016: 76). Although the dynamic of the health of Polish society has so far been complex, owing to periodic crises and the transitions of the 1990s (Gomula et al. 2015), the thesis of an obesity epidemic provides a good description of the most general trends, and is an increasingly dominant narrative on public health in Poland.

Owing to the threats related to food models and public health, the state and other institutions have taken steps to engage in educational activities and legal regulation of the food environment. For decades, campaigns aiming to reduce malnutrition and to legitimise the fight against poverty were an inherent part of state social policies. A contemporary example is the school-oriented *State-supported supplementary nutrition* programme, where support is provided to groups particularly on the basis of income criteria, or supplementary nutrition programmes offered by other, non-public entities including Polish Humanitarian Action and Food Banks. The newer strategies and documents regulating food policy are more and more often a response to the obesity epidemic and qualitative malnutrition and emphasise general nutrition education (National Health Programme for 2016–2020, Decree 1492/2016).

The regulations from 2015 applied to all food offered in schools and pre-schools. The broadest distribution channels are school lunches, either cooked on site or ordered from catering companies, and school tuck shops, which are commercial points usually located in premises rented from the school. The decision to operate a canteen depends upon the school head teacher, and the conditions for its use, including payments made by users as well as reduced rates and exemptions, are determined by the school and local authorities. School meals in Poland are therefore not an element of state education policy, but partly social policy, and partly—together with tuck shops—a school catering option. In 2015/2016, approx. 22% of school pupils consumed school lunches at full rate, approx. 2% ate subsidised

meals and 7% had their costs reimbursed (CSO 2016). Canteens were present in half of all schools, and are more common in primary schools than middle schools (CSO 2014).

On 3 October 2012, a private member's bill concerning the law on food safety was submitted to the Polish parliament. The bill's main objectives were protection of children and young people's health by limiting access to food not recommended for their development as well as reduction of overweight and obesity. This was to be achieved by regulating the food supply in schools and pre-schools. As a result, relatively intrusive instruments were introduced, which, although evaluated as effective (Bleich et al. 2017; Brambila-Macias et al. 2011; Driessen et al. 2014) and recognised by public health specialists, have met with the resistance of other stakeholders (González-Zapata et al. 2009). Surveys have indicated a general indifference among Polish respondents regarding various types of interventions promoting healthy eating, with the relatively highest support being expressed for information campaigns and school education (Szponar et al. 2007) and the lowest for intrusive steps such as top-down regulation of the nutritional value of meals in the workplace, or even a ban on advertising of unhealthy products for adults (Kozioł-Kozakowska et al. 2014). This study describes the process of rejection of the hegemony of such intrusive reforms and formation of a discourse permitting the expression of resistance to it.

The amendment to the law on food safety was passed by parliament almost unanimously on 23 October 2014; the Official Gazette of 28 August 2015 (Decree 1256/2015) published the accompanying *Decree of the Minister of Health of 26 August 2015 on groups of foodstuffs designated for sale to children and young people in educational institutions as well as the requirements to be fulfilled by foodstuffs used in institutional feeding of children and young people in these institutions*. The decree contains a list of permissible product groups, describing—in the attachments—the conditions that they must satisfy as well as the general rules of composition of meals and menus and their dietary properties. Achieving the stated goal mostly involved limiting consumption of food with high sugar levels, sweetening substances, fats and sodium, while increasing the intake of calcium and the proportion of fruit and vegetables in the diet. The decree therefore defines in detail the minimum or maximum amounts of individual ingredients, e.g. salt, sugar, fat, but also the content of meat in cold cuts or of tomatoes in ketchup.

The decree was published with an extensive rationale, discussing not only the results of research on the health aspects of consuming specific groups of products, but also the legal context, WHO guidelines, as well as the solutions adopted in other European countries. The strategies implemented are partly based on existing good practices, especially from the British system. The rationale is an 80-page expert report, dominated by health arguments, but also mentioning, for example, the social benefits of pupils eating a meal in school together. The second part provides a detailed discussion of the content of the new rules and is entirely dominated by the dietary perspective, based on an analysis of the nutritional values of the various food categories and daily and weekly diet norms. It is also worth mentioning that the amendment was prepared and implemented by the Christian democratic-liberal Civic Platform, which, within weeks of the reform, lost power to the conservative, populist and Eurosceptic Law and Justice party. This political change is a significant part of the extra-textual context, in which we can find various moral projects of individuals, groups' and institutions' responsibilities for food choices (cf. Pike and Kelly 2014).

Changes in the field of school meals are the subject of health policies in other countries, described by researchers in various perspectives. Although the implementation of these policies differs according to the specific legal and cultural system, certain elements of reforms and certain research findings are repeated, e.g. resistance encountered in response to limiting pupils' consumption freedoms (Fletcher et al. 2014; LeGreco 2007). Critical analyses of school meal reform are also characterised by internal incoherence of the school food environment and a lack of a whole school approach (LeGreco 2007). Food education policies are very much dominated by an individualistic approach, according to which consumers are responsible for the choices they make, and as such are subject to nutrition education encouraging good choices, and turning poor choices into the ignorance of uninformed, and sometimes even brainwashed children and their parents (Gibson and Dempsey 2015). The importance of biopowers and semantic provisioning is also highlighted by critical studies on school meals policies (Pike and Kelly 2014; Roslyng 2011).

Study Design and Methods: Three Stages of Analysis

The study design is built along the following vectors: from simplified model to growing complexity, from quantitative to qualitative, from literalness to intertextual and contextual interpretation of meaning.

The first stage of analysis is based on quantitative techniques, resulting in a general outline of the dynamic of the discourse in the relevant time interval, showing the main areas of discussions, direction of change and its turning points.

The research material used in this study comprises 107 articles published in the daily press in Poland between 8 May 2014 and 14 November 2015. The articles were sourced from the archives of the five general news dailies with the highest readership. Based on Polish Readership Research data, the following titles were selected: Fakt, Gazeta Wyborcza (GW), Super Express (SE), Metrocafe (until September 2015 known as Metro) and Rzeczpospolita (RP). In the first internet search, I identified the articles on the food reform, using the newspapers' archives (GW, RP) and websites (Fakt, SE, Metrocafe). The search criteria included: food reform, amendments to the food law, school meal reform, school canteens, school shops, school food, anti-junk-food law etc. These were generated until new texts appeared, resulting in 146 articles. I then excluded articles not addressing the reform (rather concerning healthy food in general, or local initiatives), and those which only touched upon it (less than 20% of the text). In the case of dailies with local editions, I decided to limit the study to one of them (selected at random), if a number of them were published on a given day. In the newspapers with no internet archive of their physical publications, the search was verified in these paper publications. In the end, 39 texts were removed, leaving 107 remaining. The texts were arranged in chronological order, in three intervals: May–December 2014 (work on the amendment, 14 articles); January–June 2015 (after accepting but before the reform implementation, 8 articles), July–November 2015 (implementation process, 65 articles). In addition, the time of the most intensive discussion, from July to November 2015, was divided 5–7 weeks intervals, in order to study the discourse in its most dynamic period.

The corpus of texts was coded using text-driven codes referring to research questions, especially concerning opinions on the reform, arguments for and against, justifications, examples, comparisons etc. A sentence by sentence coding method was employed, thus permitting use of a standard unit in counting. The coding was open, and not exclusive (the codes are not disjoint) or complete (some passages are not coded). Codes have been organised into categories, and as a result, four main areas of discussion were identified. The frequencies have been summed and categories' relative proportions in particular time intervals have been calculated. Conclusions resulting from first stage of study became the starting point for in-depth, contextual, qualitative analysis.

The second stage of study concentrates on individual utterances in the discourse, highlighting the formal characteristics that render the discourse dynamic and make these utterances an element of a not coincidental, but also non-determined sequence of meanings, an event that leads to further events/utterances (considered here as statements in press articles). Here, I applied theoretical methods from discourse linguistics (Werth 1999), in particular the concepts of common ground and possible worlds reinterpreted by Andrea Rocci (2009). Common grounds and possible worlds, i.e. the scenarios of reality filling the discourse, are ordered and have a multi-level structure that I will reconstruct below. From the common ground, further narratives emerge, in the form of definition of the situation and highlighting of the threats, anticipated states of affairs etc. At the same time, the development of discourse means that common premises are subjects to changes called incrementation—in subsequent utterances, the common ground is expanded, redefined, modified and falsified.

The third perspective leads to intertextual and contextual analysis of selected semantic nodes that are important for the discourse, using several examples to show the semantic provisioning (Cook 2009), how the food discourse articulates meanings, becoming political language and an area of power and ideology. This is an attempt to answer the question of the hidden significance and broader cultural meaning of school meals reform. By applying Laclau and Mouffe's conceptual instruments, it is possible to discern the non-determined nature of meanings in discourse and the constant openness of discursive systems (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Laclau 2014). Hegemonising practices in food practices refer to diverse meanings and areas of cultures, alluding to myths and historical narratives, political perspectives, economic arguments, ethical systems, healthist ideologies, class habitus etc.

Each of three perspectives employs different kind of analytic unit: text corpus of 107 articles (content analysis), individual textual utterance (text words method), meaningful intertextual utterance (critical discourse analysis). Each of them brings out different aspects of the same material, resulting in multilevel "zooming in and zooming out" picture and eventually stimulating for further questions.

General Dynamics and Reform's Hegemonic Discourses

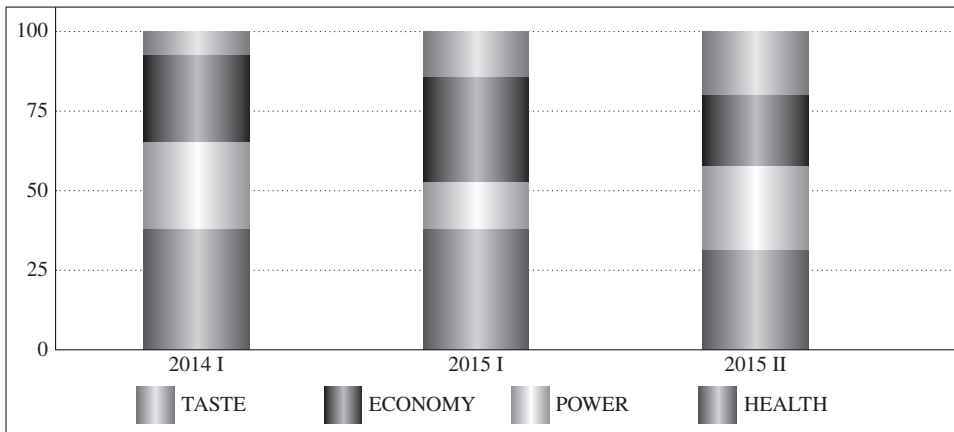
The arguments and discussion in the press discourse were mostly concerning four main, directly tackled topic areas. First, health arguments, the very rationale of the reform, referred to threats regarding excess body mass and excessive consumption of sodium, sugar and fats. These arguments encompassed lifestyle factors, i.e. balanced diet, appropriate

rhythm of meals, and physical activity. The second category refers to economic calculation. Economic arguments usually concern the indirect consequences of implementation of the reform borne by the owners of school shops going bankrupt or by local authorities saddled with the greater costs of preparing healthy meals for children. Also appearing in this discussion are, on the one hand, household micro-economies, and, on the other, the costs of healthcare for lifestyle diseases and financing reform at state level. The third category concerns power relations and nutrition decisions, which were redefined by the reform. These arguments tackled the question of the scope and specific details of the regulations, the restrictiveness of the new rules, the rights of particular institutions to interfere in the sphere of consumption, the rights of individuals and groups to manage their own food environment, the rights and limitations of economic freedom etc. The final category, that of taste, is more specific to the discourse in question, playing a particular role in forming the language of resistance to the reform. The analysis showed that this seemingly vague, subjective category was in fact more exact and defining than that of health—ostensibly objective, yet powerful: disgusting sugar-free pancakes, soups without salt, ridiculous no-fry cutlets, birthdays without chocolate treats.

The relationship between the frequencies of the codes from the four main categories (Figure 1) illustrates the general dynamic of the areas of the press discourse on the new regulations. All numbers are expressed as a proportion of a particular category, with codings/sentences of four categories in a given time period adding up to 100 per cent (Figure 1, Figure 2).

Figure 1

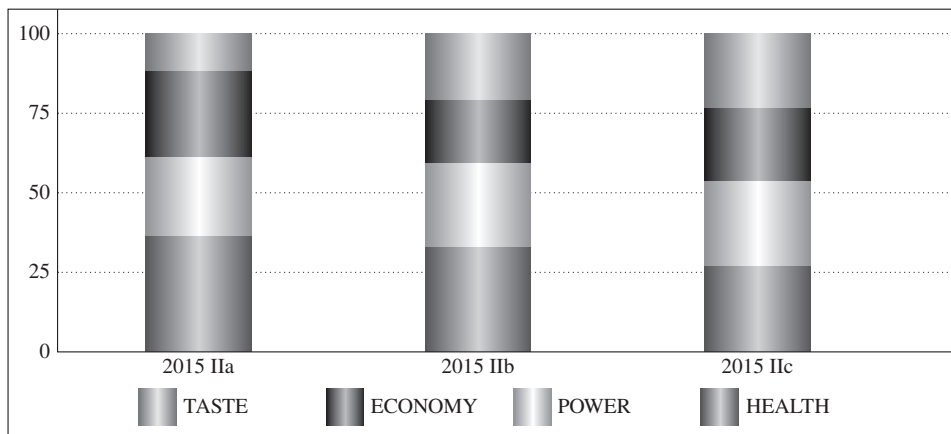
Proportion of frequencies of four main categories shown as per cent of category's sentences within all coded sentences. Long time intervals: 1 January–31 December 2014 (II 2014), 1 January–6 July August 2015 (I 2015), 7 July–23 November 2015 (II 2015).



Health issues are dominant throughout the entire research period. In the first period of the discussion on the reform (2014) and just before the implementation (first half of 2015) health-related issues consist of 38 per cent of all coded sentences. After the implementation, health arguments preserve their dominant position, with 32 per cent of all coded sentences

Figure 2

Proportion of frequencies of four main categories shown as per cent of category's sentences within all coded sentences. Short time intervals: 07.07.2015–31.08.2015 (2015 IIa, summer holidays), 01.09.2015–01.10.2015 (2015 IIb, school year, before *bun fight*), 02.10.2015–13.11.2015 (2015 IIc, school year, after *bun fight*)



(Figure 1). According to the legal rationale quoted above, increasing obesity and the growing risk of food addiction disorders justify the reform and attach positive value to it, and their domination in the discourse therefore comes as no surprise. Health-related arguments legitimate the principles of the reform and come up nearly every time the anti-junk law is mentioned in press. The public health narratives of obesity and diet-related diseases are forming the dominant discourse in all studied periods. However, taking the closer look at months after the implementation (Figure 2) unveils the consequent decrease of health topic in articles. This decrease starts at the very moment new meals are served to students and continues until reaches 27 per cent and therefore losing its monopoly.

Subjects of power and economy come with about one-fourth shares in all analysed articles. Power topics appear right away when the discussion about regulation starts in 2014 (28 per cent, Figure 1), and the arguments are being formulated for regulations and therefore for moving the decision about children's menu from private to public sphere. The power discourse becomes quieter in the period between its passing and implementing (14 per cent), and becomes strong again after new regulations comes into force (26 per cent). Articles start to discuss and problematise again the very foundations of reform, when it becomes part of everyday school's and family's reality. For the sake of the health children, parents, principals, and shops' owners are partly deprived of their power agency and consumers' choice is limited. The legitimization of the anti-junk-food law becomes a controversial issue and lawmakers and state's officials are called out to withdraw the changes. The steadily growth of interest in power relations can be also tracked within shorter periods, from the summer holidays until the end of studied period (Figure 2). This data demonstrates the occurrence of conflicts, controversies associated with executing the reform, shifts in power relations and political changes in the statuses of the subjects directly or indirectly affected by the reform. Further qualitative analysis shows some of these shifts.

The topic of economy reveals in less regular way, however frequently during all studied period. Economic references are often raised within the context of negative consequences of new law. Healthy food is more expensive, the tight budgets of school canteens and family-owned tuck shops are under threat. In the preparatory period economy topic takes 28 (in 2014) and 33 per cent (first half of 2015, [Figure 1](#)), before losing some of the press interest with about 20 per cent when regulations come into force in September 2015 ([Figure 2](#)). It's also worth mentioning that in all periods tuck shops appear more often than school canteens, which may suggest that the controversies are more focused on consumption and market regulations than school meals themselves.

Where the most interesting discourse change appears is probably the category of taste. It never becomes the dominant topic of the articles, but its relative increase undermines the hegemony of health-based arguments. Taste topic remains quiet (less than 10 per cent) until September 2015, i.e. the beginning of new school year ([Figure 1](#), [Figure 2](#)), when the new meals arrive on pupils' plates. Then it increases to over 20 per cent, becoming a real game changer, and questioning the position of health legitimisations, and therefore a reform itself. Taste and satiety were not considered in the context of the purposes, causes or consequences of the anti-junk-food law, but at the stage of evaluation of the new menu (September–November 2015), they proved to be almost as common as economic factors.

Having outlined the most general stages of discourse dynamics, the qualitative analysis will further interpret the changes within the its narratives, symbols, and cultural meanings.

Anatomy of Change: From Health to Morals, Politics, and Resistance

The varying presence of topics of power, economy, health and taste is not solely about fluctuations in interest in the various aspects of the reform. The more thorough qualitative analysis below is intended to answer three questions. 1) How do the structure of the utterances and the internal characteristics of the discourse themselves make the discourse dynamic? 2) How do the utterances from the various stages of the discourse on reform differ, and thereby what attitudes and actions do they frame? 3) In what way does the press discourse intertextually link meanings and move the issue of school food from the field of health to other cultural symbols? The first two areas—the structures of utterances and the discourse—apply critical linguistic analysis methods, and the last one shifts the analysis more strongly towards critical discourse analysis, and concerns specific articulatory practices, articulation of individual meanings that allowed new hegemonic projects to emerge.

The process of incrementation of the common ground is one of the mechanisms that dynamises the discourse. Common ground is part of the text worlds presented as the default state shared by the discourse participants, and thus providing the base for interaction. The common ground world is underspecified compared to the actual world, and is sketchy and contextual, but at the same time it provides the base for meanings which can be used in utterance. Within the discursive practices, common grounds are negotiated, reformulated, criticised, and developed. The second part of a discursive utterance, rooted in the shared common ground but determining the uniqueness of a given utterance, is the narrative of the possible world ([Rocci 2009: 15](#)). Possible worlds are constituted by modalities: they

can refer to the future, for example as forecasts, utopias, suggested interventions, moral obligations, but they can also be diagnoses of the present or past, their alternatives or threats. Semantically they are sub-worlds, (Werth 1999) pragmatically they engage the addressee with a particular action. The connection between common grounds and possible worlds is therefore a micro-level of the process of stabilisation of meanings. Common ground and possible worlds are a reflexively dynamising dyad—the common ground is subject to incrementation thanks to possible worlds, and the possible world's legitimisation and sense stem from the common ground. As a result of this internal dynamic, an utterance becomes an event in a discursive sequence.

We can illustrate the above model using examples from three different moments of the research discourse. The first is an article published in the local edition of *GW* on 25 May 2015, i.e. after the amendment to the law was passed but around three months before the decree and its entry into force. As we have seen this was a time dominated by health concerns. Power and economy issues are strong, but slightly less sound, and definitely much less is being said about taste. The article entitled “We have an obesity plague” is a good example of health dominated discourse. The text cites a Food and Nutrition Institute report on obesity and overweight among children in Poland and features a number of utterances by an expert—a medical doctor working at a university and specialising in nutrition and obesity prevention. The narrative is couched in the idea of an essentially authoritarian-instrumental policy, where diet is a means for attaining a higher goal (health), rules are formed and put into place on a top-down basis and through legal obligation, and food is a disciplinary tool (Andersen et al. 2017).

This report, precisely the data specifying the percentage of obese and overweight children, provide the common ground. In this and many other articles, a picture of the world based on figures (percentages, trends, and also absolute numbers) creates an unquestioned level of discourse, a self-evident state of affairs. The picture sketched by these data contains topics that can be developed, going beyond the status quo and creating possible worlds. In the common ground we therefore have the statements of CG1 (first level of common ground): “According to the report, over 22 percent of pupils of primary schools and middle schools in Poland have excessive body weight” (as one of the sentences opening the utterance), and CG2: “Too high a body mass leads to heart attacks, strokes, type 2 diabetes and hypertension” (in one of the last paragraphs). Each of these utterances is embedded in an expert, scientific discourse, which reinforces its self-evidence and objectivity. They determine what is called hard facts, but are also an appeal, an invocation, directing further utterances and themselves dynamising the utterance and the discourse, as they contain a highly negative evaluation of the state of children in Poland. Most of the article consists of a diagnosis and identification of the causes of the state of affairs from the common ground. Expert utterances are invoked in the form of quotations or paraphrased, developed and supplemented. Three types of utterance densely overlap: the expert utterance, that of the author, and the cited statistical data from research on obesity and overweight (implicitly meaning the Food and Nutrition Institute report). The possible world presented in the text is one in which excessive body mass among children has been caused by bad lifestyle habits (W1), in particular: W1a: availability of harmful food at schools, W1b: children's lifestyle inherited from their parents, based on limiting afternoon activity to television (here

the negative influence of advertising) and not going outside, W1c: unbalanced diet, deficiency of nutrients, W1d: parents' use of sweets as rewards, W1e: parents' excusing their children from participation in school sport, and W1f (less commonly): hormonal disorders and genetic diseases. Furthermore, some of these causes have their own, deeper causes, e.g. factor W1b is brought about by W2b, i.e. parents' tiredness after coming to work and their aversion to physical activity, W1c is brought about by W2, i.e. the belief that a greater body mass is evidence of a higher material status (a cared-for child is a plump child), and W1e by parents' demanding approach to the institution of the school (W2e) as well as the associated fear (W3e) that the child will get tired, sweaty and dirty. All of the utterances therefore comprise three levels. The first is the CG, sketch world, a statistics-based picture of obesity and overweight among children in Poland. This world constitutes the point of departure in the text, and the way it is constructed releases the narrative of possible worlds. The second level is diagnosis of direct causes (i.e. epistemic modality according to Rocci's model), indicating the behaviours and habits of children leading to an increased body mass. The relationship between CG and W1 comprises behavioural, physiological dependences, and the power of this relationship constitutes the authority of an expert. The third level is the W2 world, a more general diagnosis of society with attention directed towards the parents—as conscious or unconscious agents of the CG making incorrect decisions, lacking appropriate pedagogical competences (rewarding with chocolate) and dietary knowledge (qualitative malnutrition). An additional level that is not expressed outright but contained implicitly is affirmation of health and of the normal body mass that conditions it. This is the W0 world, constructed on bouletic modality and part of the CG, as incontrovertibly shared: we all want children to be healthy and to have a normal BMI.

The relationship between the CG and W2, although mediated by elements of the scientific/expert discourse of the W1, reaches a moral level and one of social criticism (Gibson and Dempsey 2015; Pike and Kelly 2014). Possible world W2 is an ordered, rational system in which one can point to responsible subjects, agents and original causes. Referring to Peter Jackson and Jonathan Everts's (2010) model of food anxieties, the W2 world is part of cognitive framing involving identification of the sources of threat. It is also a moment that makes it possible to prevent threat: by eliminating this source or removing it from the field of its action. The utterance analysed here therefore makes it possible to achieve the next step, i.e. to generate the following possible world using deontico-practical modality—but on condition that worlds W1 and W2 become the common ground of the developing discourse. If the participants in the discourse agree on the general and specific causes of childhood obesity, it will be possible to suggest ways of combating it. The above sequence from common ground to possible world shows how the authority of expert discourse can be used to validate managing individual food practices, and—which is a case here—limiting family's agency and parents capability of promoting healthy lifestyles.

The article "The government did not expect such a rebellion from proprietors of school shops" published in *Fakt* on 30 September, a month after the regulation came into force, illustrates the relative frequency of politics and power topics in different context. The common ground of this article and others from this period is entirely different from the common ground applying before introduction of the regulation—analysed above. It contains the following states of affairs: CG1—the laws are restrictive and encompass many of the most

popular snacks (crisps, sweets, sweetened drinks, yeast buns—*drożdżówki*, similar to Danish pastries), but also sandwiches, *zapienkanki*—toasted cheese baguettes, and hamburgers), so the turnover of school tuck shops fell even by 70%, CG2—the problem of bad eating has not been solved, because pupils get their snacks outside of school. From this reservoir of semantic resources, the modality-based realities and causes of this, negatively valorised, state of affairs are developed in turn: W1a: the way the law was introduced was too fast, and business owners did not have time to prepare themselves for the changes, W1b: the laws curb the right to trading in food authorised in the European Union. The next modality level of the W2 concerns the intentions of business owners (participant internal dynamic modality), who will not give up and will go to the European Commission to demand justice. The new common ground allowed the discourse to be shifted to a completely different area than previous one—that of free trade, the scope of the authorities' power and the way it is exercised. The implemented regulations acquired significance as a kind of oppressive intervention, impinging on the right to self-determination. The business owners' opposition here is a rebellion, a bottom-up and violent reaction to the controlling actions of the government. It is no accident that the higher authority and ally here is the European Commission and European Union, which for the then liberal-centrist Civic Platform government were a significant node in the network of legitimisation of the political-legal order. In the process of articulating meanings, a "logic of equivalence" (finding allies) is applied, encompassing both business owners as the recipients of regulations and EU institutions as a guarantor and higher authority for economic freedoms and individual rights to self-determination. A key dual antagonism is played out between the subjectivity of parents, families and local communities on the one side, and state institutions, official structures, doctors, and public health experts on the other. Important for the former are individual freedom as well as consumer choice freedom, while what count for the latter are the values of health, civilisational development, and learning policies based on the experiences of other countries.

The healthism and expert discourse constituting the new regulations was a threat to the previous social formation and identities of school tuck shops and their customers. Prior to this, healthy eating policies had been located on the borders of public order: they had been either one-off special initiatives, e.g. picnics and competitions, or privatised and enclosed within the institution of the family or the sphere of personal nutrition choices. The new policy provoked dislocation and the associated tension in the identity structure. A strong narrative emerged that challenged the status of school tuck shops as an area of free-market micro-enterprise, with the interests of the owners as well as customers at heart. The nodal points of this previous formation were located in the sphere of freedom and self-fulfilment. The hegemonic formation of the new school meals policy made powerful connections around values of healthism, such as children's well-being, normal psychophysical development, dietary-based preventive measures etc. Yet this axiological monolith was challenged in the research period, first by the appearance of the aforementioned alternative nodes, and second by pointing to the incoherent, inapt and ineffective characteristics of the new regulations. As the expert monolith was weakened, it became possible to express an alternative common ground, e.g. one based on everyday experience. "They're making up nonsense. If the children eat breakfast, second breakfast, lunch, tea and supper, and get some exercise, no one will be fat" (school cook, in GW, 10.09.2015).

We can observe similar processes of challenges to the hegemonic position of the new regulations in the utterance published on 15 October 2015 in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Lublin local edition). This begins with the claim (CG1) that children do not like the new food. It is not sweet and not salty, and the children miss sandwiches on white bread, yeast buns and chocolate bars in the shops (CG2). In response, the children are planning a protest for 16 October (World Food Day) involving demonstratively eating sweet buns at school. The reference to the category of taste shows its particular power as a common ground. The argument about food not tasting good is not only treated as incontestable and not requiring justification, but also gives the discourse extra dynamism. The threat of hunger (W1) as a consequence of the new rules gives meaning and legitimises the sense of the seemingly dysfunctional, dangerous or ridiculous practices of pupils and parents such as buying food in nearby shops before classes or in breaks, smuggling in food, eating unhealthy snacks rather than healthy but tasteless school lunches. Closure of tuck shops as a result of the limited range in stock and lack of demand for healthy eating limits access to food: “If they close the shop down too, we won’t have any food at all.” Another consequence of the reform is the increased costs of lunches in school canteens (W2), which affects the poorest families, also restricting their access to food. As a result of the articulations between possible worlds, the concern about hunger and malnutrition, dimly hypothetical, but arranging meanings very well, was expressed using the sensory, present experience of taste.

Analogously to the previous example, the logic of equivalence is manifested by references to the individual’s right to self-determination. The utterance of one participant in the protest points to the incoherence between the values declared by the educational institutions (W3) and the oppressive nature of the reform: “it’s absurd that in a school, a place that ought to teach independence and sensible decision making, you can’t eat what you want to.” The article in question gives a negative verdict on the reform, expressed in the utterances of various subjects, from pupils to the Lublin regional deputy education commissioner.

The cited articles depict three different hegemonising narratives, which appear one by one in the stages of the discourse identified earlier. These do not cover all types of narrative, but are typical of specific moments of differentiation of the discourse. Each stems from a different common ground, a different base of judgements of the status quo, often based on figures, expert reports or observable, indisputable experience: obesity among children is growing; school tuck shops are going bust; pupils do not want to eat tasteless food. The varying reservoirs of meanings contained in these common grounds allow us to explain different, antagonistic discourse. These make use of the specific possible worlds emerging from the common grounds they adopt, and containing scenarios, dystopias, diagnoses, threats, objectives and solutions. Increasing obesity among Poles, almost unrivalled in dictating the discourse at the beginning of the research period, developed towards expert diagnosis, based upon health values. The implemented solution transferred responsibility and nutrition decisions from consumers to state institutions. The emergence of new subjective positions intensified at the moment when the new regulations came into force, i.e. September 2015, a point characterised in the quantitative analysis by a rapid increase of taste category and then undermining the hegemony of health topic. Apart from the subjects mentioned in the examples, discursive logics encompassed the Lewiatan employers’

organisation, the Polish Dental Society, the Ministry of National Education, and individual politicians. Associations and dissociations were established, and the initial unanimity coherent with the rationale of the regulations gave way to diversified polyphony. In the logic of equivalence, a wide stream of criticism of the policy emerges.

The logic of equivalence (identifying allies) is constantly accompanied by the logic of difference (identifying enemies). The antagonism between the addressees of the regulation and its authors/proponents, at first distinct, with time is blurred owing to the weakening voice of the authorities. The pro-reform subject positions are subject to the logic of difference, for example during the so-called *drożdżówka* battle, or bun fight, led by Education Minister Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, during which promises were made to moderate the decree. The newly elected (25 October 2015) government does not identify politically with its predecessors' decisions and stifles the monolithic expert-medical discourse. The antagonism is diminishing. In November 2015, the school meal reform loses press interest.

Cultural Reservoirs of Meanings as the Fuel of Change

The hegemonising power of possible worlds built on common grounds results from their location in archetypes and already articulated cultural meanings. The semantic nodes of possible worlds are a repetition of the historical experiences recorded in memory and culture. This repetition enables references to things that are relatively stable in the culture, i.e. myths and the elementary semantic structures of the collective identity. Examples of such reinforcement through ritual repetitions can be found in publications critical of the reform, which appeared mostly after it came into force. One such node is highlighting the incompetence of government, which is an unaccepted, external power (the "pen pushers" from an SE column from 29.08.2015) with no grasp of everyday realities. The law it has introduced is incongruous with the rules of reality, generating dual normative structures: legal and customary, e.g. the grey market. This model is a direct reference to the historical experience of the foreign power which is inherent in the collective identity and national myths in Poland. With it also comes affirmation of approaches of opposition: emigration to the private realm (e.g. bringing salt to school in a child's rucksack) or open disobedience, expressed by grassroots rebellion (the topics of organised resistance appeared as early as 9 September). This is accompanied by a specific discursive strategy of building distance and challenging the official expert hegemony, based upon the grotesque, absurdities and black humour. The semantic nodes of myths are also invoked using significant, almost ritual props, such as candles burned outside the school tuck shop (GW 9.09.2015, GW 18.09.2015).

Another free resource, a floating signifier which was very quickly articulated in the anti-reform worlds, was hunger and quantitative malnutrition. Previously in Poland, nutrition interventions had focused on providing access to food per se. Practices of providing milk to children in schools and subsidising lunches for the poorest have been present for decades, intrinsic in the cultural memory as a means of combating hunger and assuring satiety. Universal school nutrition education targeted at changing dietary structure is something new, at times contradictory to the previous narratives. Therefore, after adoption of

the new regulations, which ultimately restrict access to food, the experience of hunger is invoked. “A lanky lad with 10 hours’ PE a week won’t be harmed by a chocolate bar—it will give him energy” (GW 08.04.2015). “Even healthy food advocates are warning: children are being starved at schools” (GW Katowice 18.09.2015). “At my school almost a third of pupils have their lunches paid by the social welfare centre. Our lunch is sometimes the only hot meal they get. It’s important to feed children healthily. But the most important thing is to feed them at all” (GW 18.09.2015). Increasingly often, the new regulations are presented as ridiculous, based on a false diagnosis, incorporated into an antagonistic dual model and easily devalued: “The youngsters from the primary school have lunches at school, but middle-school pupils—who spend up to eight hours there—will not sate their hunger with mineral water or low-fat bread. It’s a shame that the officials didn’t think of this” (*Fakt* 24.09.2015). The memory of food shortages, which remains alive and a feature of collective identity narratives, very quickly undermines the hegemony of the new values of healthy eating.

The final example of dynamising the discourse through articulation of floating signifiers is invoking of school celebration traditions and the community’s food culture. The hegemony of health values undermines the domination of food traditions, understood here as nodes of meanings. One of these is the symbolism of selected dishes regarded as the quintessence of the literal and symbolic taste of the community. Broth, pierogi, pancakes, and fried cutlets are the most homely, nostalgia-filled elements of the local cuisine. A large helping of salt or sugar is what constitutes them as an (erstwhile) distinguishing feature of delicacies, without which, as it were, they lose their emotional and sentimental meaning. The image of wholegrain pasta with unsalted broth (RP 16.09.2015, GW 17.09.2015) is a radical contradiction of meaning and taste: the very pleasure of eating. Broth without salt is not broth, and a birthday without sweets is no longer a celebration (GW 10.09.2015). One journalist quotes a well-known Krakow paediatrician, a specialist in child nutrition—“Childhood must smell of chocolate, that’s more important than having teeth as beautiful as dentures” (Olga Szpunar on Mikołaj Spodaryk, GW 10.09.2014). Sugar (sweetness) and salt (saltiness) are positive and semantically differentiating aspects of food. Without them, many dishes lose the traditional status of “dominant” in the local food culture, and become barren in taste and cultural terms. These empty spaces can be filled by positive elements such as new dishes, tastes, values and ingredients that are attractive in cultural and sensory terms with the ability to articulate meanings. The healthist discourse of school meal reforms has not been able to articulate the meanings of local, national culinary culture in a positive way, implicitly standing in opposition to tradition. In the analysed text corpus—as well as in the later stages of the reform—there is a lack of references to locality, seasonality, unique tastes (e.g. traditional herbal seasoning, pickling etc.), and local food economies, which could become nodes, enabling formation of semantic alliances around the reform and generation of a more inclusive discourse—as was the case, for example, in public procurement policy and school meal reform in Italy (*Morgan and Sonnino 2007*). In the new, disciplining policy and in the analysed discourse, however, there were few such elements. Meanwhile, as shown in possible worlds analysis, the health expert discourse managed to antagonise dieticians and lawmakers with addressees of the reform: parents, school cooks, and shop owners pictured as unqualified and unable to be agents of healthy diet change.

Conclusion

The introduction of the new nutrition policy in Poland was based on a strong healthist-expert hegemony. The discursive process triggered by the legal changes ultimately resulted in this hegemony being challenged, with new subjective positions emerging and their identities articulated, while cultural floating signifiers were articulated into new semantic nodes. These connected meanings, expressed in the structures of common grounds and possible worlds, reached far beyond the sphere of mere nutrition culture. All the parties in the antagonism could attest to the Minister of Health's assertion that "this is not about buns only," as the articulated meanings were about imponderables: identities (e.g. childhood), social institutions (family vs school), political statuses (consumption choice vs biocitizenship) or social change (civilisational development modelled on the West vs cultural continuity and local endogenous processes). Initiating new meanings accompanied the change in position, especially release from the status of objects of health policy and reinforcing statuses assuming agency, i.e. consumer or citizen.

Although the dynamic of the discourse is a continuous process, content analysis helped to identify the characteristics of several stages of the change: the dominance of health discourse, changing power relations, importance of economic aspects, finally the triggering role of taste and satiety references. This general outline of the whole process has been fulfilled with qualitative case analysis. The incrementation of common grounds which resulted in switching the starting point of discussion from public health issues to efficiency and validity of legal measures. In the various phases, myths and profound cultural structures of meanings came to the fore, which are expressed, for example, by invoking the indisputable experience of taste, then symbolic power of hunger, and the engaging ideas of freedom and individual rights.

The diagnosis resulting from the analysis points to two elements missing in the reform, which directly contributed to its critical reception. First, the perspective of the subjects of the reform was not taken into consideration in its formation, i.e. when defining its objectives and methods. The authors of the anti-junk-food law ignored the entire nutritional context of consumption and the key actors of the school nutrition system, e.g. the healthy food market, owners of school tuck shops and the related networks, parents of pupils and the people who prepare school lunches. On the contrary, while implementing the reform, the demarcation line between knowledgeable health experts and incompetent consumers has been drawn. The second way in which the intervention might have been more effective is by incorporating into the legitimisations of the reform positive elements of the local culinary culture: highlighting the tastes, traditions, as well as daily and ceremonial practices that could become non-health articulating meanings. Instead of this, the reform was mostly framed as an exclusionary register. This, I suspect, locked it into an antagonistic network of meanings and initiated a logic of equivalence between many subjective positions: from politicians and employers' associations to school heads, shop franchise holders, school cooks, parents and the students themselves.

At the methodological level, the above study demonstrated how quantitative code-based content analysis can be useful in discourse analysis. It was used as a starting point for qualitative analysis, but also a foundation for asking further questions, interrogating the relations

between categories, and proceeding with more in-depth analysis: What kind of power and agency are employed within particular time periods? How do these power entities and processes relate to economic and health arguments? Do the ideological backgrounds of newspapers matter in the discourse dynamics? And would studying other textual resources, in particular legal documents, statements from NGOs, business representatives, and finally primary data—interviews, ethnographic observations, visual materials—would shine further light on the analysed process. Such an analysis would provide greater depth to the conclusions formed here and paint a more nuanced picture of the process. The results obtained in this study can also be applied to analogous discursive processes accompanying nutrition reforms in other countries.

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