COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND MEAT CONSUMPTION: A TRADITIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF MEAT AND THE NEW MATERIALISMS FOR PLANETARY HEALTH

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in HEALTH at BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

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Submitted on Tuesday 31st of August 2021

Abstract

Global meat consumption is increasing, presenting threats to the health of populations and fragility of natural ecosystems, establishing unsustainable consumption as a challenge to planetary health. A call to action is complicated by the universal and cultural dominance of meat consumption, misaligning the issue with traditional public health and health promotion approaches. A need was identified to explore cultural meanings of meat in sustainable diets, and the influence of culture on meat consumption, food security and sustainability.

A traditional ethnography was conducted, in which I became a member of the Birmingham Foodie Community; a network of food activists in the regional West Midlands, using activism as a method of participant-led elicitation of cultural meanings of meat. A year-long period of overt participatory fieldwork generated a large multimedia dataset, explored using a bespoke post-anthropocentric analytical process developed from theoretical principles of New Materialist Social Inquiry, centring social-assemblages around meat and other foods.

Resultant themes identified diverse cultural meanings of meat in the Birmingham Foodie Community, beyond that of a simple consumable product. The role of food in the development, maintenance, transition and extinction of dietary practices, urban food systems, local communities and microcultures determined meat, as a scarce but demanded resource, was a material of local micropolitics. Meat was a material which connected local activist-led solutions to global health and environmental challenges, through which activists negotiated community development activity for food security and sustainability.

The diverse cultural meanings of meat present complications to policy development, and opportunities to innovate new planetary health initiatives from impactful local actions. The development of a novel post-anthropocentric analytical framework may have uses in the exploration of meanings of other practices relevant to health in the Anthropocene. Use of complex social theorisations to make sense of culture for planetary health, may be reconsidered in favour of grounded approaches which value participant worldviews. The meanings of meat as a material of community and culture pose opportunities and challenges to the development of sustainable diets to support planetary health.

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List of figures and images

Glossary of activist terms

Community café

A reimagined soup kitchen, providing customers with a meal, usually three courses, on a PWYW basis

Dining in Dignity

A phrase referring to the wider social value of food and eating, upholding dignity as a core Community value to guide activism.

Dregs

A derogatory term describing a custom-base for a Community food service which lacked socioeconomic diversity.

Everyone is Welcome

A codified policy of most activist organisations compelling them to provide food and service to all people regardless of means.

Food market

A reimagined food bank, requiring no referral and imposing no usage limits. Provides customers with mostly fresh produce.

Food service

An umbrella term describing all customer-facing activist events.

FoodStore

A large warehouse where people could take as much food as they wanted on a PWYW basis, without referral. A social supermarket, typically open five days a week.

House Shop

A food market held in an activist's personal home and garden.

Interception

A verb describing the collection of donated food from suppliers.

Keeping back

A verb describing the practice of activists retaining food for other activists or customers who could not attend a food service.

Pay What You Want

An alternative economic model used by organisations. People purchased food in whatever form and value of payment they wished, including non-monetary forms. Acronymised to PWYW.

Shoppers

A regular customer at a food market, FoodStore or house shop.

Zero-waste principle

An unspoken rule in the Community which prohibited wasting material, obligating activists to use resources efficiently.

This list is non-exhaustive. Other activist terms are described throughout the thesis.

Acknowledgments

"The time has come!" the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes, and ships, and sealing-wax,
Of cabbages, and kings.
And why the sea is boiling hot,
And whether pigs have wings."

Lewis Carroll, in *Through the Looking Glass* (1871)

As with everything else, this thesis is dedicated to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Statements of recognition

Introduction

Global meat consumption is increasing exponentially (Ritchie & Roser, 2017). Although meat-free and low-meat diets are gaining popularity in developed nations, the 'nutrition transition' sees consumption increase in developing nations, with economic development and industrialisation closely aligned with replication of unsustainable Western dietary patterns (Popkin, 2017). This presents a growing threat to human health through increasing prevalence of non-communicable conditions and transmission of zoonotic disease (Salter, 2018). It also challenges sustainability of natural ecosystems, through deforestation for animal agriculture and production of anthropogenic greenhouse gases (Godfray, et al., 2018). Meat consumption contributes to the Anthropocene: a period of history in which environmental degradation has pushed the earth beyond potential for natural regeneration. Recognising interdependence of human health and environmental sustainability, this thesis views excessive meat consumption as a threat to planetary health, incompatible with health needs, climate change mitigation, and predicted population growth.

As a subject of investigation for planetary health, public health and health promotion, meat consumption does not 'behave' like other threats to wellbeing. It is ubiquitous, affecting people and populations everywhere, and dominant, commanding primary dietary norms of most communities and societies. Recognising incongruence with traditional conceptions of health and disease, a need was identified to explore meat consumption from non-traditional perspectives. Based on emerging scholarly traditions of planetary health towards the de-privileging of human agency, this thesis explores cultural meanings of meat consumption through a neo-materialist lens that sought to identify interdependencies between food and social experiences which surround it. This developed into a traditional ethnography, working with food activists in the West Midlands over a calendar year to capture how meat and other foods were used to address food insecurity, support community development, challenge social injustices and ultimately bring about sustainable consumption.

The conduct and findings of the study, in ethnographic tradition, are presented as thick-description of my experience of living and working with the Birmingham Foodie Community. This thesis presents the story of this community, and how the social experience of culture was facilitated by the physical experience of meat and other foods.

Thesis guidance

Use of terms

The term 'thesis' is used throughout this text to refer to the document in its entirety, and the collective sum of arguments it presents. The term 'study' is used to refer to the specific research practices which resulted in the production of the thesis, including research design, data collection and the analytical process. The term 'fieldwork' refers to the immersive traditional ethnographic exercise undertaken from January to December 2017, and the physical interactions I experienced with the Birmingham Foodie Community. The term 'ethnography' describes traditions of ethnographic practices, the fieldwork phases of this thesis, and the immersion in the Community during the fieldwork phase. The term 'Community', where it is written with a capital 'C' to denote a proper noun, is used to describe the Birmingham Foodie Community. The common noun 'community', where it is written a lowercase 'c' is used to denote wider meanings of the term.

Use of pseudonyms

All proper nouns used throughout this text, related only to the wider study without public-facing context, are pseudonyms. All natural persons, organised groups, corporate entities, and geographic locations are presented with a false name to protect the identities of those involved in the study. The exceptions to this are the identification of the city of Birmingham, and the regional West Midlands, to provide geographic context.

Publications

The production of the thesis between 2016 and 2021 presented numerous opportunities for me to engage in wider scholarship and present this work for external scrutiny, through conference oral presentations, written presentations, and published journal articles. A list of these publications is presented at the end of this document. Some of these published works are referenced throughout the thesis.

Defining 'meat'

This thesis acknowledges the abstract conception of 'meat', which has no universal, objective, scientific or cultural definition. The thesis interprets 'meat' by the definition provided for the seminal quantification of global meat consumption provided by Ritchie and Roser (2017), who conceptualise meat as being primarily:

- Protein from bovine sources (including but not limited to beef, ox, buffalo, veal).
- Protein from porcine sources (including but not limited to pork, bacon, sausages).
- Protein from ovine/caprine sources (including but not limited to lamb, goat, mutton).
- Protein from equine/cervine sources (including but not limited to horse, venison).
- Protein from game and wild animals (including but not limited to boar, deer, pigeon).
- Protein from poultry sources (including but not limited to chicken, duck, turkey).
- Protein from exotic animal sources (including imported wild animal protein).

And to a lesser extent, meat is conceptualised as:

- Protein from rabbits and rodents.
- Protein from insects and land snails.

The thesis does not recognise the word 'meat' to include the following organic matter:

- Fish, including caviar and ambergris.
- Eggs from any species.
- Milk or dairy products from any species.
- Honey, beeswax, royal jelly, or any other product made by insects.

Finally, the thesis recognises estimated and reported quantifications of meat vary in the forms of meat included to calculate consumption, and notes some calculations include animal products which are safe for human consumption but are primarily used for non-nutritive purposes (i.e., for use in cosmetics, energy production, utilities). Global quantifications of meat consumption are recognised as being imperfect and inexact.

Thesis structure

The review chapter presents the positioning of the thesis from topical, conceptual, theoretical, and methodological perspectives. It positions meat consumption as a threat to human health and environmental sustainability, aligning a call for reduced meat consumption as a matter of planetary health. Recognising the material nature of meat and its assumed material functions, the thesis adopts New Materialist Social Inquiry as the theoretical and analytical framework for the study. Acknowledging the physical/social interactions which must be observed to investigate materialisms, the review chapter identifies and concludes a traditional ethnography is the most appropriate methodology for the thesis.

The method chapter presents design of the ethnography which generated data and analytical outputs for the thesis. Study design and approval are discussed with respect to an informal scoping exercise. It describes a year of immersive ethnographic fieldwork with an informal network of food activists in Birmingham, presented through a month-by-month 'thick description' of my experience in the 'Birmingham Foodie Community'. Photographs are provided to further illustrate ethnographic immersion and give context to the use of physical material in the analytical process.

The results chapter presents a bespoke analytical process which resulted in production of themes as analytical outputs, using New Materialist Social Inquiry to deprivilege human agency. The outputs are illustrated across thirty-two themes, summarised into four meta-themes, describing the social functions of meat as a material of sustainable diets, systems, communities, and cultures. Illustrations are presented through verbal quotes, excerpts from field notes, and visual photographs to highlight the materialist analysis and how the cultural meanings of meat are assumed to have been produced by interactions between the social and physical worlds. Commentary is provided as reflection on the thick description approach to further convey ethnographic insight following a year in the Community, concluding the materialisms of meat are complex and diverse.

The discussion chapter makes sense of cultural meanings of meat consumption by reflecting on the thirty-two themes through the Circuit of Culture, finding meanings of meat as cultural production, identity, consumption, regulation and representation. The study and wider thesis are evaluated, with a reflective account on the ethnographic fieldwork and deeper critical insights on the positioning of the thesis. The chapter then uses the interpretations to inform thoughts about community, culture, and meat consumption in planetary health, before making recommendations for future activist, policy, research, and scholarly practice. The thesis conclusion presents an isolation of the original contributions of the thesis to knowledge.

Chapter 1: Review

This chapter presents extant literature and theory concerning cultural meanings of meat consumption and their relevance to planetary health and sustainable development, identifying gaps in the knowledge base. It addresses the central assumptions of the thesis, particularly concerning deprivileging of human agency, and the material nature of health. The review presents literature from various scholarly disciplines, establishing the thesis as an interdisciplinary study employing theorisations and practices from a range of traditions, to inform practice and policy in a planetary health domain. The thesis makes distinction between topical, conceptual, theoretical, and methodological positionings, to identify an appropriate intersection which defines the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis, and the gap in knowledge it seeks to address. This chapter concludes that the complex material nature of sustainable consumption demands traditional ethnographic study.

1.1 Topical positioning

This section explores meat consumption as a threat to human health, sustainability of natural ecosystems, and its characterisation as a multidimensional threat to wellbeing. It frames excessive meat consumption as an anthropogenic challenge, inextricably linked with world cultures, economies, and political systems. It positions the orientation of this thesis around a need for reduced meat consumption, rather than total abstention. This section presents excessive meat consumption as a threat to the wellbeing of all people which, though organic in material nature, is sociocultural in its construction, maintenance, and exacerbation.

1.1.1 Meat and consumption

This sub-section presents evolving literature which finds meat consumption is increasing globally. It notes that, whilst disparities exist between nations, regions and cultures, ubiquitous exponential increases in meat consumption worldwide are being observed, largely attributable to economic development via the phenomenon of the nutrition transition.

Meat consumption is increasing globally. Though rates of increasing consumption differ greatly between nations, regions and world cultures, meat consumption continues to increase exponentially in alignment with economic development and a growing global population (Godfray, et al., 2018). This results in increasing risks to human health and environmental sustainability (Gonzalez, et al., 2020).

Calculating meat consumption is methodologically challenging. Though self-reported dietary recall may be an optimal method of dietary assessment in some developed nations, few countries have public health surveillance and informatics systems necessary for collecting population-level data of this quality (Willett, 2012). Most widely accepted estimates of national, regional, and global meat consumption are estimated from Food Balance Sheets, generated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (Thar, et al., 2020). Food Balance Sheets are based on quantification of national agricultural production in relation to national food imports and exports (FAO, 2001). After quantifying the amount of food wasted in a national food system, consumption trends are then derived from estimations of the availability of foods in a population. Although this method of estimating consumption does not assess or aggregate individual consumption or dietary behaviour, it ensures consumption estimates are standardised within and between nations. National agricultural outputs and food trade figures are widely available for every nation, thus ensuring estimated consumption can be compared between nations, and aggregated to identify global trends in food consumption (FAO, 2011), and are generally deemed a reliable means of making sense of population-level dietary trends (Thar, et al., 2020). Using this method of estimating global meat consumption, it is suggested total global intake has been subject to sustained increases since the middle of the 20th Century through to the present (Basu, 2015), with some systematic reviews of consumption suggesting up to 500% increases in global meat consumption over the last half century (Katare, et al., 2020). Although the exact details are unclear, there is universal consensus in the literature across disciplines that meat consumption is increasing (Gonzalez, et al., 2020).

Regarding the quantification of this for human consumption, estimates vary according to the methodologies employed to interpret the Food Balance Sheets, complicated by meat products rarely being produced, consumed, and disposed of in single nations: the spatial

dynamics and logistics of global meat trade networks make objective quantification of average global consumption near-impossible (Chung, et al., 2020). This thesis adopts a standard working quantification as per the methodology employed by Ritchie and Roser (2017), which used the Food Balance Sheets to conclude average global meat consumption was approximately 43 kilograms per person, per year in 2014. This equates to approximately 827 grams per person per week, or 118 grams per day. Ritchie and Roser (2017) note this global average is vastly disproportionate to average consumption in specific nations and regions, suggesting diverse inequalities in food security. Their work observes whilst the average annual meat consumption in European and North American populations averages 80 kilograms per person, per year, this contrasts with less than 4 kilograms per person, per year in India. They also observed stark differences between nations within continents, noting whilst many African nations averaged 10 kilograms of meat per person, per year, consumption in South Africa was closer to European trends at 65 kilograms. These differences were clearly related to economic development, with highest-income nations having average meat consumption up to 40 times that of lowest-income nations. Although 2014 is the last year with reliable global data, the national trends in the Food Balance Sheets for 2017 observe that the nations with the three highest annual average personal meat consumptions are Hong Kong (137 kilograms), the United Sates (124 kilograms) and Australia (121 kilograms), whilst the three lowest are India (3.7 kilograms), Bangladesh (4.1 kilograms) and Ethiopia (5.4 kilograms). Although these disparities might seem more obvious, when national estimates of meat consumption are aggregated in groupings of nations by economic development, it can be observed that consumption has somewhat stabilised in high-income and low-income nations (Godfray, et al., 2018). Meat consumption in middle-income nations, however, continues to rise dramatically. It appears that as the economies of middle-income nations, such as China, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia, develop, so too does meat consumption increase. This is not unexpected. A strong connection between dietary intake and wealth was recognised in 1941 through the study of wheat consumption, following an international dietary assessment exercise (Bennett, 1941). This relationship, historically referred to as 'Bennett's law', sees population dietary trends shift as a nation becomes wealthier: diets initially characterised by staple foods high in starches transition to diets with increasing quantities of meat, dairy products, and refined grains (Bennett, 1941; Valin, et al., 2014). This relationship continues to be influential in the modern food system, seemingly strengthening over time as global wealth becomes polarised (Gouel & Guimbard, 2019). The connection between wealth and meat consumption is better understood in contemporary dietary analysis as the 'nutrition transition' (Popkin, 1993) a modern reconceptualisation of Bennett's law which suggests that, as the economies of middle-income and industrialising nations 'catch up' with those of high-income countries, so too does food consumption and the associated epidemiological trends (Popkin, 1998). Fukase and

Martin (2020) characterise this as a global economic convergence, suggesting whilst developed nations have stabilised their economies and dietary cultures, the economic and dietary character of industrialising nations is fast converging to a single point of common consumption. Exponential increases in meat consumption may be considered the result of rapid westernisation and industrialisation of developing nations. Milford (2019) further identified a range of drivers of meat consumption which contribute to increases in some geopolitical regions, including growth of the Islamic religion, greater female economic participation, labour democratisation, and falling prices of meat due to technological advances. That study noted the diversity of causal factors of excessive meat consumption make policy development in this area conceptually challenging, as meat consumption is globally ubiquitous, but internationally diverse.

By combining the basic assumptions of Bennet's law with the modern theoretical reasoning of the nutrition transition, it can be expected that, without intervention, global meat consumption will continue to rise. Quantified predictions of future increases are inconsistent, though estimates range from a 29% to 35% increase by 2050 (FAO, 2018), to a 100% increase between 2005 and 2050 (Tilman, et al., 2011). Though different food system modelling techniques result in widely differing predictions of future meat consumption, there is strong consensus in the food science, agriculture, and global health literature that, without intervention, meat consumption will continue to rise exponentially throughout the 21st Century as global economies and cultures converge towards a standard model of Westernisation (Mathjis, 2015). The replication of developed economies and the diets of developed nations appears to be resulting in the replication of Western epidemiological trends and environmental destruction.

1.1.2 Meat and health

This sub-section positions excessive meat consumption as partially responsible for growth of some noncommunicable diseases, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and preventable cancers. It considers emergent literature concerned with the relationship between meat consumption and increasing zoonotic disease transmissions.

Before exploring the impact of increasing meat consumption on human health, it is first useful to recognise wide-ranging nutritional values and functions of meat as an element of a moderated, balanced diet. Meat is a critical source of quality dietary proteins and is the primary protein source for the majority of the global population (Salter, 2018). Though it is now widely accepted a well-planned meat-free diet can provide all essential nutrients (Appleby & Key, 2016) throughout the life course (Norris & Messina, 2020), the bioavailability of animal-sourced proteins is considered to be superior to that of plant-sourced proteins (Barre, et al., 2018). Meat is a significant and primary source of a range of micronutrients (Bohrer, 2017), not limited to essential vitamins (Wyness, 2016), iron (Pereira & Vincente, 2013), omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (De Smet & Vossen, 2016) and zinc and other trace minerals (Hunt, 2003). Deficiencies of these micronutrients are uncommon in high-income nations (Bruins, et al., 2018), but they are prevalent in low-income nations, resulting in wide-ranging health consequences of malnutrition (Mantadakis, et al., 2020; Siddiqui, et al., 2020). In many developing nations, there is limited access to nutrient-dense alternatives to meat (Dror & Allen, 2011), leading to the World Health Organisation to recognise significant reductions in meat consumption in developing nations cannot currently be achieved without presenting severe risk to child and maternal health (World Health Organisation, 2014). The threat of excessive meat consumption is one of quantity, not presence. In this regard, excessive meat consumption has wide-ranging impacts on human health. Meat consumption is a primary determinant of chronic disease risk (Salter, 2018) and consumption trends are broadly aligned with epidemiological patterns of many prevalent diseases (Richi, et al., 2015). Though diverse in the severity and form of the diseases associated with excessive meat consumption, there is broad consensus in the epidemiological literature that the greater a population's meat consumption, the greater the burden of nutrition-related disease.

Meat and cancer

There is strong evidence for a detrimental relationship between excessive meat consumption and cancer (Ferguson, 2010), particularly between red meat and colorectal cancer (Alexander, et al., 2015; Aykan, 2015). A 2016 critical review of published meta-analyses of associations between meat consumption and cancer risk concluded the exposure-outcome link is complex

but indisputable, affecting a range of cancers prevalent in populations in high-income nations (Lippi, et al., 2016). This was further supported in 2021 by a review of the global burden of red and processed meats on cancer which found positive associations between cancer risk attributable to meat consumption and socio-demographic indices (Mattiuzzi & Lippi, 2021). Further statistically significant associations between increased red meat consumption and cancer risk are seen with cancer of the breast (Farvid, et al., 2015; Lo, et al., 2020), lung (Yang, et al., 2012; Gnagnarella, et al., 2018), gastrointestinal tract (Kim, et al., 2019; Ferro, et al., 2020) and kidneys (Roasto, et al., 2018; Tahbaz, et al., 2018). Most of the literature base concerning meat consumption and disease burden relates to excessive consumption of red and processed meats (Yip, et al., 2018), though some cancers, notably those of the oral cavity, are related to excessive consumption of white meat (Xu, et al., 2014). Conversely, another meta-analysis found increased white meat consumption was associated with reduction in relative risk of oesophageal cancer (Zhu, et al., 2014). This report found negative associations between white meat consumption and cancer risk are likely explainable by the type of meats being consumed. Decreased intake of bovine meat is associated with an increase in consumption of poultry meat, correlating increased white meat consumption with lower cancer risk through reduction of red meat consumption (Lippi, et al., 2016). Excessive white meat consumption does not decrease cancer risk, but rather, is simply less carcinogenic than excessive red meat consumption. The International Agency for Research on Cancer supports this position, classifying processed meats as Class I carcinogens (IARC, 2015), characterising red meat as 'probably carcinogenic', to be further subject to observational epidemiological inquiry (Domingo & Nadal, 2017). Prospective cohort studies have evidenced an association between red meat consumption and a variety of other health behaviours detrimental to wellbeing, such as smoking, physical inactivity, and excessive consumption of alcohol (Gregorio, et al., 2017). These comorbidities complicate investigation of the relationship between meat consumption and cancer, though some studies have controlled for a range of unhealthy lifestyle factors and found similar results, concluding excessive meat consumption presents threats to human health regardless of lifestyle-related comorbidities (Koch, et al., 2019; Nucci, et al., 2020). Assuming there is at least some clinically significant association between meat consumption and cancer risk, the World Cancer Research Fund Cancer Prevention Recommendations (WCRF, 2018) suggest red and processed meat should be restricted to consumption of less than 350g per person, per week. This is clearly contradictory to Ritchie and Roser's estimations of a global average of 827g per person, per week (2017). This disparity between optimal intake recommendations and estimated consumption is cause for concern regarding the global desire to prevent cancer and reduce cancer-related premature mortalities.

Meat and cardiovascular disease

A relationship between meat consumption and cardiovascular disease (CVD) is also well-supported in the literature, which suggests excessive processed meat intake is associated with up to a 40% increase in relative risk of dying from CVD. A Europe-wide study examined the processed meat consumption of over 511,000 individuals from across continental Europe and found a clinically significant link between CVD-related mortality and increased processed meat consumption (Rohrmann, et al., 2013). This is due to processed meats being high in salt content (Petit, et al., 2019), related to increased blood pressure (Key, et al., 2019), increased cholesterol (Rohrmann & Linseisen, 2016) and increased risk of developing atherosclerosis (Riccardi, et al., 2021). Community trials conducted across global regions have found diets with lower processed meat intake are associated with decreased risk of hypertension and atherosclerosis (Weng, et al., 2013), suggesting processed meat presents as great, if not greater, a risk to human health than unprocessed red meat (Rohrmann & Linseisen, 2016).

Meat and other non-communicable diseases

Beyond cancer and CVD, excessive meat consumption is attributed as a causal factor of a range of other prevalent and urgent public health challenges, such as increasing rates of stroke (Kim, et al., 2017) coronary heart disease (Al-Shaar, et al., 2020), type II diabetes (Lofvenborg, et al., 2021), and all-cause mortality (Song, et al., 2016). Two major prospective cohort studies in the United States followed cohorts of 83,644 women and 37,698 men over 28 years and found of the 23,926 deaths which occurred in that period, 7.6% of female deaths and 9.3% of male deaths were preventable by reduced meat consumption (Pan, et al., 2012). If representative of the adult American population, the findings of this study can be interpreted to indicate excessive meat consumption can be considered a primary cause of premature preventable mortality in the United States. The Rotterdam Study (Chen, et al., 2020) concluded animal protein intake is positively associated with all-cause mortality, recommending significant reductions in meat consumption as a primary means of addressing many global health challenges.

Meat and zoonotic disease

Although this thesis does not focus on zoonoses, it must be recognised that animal agriculture is considered the single greatest cause of zoonotic disease transmissions, through ever-increasing human-animal interactions required to maintain and continuously grow the global animal agriculture sector (McMahon, et al., 2018). Whilst this may not have been of such prominence during the early stages of this study, the COVID-19 pandemic has renewed interest in zoonotic diseases as threats to global health (Latif & Mukaratirwa, 2020). Emerging research and scholarship in this field points not only to potential for zoonotic disease

transmission between livestock and agricultural workers (Adam-Poupart, et al., 2021), but also the increasing proximity between residential and agricultural areas as animal farming requires greater land use (Plowright, et al., 2021). Bernstein and Dutkiewicz (2021) characterise this growing concern, in light of the human suffering and loss of life caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as a challenge to public health ethics, concluding that national governments have a moral obligation to restrict or eliminate intensive animal agriculture to prevent further devesating zoonotic disease outbreaks.

Optimal meat consumption

The health risks presented by excessive meat consumption have resulted in adaption of food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs), typically published by the health agencies of national governments, to reflect the role of excessive meat consumption in development of non-communicable diseases (Herforth, et al., 2019). However, the specific quantities of meat consumption advised for optimal health are subject to frequent change (McAfee, et al., 2010) and vary massively between nations despite relative consistency in global nutritive demand (Kovacs, et al., 2021). Dietary reference values (DRVs) described in FBDGs established by the UK Government under the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (Acheson, 1991) recommended red and processed meat consumption should not exceed 980g per person, per week (Department of Health, 1991). This was revised dramatically in 1997 to reflect global recommendations set by the World Cancer Research Fund that red meat intake should be limited to 560g per person, per week (WCRF, 1997). A quarter of a century later, the recommended maximum meat consumption advised by the UK Government in 2021 is 490g per person, per week (Department of Health, 2018). This is still incongruent with the WCRF recommendation meat consumption be limited to 350g per person, per week (WCRF, 2018), which itself represents a maximal, rather than optimal, figure for healthy meat consumption.

Promoting healthy meat consumption

It has been suggested that, despite rapidly developing public consciousness and knowledge of the relationship between excessive meat consumption and disease risk (Cocking, et al., 2020), the inconsistencies between the dietary recommendations issued by national and international bodies is partially responsible for generating public confusion regarding quantification of 'healthy' meat consumption (Wilkins, 2020). This confusion may explain the disparity between popular interests in healthy diets and corresponding consumer trends, resulting in the average consumer having a broad understanding of the health risks of excessive meat consumption, but not acting upon that understanding to affect their dietary intake through reduced meat consumption (Marinova & Bogueva, 2019).

1.1.3 Meat and environment

This sub-section presents the destruction of, and threat to, natural ecosystems and resources which are directly attributed to animal agriculture as a result of the increasing global demand for animal proteins. It further considers public interests in sustainable development, and the potential for sustainable development through dietary change.

The literature base concerning the environmental impact of meat consumption is characterised by two primary contradictions; a consensus regarding the overall negative impact of animal agriculture on global ecosystems, and a contested debate regarding the magnitude of that impact and the urgency with which it must be addressed. Godfray, et al. (2018) suggest this complex contestation of otherwise relatively objective measures derives from the absence of a standardised approach to the classification and measurement of meat products, whist Aleksandrowicz, et al. (2016) points to the inconsistent use of environmental biomarkers by which destructive impact is assessed. There is consensus indicating increasing global meat production is harmful to environmental sustainability and natural ecosystems, but little consensus regarding the form that harm poses to human populations.

Meat and resource inefficiency
One widely recognised position is that meat production, in comparison to the production of plant-based foods, is simply inefficient. Poore and Nemecek (2018) conducted a data consolidation exercise, in which the various measures used to assess the environmental damage from animal agriculture were compared in percentages to the caloric contributions of animal proteins in the average diet. This study noted previous academic attempts to consolidate environmental and agricultural data had been restricted by uncoordinated global data collection efforts across disciplines. Using Life Cycle Assessment methods (Hellweg & Canals, 2014) the study translated agricultural production outputs into environmental impacts, rather than employing historical methodologies which sought to 'match' agricultural production to unrelated but observable environmental impact. Praised for the development of a reliable tool for the assessment of relationships between agriculture and the environment (Hadjikakou, et al., 2019), the outputs of this study included the first multiple indicators of the environmental impacts of animal agriculture, allowing for greater synthesis of heterogeneous data in the literature base. This enables this thesis to reliably conceptualise the environmental inefficiencies and harms of animal agriculture in terms of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, water use, and land use.

The dominant focus of the literature regarding interactions between meat and the environment concerns production of animal protein, rather than consumption, with most

literature making the basic assumption all produced animal proteins are 'consumed' in some form (Fader, et al., 2013).

Meat and greenhouse gases

Estimates of the contributions of the livestock sector to anthropogenic global greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) vary greatly. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation maintains official recognition of data published in 2013 which identified animal agriculture was responsible for 14.5% of global GHGs (FAO, 2013). This figure is arguably the most well-recognised (Gerber, et al., 2013) and follows the analytical re-examination of FAO balance sheets to refine previous estimates which had placed the figure in the 18-19% range (Steinfeld, et al., 2006). The seminal environmental impact data consolidation exercise in 2018 identified whilst animal proteins accounted for only 18% of calories in the global food system, meat production accounted for 58% of all anthropogenic GHGs contributed by the agricultural sector (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). The translation of LCA approaches to the assessment of the environmental impact of agriculture have been extended, for comparison, to plant-based alternative protein sources. Using Food Balance Sheet data from the FAO, the seminal Chatham House Report *Changing Climate, Changing Diets* (Wellesley, et al., 2015) gave an example of soybeans providing almost twice as much protein content per 100g as beef, but generating six times less carbon dioxide emissions in its production. The same paper identified that anthropogenic GHGs generated by animal agriculture are similar to those generated by the totality of global transport, with animal agriculture and transport each contributing ~14.5% of global anthropogenic GHG emissions. This has stimulated sociological interest in disparities between the public and environmentalist attention garnered by fossil-fuelled transport, but not animal agriculture (Darst & Dawson, 2019), and the impact this absence of concern has on consumer behaviour (Scott, et al., 2019).

The creation and emission of anthropogenic GHGs is a diverse activity. Whilst much of these emissions are the result of the digestive systems of animals producing methane (Hayek & Miller, 2021), other emissions are attributed to the production and logistics of the global animal agriculture industry (Wellesley, et al., 2015), including the intercontinental transportation of animal feed, temperature control of buildings used for intensive farming, management of manure, and transportation of live and slaughtered animals to consumer markets (Awuchi, et al., 2020). Efforts to develop animal feeds which simply reduce the methane-generation potential of ruminants through revised dietary strategies (Benchaar, et al., 2001) have limited promise for the development of sustainable animal agriculture. Following a review of biochemical manipulation of protozoa which might reduce gas emissions from animal feed, Davison, et al. (2020) state that as the globalisation and industrialisation of meat consumption has created a resource-dependent global food chain in which

anthropogenic GHGs are generated regardless of efforts to minimise direct-source methane (Bansback, 2014).

Meat, environment, and animal welfare

It has been suggested that intensive farming methods may be the only reliable means of reducing direct-source methane production without reducing global meat consumption (Godfray, et al., 2018), but this proposal is incompatible with increasing consumer demand for improved animal welfare standards (Swain, et al., 2018) and the animal welfare legislation which governs animal agriculture practices (Bonnet, et al., 2020). It is simply not possibly to legislate for the ecological production of meat without compromising animal welfare, human food security, or the failure of agricultural infrastructure (Parker, et al., 2018). Whilst efficiencies in the global food system can be found to provide marginal reductions in anthropogenic GHGs, the only means of bringing about significant and sustainable GHG reduction whilst meeting consumer demands, is to produce, and consume, less meat. Predictive modelling of the environmental impact of dietary change consistently shows a strong positive correlation between future meat consumption and anthropogenic GHG emissions. A recent systematic review identified consistency amongst 34 advanced statistical models in this regard, corroborating that global adoption of meat-reduced and plant-based diets would result in significant reductions in global GHG emissions (Chai, et al., 2019).

Meat and water scarcity

The secondary focus of the literature in this area regards water use and pollution. Poore and Nemecek's data consolidation exercise (2018) identified that whilst animal proteins accounted for only 18% of calories in the global food system, livestock production accounted for 57% of all water pollution generated by the agricultural sector. This again highlights the environmental inefficiencies of animal proteins, the production of which is reliant upon environmental degradation and use of scarce resources (Chowdhary, et al., 2020). The agricultural sector is the single greatest use of freshwater, using more than all other human economic and social activity combined: one third of this is used in the production of livestock (Hoekstra & Mekonnen, 2012). Of the freshwater used in livestock production, 98% is used in the production of animal feed, with the remaining 2% accounting for the freshwater used to provide animals with drinking water, and water used for cleaning in animal husbandry and slaughter (Mekonnen & Hoekstra, 2012). Although the majority of this freshwater is sourced from 'greenwater' (which comes from rain and other precipitation-related weather activity), at least 7% of the freshwater used in livestock production is 'bluewater' (which is taken directly from bodies of freshwater, such as lakes and rivers); this figure is not insignificant (Mekonnen & Hoekstra, 2012; Jalava, et al., 2014). Even minor human uses of bluewater are considered to

cause wide-ranging detrimental impacts on ecosystems, as those sources of water play important natural functions in the maintenance and development of aquatic ecosystems and wider natural biota (Ahmed & Thompson, 2019). Concern for the long-term sustainability of massive freshwater use to sustain inefficiencies in the global food system is not new. During an emergence in research interests concerning water scarcity as a public health concern in the late 1990's, Postel (1998) predicted the increasing scarcity of water as a result of food systems inefficiencies would begin to generate challenges for global food production by the year 2025. This has already been realised, with a meta-analysis in 2019 concluding current global supplies of freshwater are no longer able to meet the demand necessary to sustain the global food system (Dinar, et al., 2019).

The interactions between animal agriculture, meat consumption and water scarcity are profound beyond the remit of environmental science, with numerous scholars predicting water scarcity caused by an unsustainable global food system to be the most likely cause of a future global war (Pradhan, 2017). These 'water wars' are already being seen throughout the world at national and local levels (Pradhan, 2021), as agricultural and political stakeholders engage in disputes regarding the liability for local droughts caused by geographically isolated livestock farming (Dinar, et al., 2019). Unsustainable meat consumption, and its environmental consequences have local-level socio-political impacts, introducing the concept of broader sociocultural meanings of meat consumption situated in local micropolitics. As with reduction of anthropogenic GHGs, early research activity in this area concerned improving the efficiency of resource use in the food system, with a systematic review in 2007 identifying a range of methods through which marginal water use reductions could be accomplished (Hsiao, et al., 2007). Modelling of environmental impacts of dietary change consistently shows global adoption of meat-reduced and plant-based diets are capable of achieving significant reductions in global water use (Aleksandrowicz, et al., 2016), with some studies claiming a global dietary shift would serve as the single greatest influence in resolving global water scarcity (Fresan & Sabate, 2019).

1.1.4 Meat and sustainability

This sub-section presents meat as a threat to human health and natural ecosystems. Recognising predicted exponential increases in the global population, this reasoning finds excessive meat consumption is incompatible with global health and environmental urgencies.

Excessive meat consumption is a threat to global wellbeing. Meat consumption is a leading causal factor in increasing prevalence of a range of non-communicable disease risks and premature death (Salter, 2018), and processed and red meats are recognised by the Intergovernmental Agency for Research on Cancer as being carcinogenic to humans (IARC, 2015). This positions meat consumption as a harm to global and public health. These threats to human wellbeing are further compounded by concerns of zoonotic disease transmission and outbreaks (Bernstein & Dutkiewicz, 2021) resulting from unnatural production of livestock and the increasing human-animal interactions which are required to maintain the global animal agriculture industry (Magouras, et al., 2020). A resource-intensive and inefficient food, meat requires exponential increases in limited natural resources to sustain the growing animal agriculture industry, which is the largest single source of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (Godfray, et al., 2018) and the primary cause of water scarcity (Rosa, et al., 2020). Animal agriculture is also attributed as the primary cause of deforestation (Theurl, et al., 2020), resulting in significant biodiversity loss (Machinova, et al., 2015). These threats position excessive meat consumption as a primary causal factor in environmental degradation, characterising and progressing the 'Holocene extinction': a critical indictor of the Anthropocene (Dirzo et al., 2015). Natural resources and human health being finite in nature, excessive meat consumption may be deemed unsustainable.

Despite a scholarly focus on addressing excessive meat consumption in developed nations (Bonnet, et al., 2020), the sudden exacerbation of this challenge over the last half century has largely come about as a result of rapid industrialisation in developing nations (Sans & Combris, 2015) via the 'nutrition transition', which sees the unsustainable diets of developed nations replicated in developing nations, positively aligned with economic development (Popkin, 2017). With the global population predicted to increase exponentially throughout the next century (da Silva & Gouveia, 2019), it is inconceivable that health and environmental targets can be attained without a progressive and sustained reduction in global meat consumption. Marinova and Bogueva (2019) state whilst consumer consciousness of the health risks and environmental damage caused by excessive meat consumption is relatively accurate, there is poor appraisal of the connectedness of the two threats, and there exists a global hesitance to act upon them.

This thesis positions excessive meat consumption as being unsustainable, and incompatible with the need to protect and develop human health, sustain natural ecosystems, prevent further dangerous climate change, and feed a growing global population. Interdependencies between these challenges and the causal factors to which they are attributed, allow for excessive global meat consumption to be considered a threat to planetary health.

1.1.5 Meat and society

This sub-section presents differing understandings of the social construction and meanings of meat and meat consumption, from a non-exhaustive consideration of three major texts from political, sociological, and systems approaches.

The topical rationale for the investigation of excessive meat consumption lends to a conclusion that meat is social, and can be studied from social scientific perspectives. To value the diverse positionings from varying social sciences, this sub-section identifies three major texts which provide some dominant lines of thought around the role of meat in the social world. First, Emel and Neo's *Political Ecologies of Meat* will provide key insights from the political and economic sciences, exploring extant literature on how and why meat is governed, regulated, capitalised, and commodified (Emel & Neo, 2015). Secondly, Adam's widely-acclaimed critical text *The Sexual Politics of Meat* will explore sociological thought around meat, primarily from feminist perspectives but also through broader critical theoretical lenses (Adams, 2000). Finally, Winders and Ransom's more recent *Global Meat* will consider the systems approach to thinking about meat consumption, using literature identified in this review to make sense of the food system and the role meat plays in maintaining and exacerbating health inequalities (Ransom & Winders, 2019).

The texts reviewed here do not represent all thought in the social investigation and appraisal of meat and meat consumption. Rather, they illustrate some of the major themes of scholarship and extant literature in these fields, aiding development of the study towards novel inquiry for planetary health. The broad thematic narratives of the disciplinary approaches identified in these texts are then synthesised to characterise the framing of meat in the extant literature, allowing for direct comparison in the discussion between this thesis and the broader literature base. The texts are here presented as short-summary book reviews (Labaree, 2018)

Political Ecologies of Meat

Edited by Jody Emel and Harvey Neo (2015): 1st edition.

This edited text offers comprehensive insights around not simply the politics of meat, but the ecologies which affect, and are affected by, meat consumption. In their opening chapter, Emel and Neo characterise the "ever-expanding livestock industry" as biopolitical, observing that anthropocentric assumptions of human superiority have resulted in an appreciation of species interdependence in ecosystems from which humans have seemingly been absolved (Tsing, 2012). It is this – the removal of people from a problem for which they are responsible – which is inherently political. The biopolitics of meat and animal agriculture are explored in four sections by contributing authors.

The first section on the "livestock revolution" considers the political geographies of meat and the agriculture industry, focusing on the massive and sudden growth of meat consumption in the 20th and 21st Centuries. MacLachlan unpicks arguments surrounding exponential increases in demand for animal protein, identifying scholarly "camps" which argue a change in human population is driving increased need for food, or challenging this position by pointing to post-war cultural and economic shift, including greater use of the media to promote meat consumption, and decolonisation (MacLachlan, 2015) leading to the "nutrition transition" (Popkin, 2004). The section concludes that the latter likely spurred the former, with rapid expansion of the post-war food system supporting population growth (Waithanji, 2015), thereby creating an agricultural-economic complex in which economic prosperity brings about increased meat consumption, which is commodified to further stimulate the economy.

Section two concerns the detriment of this transition on ecosystems, and the biopolitics of navigating injustices caused by environmental degradation and climate change. After an outline of the broad health consequences of animal agriculture (Gunderson, 2015), chapters contrast the micropolitics of food with American federal governance of food and environmental policy. Sauri and March's chapter on the micropolitics of water pollution from pig farming in Spain presents a raw observational account of the political ecologies of water, and local peoples' navigation of resource access following irreversible toxification of potable water sources, tainted by "sustainable" manure management (Sauri & March, 2015). This is then conceptually upscaled to examples from the United States, in which Stoddard (2015) conceptualises the "normalised accident" as a political device used by neoliberal governments to excuse the environmental and human injustices of meat production (Stoddard, 2015).

It is in the third section where the direct conceptual links between this book, and this thesis, can be seen. "Biopolitics, knowledge and the materialism of meat" introduces the construction of knowing and doing around meat, with Colombino and Giaccardia's introduction giving a primary example of how meat is not just given by nature, but socially, economically,

and politically produced, here explained through the "making" of cattle as a commercialised material of Piedmontese culture (Colombino & Giacarria, 2015). These ideas of how meat is culturally produced via the construction of knowledge are then, effectively, "reversed" in Neo's chapter on their application to vegetarianism, which argues that anti-meat narratives present a sociopolitical disruption of knowledge which, if used objectively, points to the health and environmental virtues of a meat-free diet (Neo, 2015). A pertinent conclusion of this section is Neo's observation that, due to the sociopolitical complexities of meat, identifying and addressing knowledge gaps alone cannot resolve the question of excessive meat consumption.

The final section of this book addresses "big P" political ecologies of meat, focusing on governance of animal agriculture in light of the threats posed by meat production to human health and the sustainability of ecosystems. The role of political systems in the "greening" of animal agriculture is considered, with Johnson (2015) concluding that government food policy development initiatives involving consultation with academics, are performative and tokenistic exercises, in which well-meaning stakeholders serve as unwitting collaborationists to rubber-stamp policies which are generally ineffective. Of particular interest to this thesis is Johnson's view that public consultation in policy development is limited by restrictive definitions of "sustainability", as the term is generally understood in government roundtable exercises to refer solely to ongoing environmental viability. This section concludes that governance of meat and meat consumption can be a powerful tool for creating equity and wellbeing in the political ecologies of meat, but that there are challenges ahead in ensuring these methods of change do not result in high-level definitions of social and environmental goals which are meaningless, or unachievable, at a local level.

Political Ecologies of Meat therefore presents a diverse array of the varying political constructions of meat, and political handlings of biohazards arising from meat production. Aside from the obvious thematic stream through the book that meat is inherently political, this text provides new lines of inquiry for the thesis through the observation of the micropolitics which determine not just how (or if) meat itself is accessed, but how meat consumption influences access to sociopolitical spaces. Neo's thoughts around the fallacy of information-deficit approaches have direct relevance to the use of health promotion theory in developing impactful public health interventionism (Neo, 2015). Finally, in considering the political arenas in which meat is constructed through knowing and doing, Johnson's thoughts about effective governance of the food system will be useful in critiquing community-level responses to food crises that seek to remove local groups from the pitfalls and performativity of the "big P" politics of food (Johnson, 2015).

The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory

Carol Adams (1990)

Adams' book, originally published in 1990 and revised in 10th, 20th, and 25th anniversary editions, is considered a landmark sociological text (Yilmaz, 2019), offering profound insights intersecting feminism, environmental sociology, health, animal rights and social justice, in a transdisciplinary space Adams' identified as belonging to the field of ecofeminism (Adams & Gruen, 2021). This text is overtly post-human, framing meat consumption as an injustice from the beginning with an apologetic memorialisation of the "*31.1 billion each year, 85.2 million each day, 3,5 million each hour, 59,170 each minute*" in reference to animals slaughtered for meat production. This unique contribution contrasts with the Political Ecologies of Meat, in which none of the contributing authors were seemingly advocating for total abstention of meat. Adam's book has been well-received in sociological and food studies thought, captured in a book review which states "no book has stimulated as much discussion and interest in the connections between feminism, animal advocacy, and vegetarianism" (Lockie, et al., 2002). Although this thesis does not seek to examine meat from a feminist position, it can learn from the diverse intersectional thought Adams presents. She offers a three-part argument around how meat is socially constructed and serves as a material of (largely oppressive) social construction.

The central thesis of The Sexual Politics of Meat advocates viewing diet and consumption as reflecting power, which can be understood to perpetuate and maintain a range of oppressions, including those against genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic groups. Adams frames meat as a patriarchal institution, which subordinates animals as food, and food as property (Slicer, 1992), in a manner similar and related to the patriarchal objectification of women. The core conceptual mechanism is Adams' seminal theory of the "absent referent": semiotic and linguistic references to meat which separate the physical and organic material of flesh from the social, emotional, and animate life it was part of. In an early chapter entitled "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering or Women", Adams directly addresses the overlapping nature of violence against animals and violence against women, pointing to semiotic parallels in which language is used to remove sufferers of violence from the violent acts. This central idea of language as a key component of social inquiry is useful in exploring symbolic interactions with meat throughout this thesis.

Part One explores the semiotic and linguistic representations of meat, through what Adams determines to be "patriarchal text", as illustrated through a vast range of photographic and anecdotal examples. Theoretical interpretations of the absent referent are then presented according to differing forms of oppression, through which Adams compares and links human suffering and animal exploitation using pertinent examples from colonialism, sexual violence,

slavery, and serial killers. It is made clear in each example that interactions with the oppressed become symbolic through the absent referent mechanism, for example, Adams' observation that the function of a slaughterhouse is to remove the identity of animals, for them to leave as meat: the social being is referred to in representations of meat, but their unique identity and life is absent, facilitating objectification and subsequently commodification of meat.

This is further explored in Part Two, where Adams readily notes that this scholarship is not simply a discussion of abstract ideas about language, but rather how language conveys meaning about the transition from the animate to the inanimate. This relates well to this theses' adoption of New Materialist Social Inquiry as the primary theoretical framework, seeing conflicts between the physical and social worlds as the micropolitics of food. The second part of the book shifts towards exploring these ideas in application to vegetarianism, and vegetarians, who Adams notes are socially isolated and othered in a manner similar to that of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The concept of the absent referent is disrupted, Adams claims, through vegetarians including non-human animals in their moral codes, in doing so giving identity to animals which challenges human privilege of being able to make them absent.

The final Part of Adams' writing concerns the contribution of these cross-theoretical ideas to wider sociological scholarship. Characterising vegetarianism as a form of feminist theoretical praxis, Adams questions the extent to which dietary choices are a form of scholar-activism and advocacy, stating that revulsion to meat and refusal to eat it is similar to an opposition to patriarchy and disruption of patriarchal institutions to achieve women's independence. To illustrate this, she observes historical material connections between feminism and vegetarianism in numerous social causes, such as the temperance and suffrage movements, and pacifism in the Second World War. This line of reasoning, in viewing interactions with, or abstention from, meat as a form of activism, will aid analytical interpretation of the diverse motivations of the community this thesis seeks to explore.

The Sexual Politics of Meat, though presented from overtly feminist and anti-meat perspectives this thesis does not intend to uphold, provides theoretical insights for the development of the study. Adams work around language and semiotics as a tool for inquiry around symbolic interaction speaks to the search for "meaning" in this study, whilst her concept of the absent referent is broadly aligned with the New Materialist position which seeks to explore relationships between animacy and inanimacy of material, and how the meanings of meat change as it is used in different social contexts.

Global Meat: Social and Environmental Consequences of the Expanding Meat Industry
Edited by Bill Winders and Elizabeth Ransom (2019): 1st edition.

The final major text used to explore the wider literature is more recent in publication. Global Meat is another edited text, with contributions from broader food systems scholars from the social sciences and beyond. Again separated into three distinct parts, this text presents greater exposure of the corporate and industrial nature of meat, moving beyond mere acknowledgment of industrialisation in Political Ecologies of Meat, and the exploitation of animals for capitalisation in The Sexual Politics of Meat. Here, Winders and Random present a series of thematic chapters exploring the systematic role meat plays in industrial and post-industrial complexes, which Ankeny (2020) reviewed as being more canvassing than previous texts in this area, scrutinising the systematic injustices of industrialisation.

Following an introduction providing a broad overview of the health and environmental consequences of increasing meat production, Part One of this text considers how global forces shape, and are shaped by, animal agriculture. This contrasts with Political Ecologies of Meat which presented a series of global examples of the social impact of meat, but did not attempt to draw conclusions about a systematic global structuring of meat-related social justice threats. A primary example of this is global corporations receiving agricultural subsidies from numerous national governments, to conceal the inefficiencies of meat production by artificially lowering the price of animal feed and endorsing government inactivity concerning financing of solutions for meat-related environmental degradation (Howard, 2019). Though this thesis concerns the "local" over the global, this line of inquiry around costing mechanisms will be of use when considering the financing of local initiatives, and potentially economic intervention as a public health measure. This first Part of the book also includes an extensive discussion of unjust corporate power in the seafood industry (Bailey & Tran, 2019), which is here recognised as being valuable for future scholarly consideration, though this thesis does not concern itself with the production or eating of fish, according to its working definition of meat.

Part Two of this text is of more direct relevance to this thesis, in exploring the locally-felt impacts of the global meat industry, comparing the small-scale effects of the pork industry in China (Schneider, 2019), cattle ranching in the Amazon (Rudel, 2019), and labour inequalities in the American poultry industry (Freshour, 2019). These chapters offer valuable narratives distinct from other texts, which concern themselves with the felt impacts of meat on health and ecosystems, instead focusing on the influence meat has on major social institutions such as the workforce. Freshour's chapter on the maltreatment of poultry industry workers aligns with Adam's views that meat reflects historical and ongoing oppression, in this case illustrating how the roots of the current corporate-state nexus which supports poultry farming can be traced to oppression of African-American farm labourers in the Southern States during

the Jim Crow era. Using data from the US Census, Freshour argues that the US Department of Commerce systematically engaged in a labour displacement to suppress Black workers' rights movements in the 1990s, working with the three largest poultry producers in the country to engage in a recruitment campaign throughout Mexico to staff the poultry industry and maintain the oppressive conditions upon which that industry is based. The ethnographic character of this thesis will see immersion in primary social institutions, and Freshour's work is useful in provoking thinking around how food is used to perpetuate social injustice, and is also systematically constructed by it.

Global Meat ends with three chapters considering alternative systems which might result in meat contributing to social and environmental justice, which may connect well to the envisaged light-touch policy and practice recommendations of this thesis. The first such systematic solution presented is Denny's proposed reduction of anthropogenic GHG emissions through examining meat production methods across the world, noting that intensification of animal agriculture results in slight reductions in emissions but compromises other important considerations such as animal welfare (Denny, 2019). The chapter concludes with a blunt statement that "the most sure-fire way to reduce GHG emissions from meat is to produce less of it", recognising that supply-side methods of change alone are inadequate. Ransom and Winders present the final chapter, recognising the difficult truth that state interventionism through policy has limited potential for systematic change in meat consumption, as evidenced through extant policy which encourages overproduction. Instead, they corroborate claims from the Political Ecologies of Meat that "small P" politics will play an instrumental role in reducing consumption, through social movements, community development, advocacy initiatives, small-scale farming, food cooperatives, and even individually focused health promotion activity. The shortcomings of "smallitics" are recognised before the final concluding remarks reminding us of the real urgencies of the global meat crisis.

The text offers a substantially different style of scholarship compared to the two other books. Where Political Ecologies of Meat was rooted in a global-local nexus, and The Sexual Politics of Meat considered a physical-social nexus, Global Meat introduces a range of thoughts which might be best summarised as a state-corporation nexus, considering the impacts of major social actors in food systems. Although this thesis will be locally rooted and traditionally ethnographic, this provides novel insights for the broader context in which meat is situated. The conclusion of Global Meat, that change must come from the demand-side, also offers a clear imperative for public health interventionism, to be explored in the "implications" section of the thesis.

Extant literature on the social scientific study of meat

Following the reading, review and summarising the themes of these texts, a firm shape of the messages of the extant literature is clear: meat is political, social, and systematic. Although certainly non-exhaustive, a summary of thematic findings from these texts will provide a space for reflection in the discussion to consider what novel contributions this thesis makes, and where they are situated in the literature.

Political Ecologies of Meat: *Meat is political.*

- Meat is situated in an agricultural-economic complex which supports exponential increases in human population, resource needs and environmental degradation (MacLachlan, 2015; Waithanji, 2015).
- Meat creates challenges which populations then struggle to navigate, generating micropolitical conflicts which become normalised through destructive neoliberal policy (Sauri & March, 2015; Stoddard, 2015).
- Meat is socially constructed through complex processes of biopolitical knowing and doing, limiting the role of information provision in reducing meat consumption (Colombino & Giacarria, 2015; Neo, 2015).
- Meat can be regulated through meaningful processes of policy development, but these are currently stifled by performative political placation exercises (Johnson, 2015).

The Sexual Politics of Meat: *Meat is social.*

- Meat is justified and normalised using the absent reference mechanism, through which animals are deindividuated to legitimise their objectification and subordination (Adams, 2000).
- Meat sees animals treated in similar ways to oppressed peoples: its production and cultural ubiquity can be understood in parallel to historical oppression and suffering (Adams, 2000).
- Meat is threatened by anti-meat movements and presence, which disrupts transfer of material value from animacy to inanimacy, isolating and othering vegetarians (Adams, 2000).
- Meat, as a focal point of sociological analysis, illustrates alliances between areas of activism and scholarship, creating common causes between conflicting groups (Adams, 2000).

Global Meat: *Meat is systematic.*

- Meat is produced through global forces which see a state-corporate nexus create food systems which result in overproduction of food, fuelled by government subsidies (Bailey & Tran, 2019; Howard, 2019).

- Meat is shaped globally, but its effects are felt in local settings in which people and populations suffer for inefficiencies in, and mismanagement of, the global food system (Rudel, 2019; Schneider, 2019).

- Meat, and its production, shapes local-level social institutions to perpetuate and maintain historical oppressions upon on which the global food system is based (Freshour, 2019)

- Meat reduction is unlikely to occur via supply-side intervention due to complex links between the meat industry and the state, requiring demand-side public health activity (Denny, 2019).

1.2 Conceptual positioning

This section argues threats posed by excessive meat consumption are a challenge to planetary health: the conceptualisation of interdependence between the human population and the earth it inhabits. It frames excessive meat consumption as an unusual, exceptional challenge which does not align with traditional public health and health promotion tools, and established practice or policy frameworks. This section concludes with an assertion that to transition beyond traditional conceptions of health, this thesis must deprivilege human agency to make sense of the cultural connections between health, humanity, and sustainability.

1.2.1 Planetary health

This sub-section introduces the concept of planetary health, seeking to determine and promote the interdependence of humanity and sustainability, to advance a holistic framework for health. It concludes that this thesis aligns to the new scholarly traditions of this emergent field.

A case for the exploration of meat consumption exists in the relatively new field of planetary health. In the early 1990's, the concept of 'patient Earth' emerged, applying fundamental principles that guide public health theory and practice to the physical planet via the likening of anthropogenic climate change to symptoms of human illness (Casassus, 2017). This concept is summarised in a now-famous quote by the Norwegian medical doctor Per Fugelli, who stated that "*The patient 'Earth' is sick. Global environmental disruptions can have serious consequences for human health. It's time for doctors to give a world diagnosis and advise on treatment*" (Fugelli, 1993). This quote speaks to the characterisation of earth (from here on described with lower-case 'E' to recognise the aspirational but impractical nature of Fugelli's ideas about Patient Earth) in an anthropomorphic fashion, resulting in the theoretical approach of analogising social determinants of health and wellbeing to the social interactions that humans have with the planet they inhabit. Subsequent scholars have furthered this analogy by comparing human exploitation of the planet to parasites expending a diseased body, or a cancerous tumour using up nutrients from a body upon which its survival is dependent (Gabrysch, 2018). From these imaginations of relationships between humans and the earth emerged novel conceptual insights, making disciplinary assumptions concerning an interdependency between human health and the sustainability of natural resources, which are in turn dependent on human activity for their care and protection. This suggests a delicate symbiotic relationship between the global human population and the earth, beyond that explored in the natural sciences; a new conceptual paradigm which assumes human existence is dependent on the natural resources that are quickly becoming scarce or depleted due to symbiotic inequities (McMichael & McMichael, 1993). Scholarship developed throughout the 1990's and first decade of the second millennium, seeking to make sense of how public health concepts might be furthered to include a new global stakeholder in health and wellbeing.

From this early scholarly demarcation was born the discipline of planetary health, a sister discipline to public health at the intersection of a range of social and natural sciences. Described as "*a new science for exceptional action*" (Horton & Lo, 2015) this new area of study assumes that the health of the planet is an inherent public good and must be considered a critical determinant of human health. Developing conceptual contributions would primarily seek to identify symbiotic relationships between human populations and the ecosystems upon which they are reliant (Prescott, et al., 2018).

It is important here to recognise that socioecological approaches to health and wellbeing are not new, and the conceptual framework or discipline of planetary health does not offer anything intellectually unique in this regard, beyond perhaps commanding greater scholarly synthesis than existing socioecological thought. Conceptualisations of wellbeing based on respectful reciprocity between humans and the earth have long been presented in ecofeminist thought (Gaard, 1997; Foster, 2021), Christian environmentalism (Kearns, 1996; Chandler, 2021) and ecological discourses in civil rights movements such as those of black radical environmentalism (Mohai, 1990; Guild & Whetstone, 2021). This is particulary true of conceptions of health according to the values, practices and beliefs of Indigenous, Aboriginal and First Nations peoples (Ratima, et al., 2019), who have for millennia modeled planetary health activity congruent with protection of human health and environmental stewardship (Redvers, et al., 2020). The IUHPE Waiora Indigenous Peoples' Statement for Planetary Health and Sustainable Development recognises that core characteristics of Indigenous worldviews are shaped by "*the interactive relationship between spiritual and material realms*" and preceed Fugelli's views of 'patient Earth' by recognising "*that Mother Earth is a living being: a 'person' with whom we have special relationships that are a foundation for identity*" (IUHPE, 2019). The Statement further calls upon health promoters to value those Indigenous conceptions of health and wellbeing, and recognise established Indigenous practices and modeling of health promotion activity which planetary health seeks to support. In this sense, the foundations of planetary health are not 'new', indeed, they are simply reframed to form a cohesive scholarly discipline from the fragmented areas of extant but disparate scholarship concerning reciprocal socioecological conceptions of health (Dunk & Anderson, 2020). Theorisations of planetary health, and meat consumption according to that lens, presented by this thesis build upon these foundations, and in doing so recognise the intellectual contributions of historically underrpresented voices, and the onto-epistemological challenges of working in planetary health (Horton, 2013; Abimbola & Pai, 2020).

Scholarly questions were quickly asked about what separates planetary health from these other established, but perhaps under-voiced, socioecological approaches to health and wellbeing. Lerner and Berg (2017) state that the defining characteristic of planetary health is the emphasis on interdependencies. Whilst the One Health approach values interdisciplinary and interprofessional discourses between human, animal and ecosystems interests, and the ecohealth approach values interconnectedness between humans and the natual envrionment, the planetary health approach asserts an unquestionable reliance between social and physical actors from which health is formed (Myers, 2017). Demaio and Rockstrom (2015) assess that the uniqueness of planetary health concerns how it makes sense of separations between human health, and the welfare of nonhuman entities; human health is an element of, not competitor to, planetary health.

This directly speaks to the global challenge of excessive meat consumption, which requires planetary resources to fulfil human demand for a material on which life is partially sustained but requires unsuitable production that threatens ongoing environmental viability. Fresan and Sabate (2019) state that planetary health is characterised by a respect for finite planetary boundaries of natural resources, with which excessive meat consumption does not comply, justifying planetary health as a lens for addressing global meat consumption. Conceptually 'launched' formally by the Rockefeller-Lancet Foundation through the seminal paper "*From public to planetary health: a manifesto*" in 2014 (Horton, et al., 2014) development of research activity took place relatively quickly, and a body of literature, praxis and implementation emerged soon after (Pongsiri, et al., 2019). The holistic and multidimensional nature of planetary health meant that almost any challenge which related to human wellbeing, the earth, or both, could be explored through this conceptual lens (Cole & Bickersteth, 2018). Literature on meat consumption as a planetary health issue began to emerge from 2018, spurred by the EAT-Lancet Commission's publication of the 'planetary health diet' (Willett, et al., 2019) which sought to integrate planetary health visions into standard dietary reference values (DRVs) to inform a sustainable food-based dietary guideline (FBDG). Although the planetary health diet was quickly and widely criticised for being unrealistically expensive (Drewnowski, 2020), overpromising in terms of environmental impact (Zagmutt, et al., 2019) and culturally ignorant (Verkerk, 2019), this reference diet sparked a wider debate about the implementation of planetary health ideals, and whether planetary health is merely a conceptual lens for academic analysis, or a practical framework to inform action in reducing meat consumption (Prescott & Logan, 2019). Early practical attempts to implement the planetary health concept in more specific interventions include planetary health labelling efforts on food (Parker, et al., 2020) and integration of planetary health thinking into health care education (Barna, et al., 2020). There have also been calls, from a theoretical perspective, for plant-based diets in support of planetary health (Hemler & Hu, 2019).

The growing conceptual discourses and their emerging application establish a precedent for scholarship in this area, with planetary health serving as a conceptual recognition of the interconnected and interdependent nature of threats to human health and harm to the environment caused by excessive meat consumption. This justifies the adoption of planetary health as the conceptual position for this thesis: that the threat of excessive meat consumption sits at the interaction of human health and environmental sustainability, and planetary health is situated to assume the interrelatedness of these concerns.

1.2.2 Emergent solutions

This sub-section considers seminal reports which have stimulated policy proposals concerning reduction of meat consumption. Paying particular attention to the incongruence of meat and other public health challenges, it identifies a generalised deficit in extant theoretical approaches which may be rectified through investigation of dietary cultures.

Despite growing concern about the threat excessive meat consumption poses to planetary health, little coordinated action has been taken. A brief but scholastically important period of public interest in meat and planetary health emerged between 2014 and 2015, in response to publication (and surrounding media activity) of two seminal reports from supranational government (Olausson, 2019; Painter, et al., 2020). Though neither explicitly links human health and environmental sustainability through meat consumption, the reports proved influential in energising public, academic and political discourses towards valuation of excessive meat consumption as a threat to planetary health (Adams-Schoen, et al., 2015; Domingo & Nadal, 2017).

1) The "*Fifth Assessment Report of Working Group III*" published in October 2014 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), formally stating the United Nation's acknowledgment of the central role of animal agriculture in development and exacerbation of climate change (IPCC, 2014). The report repeatedly notes that *"behaviour, lifestyle and culture have a considerable influence on [sustainability]"*. Chapter eleven, "*Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use*" recognises unsustainable use of resources to supply the growing animal agriculture industry is attributable to excessive meat consumption. The report recommended nation states support "*lifestyle changes, including a less-meat-intensive diet*" (IPCC, 2014), but does not state how this might be achieved, or which stakeholders are to be responsible for attainment of sustainable levels of meat consumption.

2) The "*IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans: Red Meat and Processed Meat*" was published in October 2015 by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), formally stating the World Health Organisation's recognition of the carcinogenicity of red and processed meats (IARC, 2015). Processed meats became classified as a Class I carcinogen (presenting the greatest threat to human health) and red meats became classified as Class 2A carcinogens (noting strong epidemiological evidence of carcinogenicity but lacking confirmation due to the presence of confounders). To supplement the report, the WHO produced a Frequently Asked Questions website (WHO, 2015) to support consumer interpretation

of the Classifications, which states that the Classifications do not compel nation states to take any action. The website advises less red and processed meat consumption.

These two reports were used to frame a developing policy brief by Chatham House, a think tank and policy institute based in London, UK. The Chatham House report "*Changing Climate, Changing Diets: Pathways to Lower Meat Consumption*", published in November 2015, connected a 14-month policy development project to the two seminal reports by the IPCC and IARC (Wellesley, et al., 2015). This report framed excessive meat consumption in a more holistic light, forming greater synthesis between the concerns about threats to human health and environmental sustainability, but failing to recognise human/earth interdependencies and characterising the matter as a threat to planetary health. The lengthy and comprehensive report presented the following four Key Findings to explain why little action had been taken to address excessive meat consumption.

- **Excessive meat consumption is facilitated by policy inertia**. The Chatham House report found that despite public beliefs about government leadership in intervention design and implementation being required to address such a ubiquitous public health challenge, national governments are "*trapped in a cycle of inertia*" regarding sustainable consumption. The report considers that governments overestimate the political consequences and public backlash of government intervention in food security and sustainability, and this interaction communicates political discourses that undermine the urgency of excessive meat consumption. Chatham House recommended that it is necessary to "*build the case for government intervention*", to better connect meat consumption to arenas of extant health and environment policy.
- **Excessive meat consumption generates poor public consciousness and interest**. The Chatham house report recognised that 'raising awareness' and 'education' alone cannot generate urgent change in diets, nor be considered as a serious method of bringing about population-wide dietary change. However, the report recognised the absence of popular discourses connecting diets, human health and environmental sustainability creates "*a considerable awareness gap*" which prevents engagement with policy development and systematic barriers to dietary change, limiting grassroots community health activity. Chatham House recommended an urgency to "*initiate national debates about meat consumption*" to develop public discourses, overcome inertia and create social and political spaces for change.
- **Excessive meat consumption requires abstract discourses to imagine novel solutions**. The Chatham House report identified that "*the issue is complex, but the*

message must be simple", and efforts to reduce meat consumption at a population level are hindered by an absence of meaningful communications around the role of diets in environment sustainability. The report also found that attempts by non-governmental organisations to promote the clear and coherent message of "*globally, we should eat less meat*" are complicated by conflicting messages from a range of social movements and political actors. Chatham House identified "*a role for governments, the media, the scientific community, civil society and responsible business*" in generating holistic approaches to reduced meat consumption.

- **Excessive meat consumption lacks attention from trusted sources**. The Chatham House report stated that, following decades of gradual, largely unobserved increases in meat consumption, a demand for sudden reduced consumption is likely to be met with considerable consumer resistance. A highly reliable source of support must be provided to strengthen public confidence in the urgencies which present a need for change. The report identifies that "*experts are consistently seen as the most reliable source of information*", but few figures specialise in this challenge. Chatham House recommended that action requires "*pursuing comprehensive approaches*", identifying that public trust in massive dietary change will require a shift in consumer culture that must be supported by reliable and confident public voices.

Underpinning these key findings, and the recommendations Chatham House suggests might initiate their implementation towards reduced meat consumption, is a series of complicated socio-political questions about the role of the state in coordinating planetary health efforts, public interest in planetary health, public confidence in health science, and uncomfortable transitions in consumer culture. Although the natural scientific element of the interdisciplinary nature of planetary health is present in the seminal reports, Wellesley et al. (2015) observe that translation of bioscientific and physiological urgencies into social and behavioural change is more challenging and less obvious. The Chatham House report, however, presents an optimistic view of this challenge, stating that "*although reducing meat and dairy consumption is far from straightforward, it is neither an insurmountable task, nor more challenging than other climate imperatives*". From this position, the task of addressing excessive meat consumption concerns the social and behavioural investigation of food and diet.

Meat and culture

The Chatham House report states that "*the culture of meat-eating is complex and highly influential*" but does not expand on this beyond noting three specific examples of national cultural meanings of meat. The report simply observed the social tradition of barbeque meals in Brazil, hesitancy to identify as a vegetarian in the United States, and associations between

meat and economic prosperity in China. The report makes 16 final recommendations to national governments regarding the reduction of meat consumption to avoid further threat to human health and environmental degradation. Three of the recommendations actively describe 'culture', whilst numerous others describe social, political, and broadly cultural structures which relate to the role of culture in health and diets. These three recommendations are illustrated below, interpreted for this thesis regarding their significance in conceptualising excessive meat consumption as a threat to planetary health.

Recommendations from '*Changing Climate, Changing Diets: Pathways to Lower Meat Consumption'* (Wellesley, et al., 2015)

From the Chatham house report…

"R3: Establish international norms and standards on sustainable diets. Concerted efforts should be made… to arrive at a common definition of what a 'sustainable diet' looks like, both across different cultures and in view of future resource constraints."

For this thesis…

Environmental sustainability forms only one strand of planetary health, which asserts a human/earth interdependency requiring 'sustainability' to be interpreted in physical and social contexts. **To reduce meat consumption for planetary health, the cultural meanings of holistic sustainability across and between cultures must be explored.**

From the Chatham house report…

"R6: Tailor strategies to national contexts. Opportunities for intervention will vary across communities, regions and countries, meaning that policy strategies must be developed in line with local conditions and cultures if they are to be effective."

For this thesis…

Successful and impactful movements and actions towards planetary health will be achieved through development of activity that has meaning in local cultural contexts. **To reduce meat consumption for planetary health, the cultural meanings of meat must be recognised in local contexts to aid development of health promotion activity.**

From the Chatham house report…

"R16: Promote and protect diversity. Local and national cultures and traditions should therefore inform the development of food policies and guidelines and should be regarded as an opportunity for fostering positive change rather than an obstacle to dietary shifts."

For this thesis…

Accountable and empowering processes of policy development must value the diverse meanings of meat in culture and social life, framing culture as a tool for sustainability. **To reduce meat consumption for planetary health, the diversities of cultural meanings of meat must be captured, respected and celebrated to develop effective policy.**

Planetary health and cultural inquiry

Based upon the recommendations of the Chatham House report (Wellesley, et al., 2015), and their relevance to excessive meat consumption through the conceptual lens of planetary health, this thesis recognises a need for inquiry concerning the cultural meanings of meat consumption, to inform impactful and meaningful health promotion and policy activity which might support reduced meat consumption.

1.2.3 Scholarly positionings

This sub-section considers the relative positioning of the thesis in the extant scholarly literature, to determine an appropriate disciplinary and interdisciplinary space for the study of meat as a planetary health threat through cultural meanings.

Planetary health is inherently interdisciplinary. By virtue of a scholarly orientation towards wellbeing which seeks to disrupt anthropocentricity and create equity in the relationship between people and the planet (Horton, et al., 2014), planetary health requires thought from the social and natural sciences. In a position paper outlining differing characteristics between scholarly approaches to post-human health research, Lerner and Berg (2017) observe that one of the most valuable novel contributions of planetary health is that it balances human and non-human health needs through a core appreciation of the mutual dependencies between people and the planet they inhabit. By comparison, the One Health approach privileges the wellbeing of non-human animals at the potential expense of human health and society (Natterson-Horowitz & Bowers, 2013), lending to a scholarly field dominated by biomedical interests (Learner & Berg, 2015). Similarly, the EcoHealth approach reconceptualises wellbeing through more rhizomatic understanding of the social determinants of health, seeing biodiversity and ecosystems preservation as the core focus of public health efforts (Waltner-Toews, 2009), favouring scholarship from the eco-policy arena such as environmental biology and political sciences (Saint-charles, et al., 2004). By contrast, the central focus of planetary health on dependencies suggests cyclical relationships between humans, non-human animals, ecosystems and the earth, inviting a broader range of scholarly contributions from across the natural and social sciences (Lerner & Berg, 2017). In the seminal introductory manifesto for planetary health, Horton (2014) explicitly address the need for interdisciplinary and interprofessional approaches to studying wellbeing, noting the limitations of dichotomising health activity into the theoretical and the applied, by actively inviting involvement from clinical and non-clinical health professionals. This is further supported in the report of The Rockefeller Foundation Lancet Commission on Planetary Health, which observes that the cyclical dependencies central to planetary health can only be studied through disciplinary advocacy (Whitemee, et al., 2015), in which scholars from different fields advocate for the privileging of the health needs of their entities of interest. The theoretical and conceptual framing of this thesis is therefore interdisciplinary, drawing upon scholarly contributions from numerous fields, aligned with the emergent and axiologically-informed early "traditions" of planetary health.

Before exploring meat from interdisciplinary perspectives for planetary health, it is useful to frame the positioning of this thesis in the extant major narratives of meat from the source disciplines. In a position paper scrutinising the comparable field of Human-Animal

Studies, which explores relationships between people and non-human animals, Shapiro (2010) describes interdisciplinary scholarship as extolling "the virtues of knowledge and goodness", with the natural sciences contributing "knowledge", the arts and humanities contributing "goodness", and the social sciences forming a transdisciplinary bridge to form a holistic appraisal of the conflicts and agreements between the two. Ultimately that bridge and the conflicts it seeks to explore between the natural and social worlds, is where this thesis finds itself positioned: this is explored in greater depth in a later defence of the adoption of New Materialist Social Inquiry as the primary theoretical framework.

The natural scientific study of meat has, historically, been overtly anthropocentric, framing meat as a capitalised commodity which serves to be useful for people. Indeed, this is explicitly captured in the Terms of Reference of the seminal industry journal *Meat Science*, which characterises the natural scientific study of meat as concerning "the qualities of meat, it's composition, nutritional value, wholesomeness and consumer acceptability" (Meat Science, 2022). This positioning embodies a field of "knowledge" around meat which inherently exerts human privileging and exceptionalism: assumptions that meat is for people, by people, and cannot have functions beyond those which are useful for people (Acampora, 2016; Adams, et al., 2020). There has been considerable scholarly critique of the natural scientific framing of meat for this reason, with opinion papers in the early 1990's questioning scholarship, methods, analytical practices, and techniques based upon anthropocentric assumptions (Alston & Chalfant, 1991). Although presented from a largely carnistic perspective (Pelletier, 2015), the "knowledge" from the natural sciences presents clear rationale for the study of meat from broader perspectives, including defence of the health and environmental threats of excessive consumption. These threads will be explored in the rationale for the thesis in relation to the summative contributions to the positioning of the thesis as being one of planetary health.

This critique furthers discussion of the "goodness" qualities of meat, or the absence thereof, from the arts and humanities. Grivetti (1987) undertook a sizeable narrative review to identify common threads in "cultural nutrition" studies, with explicit focus on scholarship on food from the arts and humanities. The review observes a common interest across numerous fields in the role of food in folklore and mythology, with the transdisciplinary field of folkloristics contributing greatly to the understanding of the human-ness of food and the diet (Shifflett, 1976). Perhaps the most valuable scholarly framing of meat from the arts and humanities is the position that food has meaning (Long, 2015). The study of the meanings of meat in the humanities has a thousands-years-old history, with this frame presenting diverse thought from meat in the classical world (Bakker, 2013) to contemporary applications of humanities methods and theory to explore food and diet during the COVID-19 pandemic (Shen, et al., 2020). The value of these fields in terms of their potential for application, however, has long

been challenged (Brush, 1990), fostering a sizeable body of critique questioning the relative low "*levels of achievement from the humanities*" compared to the natural and social sciences (Sorlin, 2018). Although stifled by a theory-to-practice challenge (Donogue, 2008), the "goodness" of meat is presented by the humanities as meat being a material of meaning. This will be explored later in greater depth through the theoretical lens of New Materialism and this thesis' conceptual framing of meat as being a material of meaning for planetary health.

In considering the challenges of interdisciplinary research in the relationship between food and health, Wilk (2010) identifies that the conflicts between disciplinary boundaries have obstructed useful vision of food and the diet, concluding in a call for "*a more synthetic approach… grounded in the study of everyday life*" (Wilk, 2012). To connect the extant "knowledge" and "goodness" of meat together for a holistic, interdisciplinary planetary health investigation, this study explores both the value and meaning of meat through an ethnographic methodology, seeking to explore conflicts between "knowledge" and "goodness" through the micropolitics of social-assemblages according to New Materialist Social Inquiry.

1.2.4 Meat and culture

This sub-section identifies characteristics of culture, to develop thinking around cultural meanings of meat consumption. It views meat as an artefact through which social life may be determined by cultural structures. This sub-section critiques a seminal text on meat and culture and identifies onto-epistemological differences between this thesis and extant literature.

In order to consider the cultural meanings of meat consumption to inform development of workable and effective interventions to support planetary health, culture must be explored sociologically. Goldstein wrote that "*the meaning of 'culture' cannot be the same as the meaning of culture*" (1957), identifying differences between nominal and synoptical meanings of the term. This distinguishes culture as being subject to a contestation between the lived experience of culture, and academic attempts to capture, define and interpret it. This tension is observed in this thesis only to respect the challenging abstract nature of making sense of culture: the definitions and subsequent cultural analytical framework adopted by this thesis are merely few ideas amongst a vast body of diverse and mature scholarship.

In the book *Primitive Culture*, Tylor described culture as "*that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*" (Tylor, 1871). This definition characterises culture as a collection of shared practices, values and behaviours in a defined community, and further conceptualises culture as an entanglement of physical matter and social experiences, positioning culture at the centre of a distinction between the physical and social worlds, which is explored in this thesis. Regarding scholarly thought concerning a unifying definition of culture, there is a mature body of academic works which attempt to make sense of culture through fragmentation of the broad, abstract construct into more manageable 'elements' (Baldwin, et al., 2006). Thousands of theorisations of cultures exist in this regard, with competing conceptions of culture (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1997).

To make sense of the varied interactions between meat and culture, a seminal text is identified which provides scope for the cultural investigation of meat. The 2016 text 'Meat Culture' was written for a book series in Human-Animal Studies (Potts, 2016), providing an anthology of diverse cultural perspectives on meat consumption through various lens of critical animal studies. In a review of the first edition, Gigliotti (2017) comments on the original scholarly contributions of the text as being the creation of a new framework for studying "*production and consumption of animals*", highlighting the critical lens employed by the paper to make sense of human-animal relations, rather than meat as inanimate matter. This difference in perspective forms the demarcation between Pott's cultural studies of meat and my thesis. Whilst I recognise the scholarly value of critical animal perspectives which see

nonhuman animals as conscious social actors (Wilkie, 2015) and the sociological potential of inquiry in multispecies entanglements (Carter & Charles, 2018), my thesis ultimately positions meat consumption as social practice at the centre of an earth-human nexus, to make sense of meat for planetary health practice and policy. In this sense, whilst I have engaged in broader areas of critical animal scholarship, particulary in the emergent field of vegan sociology (Sallaway-Costello, 2020; Benjelloun & Sallaway-Costello, 2020) and recognise the amazing potential of sociological imagination in this area to make greater sense of the human-animal nexus, this thesis orients towards theorisations which see nonhuman animals only in their inanimate form. This is, perhaps, favourable in the production of this thesis. Pott's 'animal-friendly' or 'animal-centric' text on the cultural interpretations of meat has been criticised for presenting a "*decidedly anti-carnistic stance in favour of cultural transformation to veganism*" (Freeman, 2021), presenting meat consumption in a near-universal negative light with no redeeming positive social value: this thesis rejects vegan primacy as a theoretical position. Freeman's critique (2021) concludes that the book, whilst rich in imagination about the cultural interactions which see meat structure the human-animal nexus, ultimately offers little beyond offering hope of a future of reduced (or total abstention from) meat consumption. Poirier (2019) substantiates this contribution by noting that Meat Culture presents novel discourses around 'meat' as 'living subjects' rather than 'man-made objects', further qualifying the use of this text in exploring some of the cultural valuations of meat, but also its limited use here. This thesis makes sense of 'meat' as the inanimate, but socially affective, man-made object lacking agency. McCorry and Miller (2019) support this approach, finding that the value of literary 'meat critique' is conceptually diverse and need not be applied solely to the purpose for which its author intended. Pott's ideas about meat and culture are here used to explore some potential cultural meanings of meat, with cognisence of their original presentation through onto-epistemological lens which differ with those of this thesis.

As noted by Freeman's critique (2021), Meat Culture is structured as an anthology of diverse and seemingly disparate cultural interpretations of meat, and employs no obvious framework to make sense of that diversity beyond an assumed vegan primacy. The book outlines from the beginning the relative uniqueness of meat in the contemporary food system, noting that whilst humans have always consumed meat, the growing animal-industrial complex shadowing meat consumption is unprecedented in size, scope and global entanglements (Twine, 2012). Potts also identities that meat is "*widespread and ingrained*" in culture, displaying a near-universal engagement, which is unmatched by other threats, and is "*not one thing, nor is it static*". Meat is framed as culturally dynamic and evolving, supporting views that social and cultural constructions of meat alter as economic conditions change (Popkin, 2017). The anthology styling of the book then launches fourteen chapters, each presenting a diverse

cultural framing of meat consumption. These are summarised here for reference to the broader thesis and development of new ideas about meat in culture.

- Meat shapes gender norms and sexual politics by facilitating 'carnophallogocentrism' that intersects the denigration of women and animals (Adams & Calarco, 2016).

- Meat is normalised by popular critique of food systems placing attention on political processes which surround food, rather than food itself (Taylor & McKenzie, 2016).

- Meat is used to legitimise xenophobic discourses by focusing ethical questions about the food system onto non-Western practices (Dalziell & Wadiwel, 2016).

- Meat is shaped by American cultural imperialism which markets exoticised Western dietary practices to justify global expansion of fast-food restaurants (Stanescu, 2016).

- Meat is supported by 'zooesis' via marketing performances which conceal animal husbandry practices and hide human-animal interactions (Linne & Pederson, 2016).

- Meat represents the largely hidden violence of the agri-food industry by serving as an end-product of anthroparchal processes which conceal brutality (Boyde, 2016).

- Meat is normalised by science fiction narratives in literature and media via analogous devices which 'other' nonhuman animals as distinct life forms (Dunn, 2016).

- Meat is communicated as the end-form of human interventionism in natural processes through inaccurate artistic representations of farmed animals (Watt, 2016).

- Meat is legitimised by comparing the intellects and rights of nonhuman animals to those of human children, which is used to negate their interests (Davis, 2016).

- Meat is being challenged by a vegan counter-culture and related movements which threaten to destabilise inequitable human-animal relations (Cole & Stewart, 2016).

- Meat presents complicated moral challenges to adherents of those movements by questioning naturality and morality of nonhuman animal carnism (Cudworth, 2016)

- Meat creates social tension through vegan practices challenging culturally dominant practices of meat consumption, threatening social relationships (Twine, 2016).

- Meat challenges eco-critics, environmentalists, scholars, and academics working in sustainability, health, and social justice to alter their own consumption (Gaard, 2016).

These diverse and thought-provoking claims of the cultural meanings and functions of meat present opportunity for further socially imaginative investigation of meat consumption. A recent research prioritisation exercise confirmed the need to progress the cultural study of meat. Morris et al. (2021) led a participatory process to etablish priorities in social scientific research to conceptualise food systems beyond the current animal-based practices which characterise unsustainable diets in the Anthropocene. Amongst diverse lines of research inquiry,

participants voiced a need to explore diversities in and between food cultures to make sense of complex global entanglements in the food system, and the cultural framings of animals as food in different time periods across world cultures. This thesis contributes to the former by seeking to explore relations between micropolitics of local food systems, and their relation to macrosocial, political and cultural structures. The latter is to be partially explored through the longevity of a prolonged ethnographic fieldwork phase which may enable observation of changes in cultural constructions of meat and food over time, though not in the broader chronological or temporal context urged by Morris et al. (2021). This thesis recognises, but does not adopt, critical animal or vegan scholar perspectives on meat consumption, instead supporting a more open onto-epistemological stance towards planetary health.

1.2.5 Cultures of Birmingham

This sub-section identifies extant literature in the field of cultural studies focused on the cultures of Birmingham, including the Birmingham School of cultural studies scholarship, and the methodological insights from the literature in this area.

Area studies and culture

When considering health and food cultures, and the research methodologies which might be used to explore them, it is important to recognise the area studies approach. This transdisciplinary perspective effectively reshapes the ontological framing of localised inquiry (Szanton, 2004), by interpreting social experience according to specific, place-based theorisations, rather than viewing local life through established but fragmented disciplinary lenses (Miyoshi & Harootunian, 2022). In the context of this thesis, the area studies approach would demand the holistic appraisal of health and food cultures in Birmingham from numerous and probably conflicting theoretical positions representing differing social scientific traditions, rather than what-will-be the adoption of planetary health as a conceptual framework, and New Materialist Social Inquiry as the theoretical lens through which to explore Birmingham-based planetary health activity.

There are a range of academic and real-world benefits of working from an area studies perspective. Jenkins and Leaman (2014) advocate area studies for resisting reliance on established academic disciplines, which risk "rigidities and over-determinism" in making sense of social life. This allows for the recognition of nuanced, special characteristics of specific places, which may be used to develop more effective solutions to local problems (Kuijper, 2008). Accordingly, area studies approaches may be a useful tool for the investigation of local health threats and development of public health and health promotion activity.

The area studies approach has also been widely criticised for encouraging notions of Western exceptionalism, by suggesting that spaces and places in the Western world are too unique to be studied using conventional universal methods of inquiry, demanding localised analytical frames which differ from those used to study other places (Pease, 2009). Acharya (2006) states that area studies scholars tend to "reify and essentialise" their places and spaces of interest, in an attempt to make scholarly claims that they have found a place so unique it cannot be studied using conventional methods and theories, thereby closing-off any legitimate scholarly debate around it. Other scholars have commented that area studies approaches, whilst sufficiently holistic for the authentic appraisal of social life, have a strong tendency to epitomise positive characteristics (Cumings, 1997), seeing only the virtues of people in specific places and, for the absence of disciplinary analytical frames, fail to engage in scholarly social critique (Fanon, 2008). Peterson (2015) states that whilst area studies has potential to

generate meaningful local solutions to local problems, the approach has a "troubling record", leading to some scholars declaring this transdisciplinary field invalid (Walker & Sakai, 2019).

Cultural studies in Birmingham

Birmingham was once globally recognised as a focal point of the area studies academic movement. The Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology (CSS) at the University of Birmingham was a world-renowned centre of innovation in development of the area studies approach, and published numerous important Birmingham-based area studies works (Webster, 2004), the collective vision of which became internationally referred to as "the Birmingham School" [of interdisciplinary area and cultural studies thought] (Hilton, 2013). The Birmingham CCS was closed in 2002 and later reformed into a more traditional sociology department, as part of a process the Head of the reformed School referred to as a transition to a "broad church" (Marsh, 2005). Marsh's response to Webster's critique of the closure of the Birmingham CCS actively addresses how the historical area studies approach adopted by the School eventually led to its demise and a need for reformation, as the nuanced and bespoke nature of area studies effectively closed academic dialogue between researchers in the School, and their academic interactions with scholars beyond Birmingham. Both Webster and Marsh's critique of the Birmingham-based area studies approach are valuable in shaping this thesis. Whilst Webster argues that there is value in challenging disciplinary orthodoxy to understand the cultures of Birmingham, Marsh contends the real value of social inquiry is in using place-based findings and narratives to make sense of broader social life, for which the area studies approach is inappropriate for modern scholarship.

The Birmingham School does, however, provide some insights into local culture which can inform interdisciplinary works beyond the area studies approach. Firstly, to address the recognised deficit of area studies being unable to provide commentary or findings for implications beyond the focal space, Harrison (2010) notes in a study of the working-class Birmingham origins of heavy metal music, that spaces in Birmingham influence national and global cultures. Through a series of interviews with Birmingham bands Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, Harrison concludes that industrial geographies of the Birmingham working-class can be directly linked to global cultural changes in music of the late 20th Century. This is supported by historical observations that Birmingham's role as a centre of industrialisation in the 18th and 19th Centuries (Whyman, 2018) and as a focal point of British artistic geographies in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Hartnell, 1995) have had profound influence on national and international cultures.

In developing Birmingham-centric research methods, Watson's (1993) reflections on the "Birmingham ethnographic tradition" which came from the Birmingham School, warn of the untheorized presence of a "*new middle class*" in Birmingham, which confuses ethnographic

practice and analytical lenses by questioning what the dominant culture of Birmingham is. To avoid a weakening of the coherence of analytical outputs illustrating Birmingham cultures, it is advised that ethnographic work in Birmingham actively addresses socioeconomic diversity to recognise, and make sense of, this presence (Watson, 1993). Aligned with the critique of the area studies approach, Griffin (2011) argues that studies of Birmingham culture have tended to romanticise the working-class origins and industrial past of the city, resulting in publications which do not accurately reflect growing hardships faced by communities in the West Midlands. It is therefore advised that studies of Birmingham cultures make greater use of survivalist narratives, respecting the challenges of urban life rather than celebrating them (Griffin, 2011). Both these lines of methodological thought are useful in constructing an ethnographic exercise which is cautious of false representations of Birmingham life through the "*new middle class*" which also dominates contemporary activism (Chen & Shen, 2017), and which illustrates current deprivations in the city (Karner & Parker, 2011; Rajendran, et al., 2020).

In defence of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity

This thesis recognises that meat is political, social, systematic, and cultural. Health and food culture in Birmingham is thereby adopted as the primary focal unit of the investigation of meat for planetary health. It is important however to note that this ethnography is one of culture *in* Birmingham, rather than the culture *of* Birmingham. Recognising the scholarly debate around the work and legacies of the Birmingham School, this ethnography is rooted in local communities without making claims of their relative exceptionalism. As inquiry driven by the conceptual framework of planetary health, which is inherently global and makes sense of wellbeing as a connection between the global human population and the planet, there must be some outputs of this work which are relatable for populations beyond Birmingham. The thesis therefore seeks to respect Birmingham cultures, without seeing them as exceptional.

A final important recognition of the legacy of the Birmingham School, and its interpretations of culture in its home city, is the work of Stuart Hall, Director of the Birmingham School of CCS from 1968 until 1979 (Bennett, 2016). Hall's work in and of Birmingham had profound impact on the academic study of culture (Ang, 2016), and his methodological theorisations of cultural practice analysis are of considerable influence for this thesis. Central to his contributions to cultural studies was his theorisation of the bidirectionality of culture in the social world: that culture is the reproduction of social life, which in turn produces culture to sustain itself (Rojek, 2012). This is represented through Hall's seminal cultural model, the Circuit of Culture (Hall, 1997) which is explored later in this thesis.

Amongst his wide-ranging contributions to cultural studies and their implications for research practice in studying the cultures of Birmingham, the following ideas are observed:

- Hall recognised an importance of immersion in and appraisal of the "lived experience" for the holistic investigation of Birmingham culture (Scannell, 2016).

- Hall envisaged a critical cultural analysis of Birmingham which was not limited to the virtue-praising traditions of area studies scholarship (Winter, 2018).

- Hall understood contemporary challenges of urban health and justice as being biopolitical, symbolically constructed by UK government policy (Hussain, 2018).

Although referred to seemingly only by Hall himself, and not gaining much wider scholarly recognition, Hall coined the term "Birmingham analysis" to refer to his proposition of the bidirectional creation of culture and its relationship with social life, of which these visions of a cultural investigation based on lived experience, critical theorisation and biopolitics form an integral part (Lave, et al., 1992). Hall's ideas, using the Circuit of Culture, may therefore serve as a theoretical bridge between area studies and non-area-focused interdisciplinary scholarship, allowing for a Birmingham-centric analysis of local cultures which have meanings and relevance beyond the city for planetary health.

1.2.6 Deprivileging human agency

This sub-section reconciles planetary health urgencies with the shortcomings of emergent solutions to reducing meat consumption. It orients this thesis towards a cultural inquiry employing a materialist ontology, exploring interdependencies of health, humanity, and sustainability via analytical deprivileging of human agency.

Planetary health demands some form of sociological framing beyond the immediate needs of humanity (Farman & Rottenburg, 2019). Posthumanism refers to a range of scholarly positions which assume an urgency to define onto-epistemologies beyond that of human agency and moral concern (Ferrando, 2013). Simply put, posthuman thinking demands the privileging of needs of other natural entities, including nonhuman animals, natural ecosystems, plants, and the planets (Badmington, 2003). Ultimately, posthuman thought concerns the criticism and possible rejection of human exceptionalism and supremacy (Nayar, 2018), presenting urgencies which exist beyond 'the human' (Ferrando, 2019). How this might be achieved is subject to hotly contested scholarly debate, from which a diverse body of philosophical thought has emerged concerning posthuman privileging (Hassan, 1977; Hassan, 1988). This body of scholarship has seen radical development in the 21st Century, as it becomes increasingly recognised that posthumanism offers potential in imagining novel solutions to complex global challenges such as climate change, water scarcity and environmental degradation, in what Ferrando (2016) describes as "*the Party of the Anthropocene*", a dry satricial remark to observe that humanity does not exist in a social vacuum: the physical environment in which social life takes place is deserving of urgent attention also. Although conceptions of posthumanism are contested, it is generally agreed that posthuman thinking may aid navigation of the Anthropocene (Menga & Davies, 2020), and the inquiry needed to support such navigation (Ullmer, 2017). In this thesis concerning the cultural meanings of meat and other resource-intensive, unsustainable forms of consumption in the Anthropocene, posthuman thinking offers a lens through which sustainable food systems for planetary health might be visible.

Of critical debate in the scholarship of posthumanism is the extent to which human exceptionalism is challenged and, where necessary, reconciled. Post-anthropocentric views contend that the human condition is weakened and compromised by the privileging of human welfare, which would be better supported by socioecological realignment of thought concerning matter on which human life is dependent (Kopnina, et al., 2018). By appraising human welfare but rejecting human exceptionalism and supremacy as a means of achieving it, the post-anthropocentric position suggests that human wellbeing can be supported and enhanced by privileging the ecological matter on which wellbeing depends, namely natural

resources and planetary systems. In contrast to critical forms of posthumanism, which contend that philosophical thought should progress beyond the human species entirely, post-anthropocentrism suggests a more subtle but complex nexus between human and nonhuman entities, suggesting that thought might progress beyond human-centred needs, but not beyond the human species in totality (Marchesini, 2015; Marchesini, 2019). In regard to meat consumption, post-anthropocentrism offers a balanced view that human wellbeing can be supported, essentially, by privileging the needs of natural ecosystems above those of humans, on the assumption that this will be of greater holistic value to the human species than the extremes of exploiting natural resources for human gain or ignoring human needs entirely to benefit natural resources. There is a small body of literature surrounding purely theoretical conceptions of meat as viewed through post-anthropocentric lenses (Calarco, 2014).

This post-anthropocentric thinking may be achieved, according to Fox and Alldred (2016) via the deprivileging of human agency. By respecting the notion that the human species has agency, but also recognising that human agency has resulted in threats to global health and sustainability, a theoretical compromise is reached in which human agencies are accepted as existing but have been de-centred in considerations about how best to support human welfare. This balance was later described as recognising that "*humans are an integral, but not privileged, element*" (Fox & Alldred, 2020). What should replace humans at the centre of social inquiry is not universally agreed, particularly regarding the direction of deprivileging. Some post-anthropocentrism scholars assert a need to privilege 'other-than-human' agencies (Harrison-Buck & Hendon, 2018), whilst others value the privileging of 'more-than-human' agencies (Dowling, et al., 2017). As this thesis concerns the micro-subjective experience of meat consumption, and its relation to the macro-objective health and environmental threats which challenge sustainability, the 'more-than-human' agencies of the planet are privileged in this thesis, assuming that there is sociological value in the posthuman agencies of food, and the material used to produce it.

This thesis recognises the value of post-anthropocentric scholarship as a form of ontological posthumanism, in creating a delicate balance between human wellbeing and environmental sustainability as aligned with the values of planetary health as a conceptual framework for social inquiry. To explore cultural meanings of meat, a post-anthropocentric deprivileging of human agency occurred in which urgencies of human were respected but assumed to be best supported by privileging of 'more-than-human' agencies of material, primarily food and specifically meat. This was supported by adopting a new materialist theoretical conception of the interactions between social and physical worlds.

1.3 Theoretical positioning

This section presents a theoretical framework which enabled the thesis to explore cultural meanings of meat consumption as social material. The study adopts New Materialist Social Inquiry (Fox & Alldred, 2015) as the primary theoretical lens, identifying with the posthuman axioms of that theory in relation to the conceptual orientation of the thesis as a matter of planetary health. Rejection of distinction between the social and physical worlds, and seeking the social animacy in all things, facilitated deprivileging of human agency via analytical representation of complex cultural entanglements, known as social-assemblages.

1.3.1 New materialisms

This sub-section clarifies how the analytical depriviteging of human agency was supported, through a considered theoretical praxis surrounding transition from the 'old' to the 'new' materialisms. determining core features of new materialism.

Theory in the social sciences has traditionally focused on human agency and how social experience is derived from the interactions between people (Corbetta, 2003). In this sense, scholarship has been overtly anthropocentric, assuming and privileging human exceptionalism and valuing human agencies without much regard for affect exerted by nonhuman entities. Traditional or historical social inquiry typically concerns structural social phenomena and can be considered to employ limited or uncreative approaches to capturing and interpreting social life, generating a research culture of interviews, focus groups and questionnaires (Prasad, 2017). Such traditional methods are highly reliant on the analysis of communication in a form of 'empirical falsity' (Schmidt, 2013), failing to acknowledge presence or influence of physical matter that connects people, providing stimulus for social interaction, social experience and ultimately shapes the social world (Fox & Alldred, 2020). Reliance on spoken or written words as proxy for social life, privileges human exceptionalism which this thesis seeks to reject.

Materialist ontologies shift the analytical focus from conversations to assemblages: groupings of physical matter and social entities which interact to produce social reality (Rekret, 2016). Recognising the broad-ranging and all-encompassing nature of social inquiry, new materialist assemblages are not limited to the spoken words of conversational interaction (Lettow, 2017). In academic inquiry, assemblages are termed 'research-assemblage', encompassing a unique entanglement of the people, the conversations, the context and the physical materials involved in a particular social experience (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011), providing the basic foundations for post-anthropocentric analysis, by making the recognition of matter central to the analysis. In locating humans in a research-assemblage, matter is recognised; in de-centring humans in a research-assemblage, matter is privileged. This orientation is determined by what Fox and Alldred (2021) refer to as 'diffractive methodology': by privileging the processes by which matter diffracts, and is diffracted by the social experience according to affect economies, the analytical process rejects human supremacy via the (at least) partial privileging of nonhuman agencies.

Such theorisation of social life lends to the production of meaning of the micropolitics which shape, and are shaped by, matter (Fox & Alldred, 2015). Physical matter involved in social interactions might include the venue, objects, sensory affect, or any other physical matter upon which the social interactions are dependant. Removing human voice and action as the focus of agency, new materialism approaches the investigation of social reality on the

assumption that inanimate material has as much affect and influence as the animate actors and voices in any social interaction (Fox & Alldred, 2018). This progresses exploration of the research-assemblage beyond merely examining humans alone without context, providing the basis for post-anthropocentric analysis and interpretation. This thesis specifically concerns the framework presented by Nick Fox and Pam Alldred, 'New Materialist Social Inquiry' (Fox & Alldred, 2015) as the theoretical lens for making sense of the cultural meanings of meat for planetary health, via the deprivileging of human agency.

Reflection on the earth-human nexus under planetary health, lends naturally to consideration of the physical-social nexus under the new materialisms, and the potential they offer to serve as analytical construction for the deprivileging of human agency. Like the publication of seminal works in planetary health, the primary literature concerning New Materialist Social Inquiry was published around the time of the launch of this study (Fox & Alldred, 2015), again highlighting the 'newness' of the orientations of this thesis. Scholarly criticism in this field during the production of the thesis has predominantly attracted attention in the distinctions between the 'old' and 'new' materialisms, with numerous scholars questioning whether such a distinction exists at all (Monfore, 2018).

Cudworth and Hobden (2015) simplify this divide by identifying the primary difference of opinion in the emancipatory role of posthumanism, and the potential for wellbeing created through the rejection of anthropocentrism. Whilst the 'old' materialisms, developed largely from Marxist thinking, assert that sociological inquiry around physical-social interactions should be centred around human need, the 'new' materialisms transition towards exploring those interactions beyond 'the human' via the deprivileging of human agency (Gamble, et al., 2019). This might be further defined as the 'old' theories seeing material as being part of social life, and 'new' theories recognising the total reliance of social life on material. Fox responded to these questions of 'newness' by asserting that the 'new' materialisms seek to better reconcile historical tensions in social theory concerning the separation of matter as biological and socially constituted entities, making sense of social life by valuing the matter on which it is dependent (Fox, 2012). This relatively simplistic transition of the valuation of material "*re-makes sociology*" (Fox & Alldred, 2016) ultimately locating human needs in sociological inquiry, without centring them. In doing so, human agencies are deprivileged (or de-centred), providing theoretical and analytical focus for privileging the needs of non-human actors such as animals, ecosystems, and natural environments. This presents a need for this thesis to adopt New Materialist Social Inquiry as the theoretical framing of the later analysis.

1.3.2 Research-assemblages

This sub-section describes how viewing social life through material culture generated data forming complex, messy entanglements, initially known as research-assemblages. This justifies transitioning 'old' materialist thinking about phenomena, towards seeing material interactions as events, and the relational character of those events as culture.

The macro-unit of social analysis in New Materialist Social Inquiry (Fox & Alldred, 2015) is the research-assemblage: the entanglement of the physical matter and social interactions which together create social life. This defining feature is new materialist analytical deviation from simpler ontological positions which might be employed in researcher-led data collection practices, conducted in artificial settings, such as an interview or a focus group. Naturally lending to participant observation, the research-assemblage requires a holistic frame for inquiry, capturing the materialisms of social life in authentic snapshots. Pieced together, multiple research-assemblages with consistent linkage (i.e., following a particular group over time), may be used to derive materialist understandings of the social world.

The research-assemblage celebrates the diverse matter which affects and is affected by the social experience. For example, a research-assemblage in a community kitchen might consist of a number of individuals (categorised as different types of community stakeholders), audio recordings of verbal conversations, a short field note based on personal observations, sensory experience and emotive affect, six meals, one venue (and several spaces in the venue), a wide range of food stuffs, and a range of kitchen equipment.

Traditional social inquiry might have collected, analysed, and interpreted only the audio recordings (which might be considered non-directive interviews), by positioning textual data as proxy for human experience (Bradshaw, et al., 2017). New Materialist Social Inquiry however also considers the role of the inanimate matter in the social experience, to look beyond the human and at the wider framings of social life. This generates a secondary form of post-anthropocentrism in which the analytical processing of the data is itself a form of posthumanism, complementing the broader posthuman conceptual positioning of the inquiry (Schadler, 2019). Deprivileging of human agency towards planetary health is theoretically supported by post-anthropocentric analytical valuations of matter, for post-anthropocentric research outcomes. New materialism frames the social interaction by situating the physical matter in the research-assemblage at the centre of the social experience; that which is said, felt or experienced by the people involved happens only because there is some physical matter about which to say, feel or experience something.

This is of relevance to a study which concerns the social and cultural meanings of a physical material, meat, to individuals. Braidotti (2013) considers this to challenge the

dichotomy of nature and culture; the assumption that one exists without the other fundamentally fails to recognise the context of social reality, which is based primarily on physical and material entities. All forms of materialist thought challenge this assumption, questioning traditional anthropocentric social research perspectives which assert material is merely the 'background' for social activity but is not an active part of it (Ivinson & Taylor, 2013). One clear challenge is in the authentic and holistic capturing of the 'wholeness' of the research-assemblage, as the analysis through new materialism retains some element of human supremacy by virtue of the researcher being human and having finite capacity to capture the wholeness of material and social experience in the research-assemblage. Whilst this 'wholeness' cannot be guaranteed, data collection methods, and a holistic methodology, may be employed to enhance, as much as possible, the holistic nature of the data, and the authentic completeness of the research-assemblage. This thesis proposes that participatory observation is the most suitable format for new materialist data collection, supporting techniques which would result in my immersion in the research-assemblage as much as is possible without causing disruption to social life. Ethnographic research is suited to this, supporting full researcher immersion in a community to capture the entirety of the lived experience with a group. This would maximise data collection potential to work towards authentic completeness of the research-assemblage.

As this participatory method is proposed, from this point in the thesis 'research-assemblage' is here referred to as 'social-assemblage', to reflect the application of immersive ethnographic methods to New Materialist Social Inquiry.

1.3.3 Affective flow

This sub-section considers how connections between material in the social-assemblage might be understood, to be known as affective flow. This describes relational power and resistance between material, drawing together and separating the physical and social worlds, aiding post-human analytical processes to make sense of material culture and consumption.

The micro-unit of social analysis in New Materialist Social Inquiry (Fox & Alldred, 2015) is affective flow: the connections between physical matter and social interaction, which together form materialism, and contribute to the materialist construction of social life. With the focus of inquiry being on the social-assemblages and not merely the people who are part of them, analytical concern shifts from what is being said or done to the relationships between the elements of the social-assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari (1998), generally deemed the 'masters' of 'old' materialism (Fox, 2012) referred to these relationships as 'affective flows'; meaning, feeling, identity or desire which is the result of the interactions between people and the physical matter which connects them. Affective flows may be continuous or continual. Continuous affective flows are deemed the absolute and universal relationships between the physical and the social, and are common across social-assemblages, such as food generating satiety and general enjoyment. Continual affective flows are those which are typically expected or simply high in frequency, for example hot drinks being offered and consumed in a social setting on a cold day. This study seeks to identify how forms of affective flow emanating from meat and other foods, and the wider material used in the production and cultural experience of meat, generate affect in people and groups around them.

If comparing to more traditional forms of social inquiry, it might be proposed that affective flows are comparable to concept-driven codes in traditional interpretative analysis: the basic units of social life that indicate broader trends about relationships in the social world. Unlike traditional inquiry, however, the points on the ends of codes are not merely social interaction but must include physical matter, thus supporting the physical-social nexus which this thesis compares to the earth-human nexus under planetary health. Their primary function in social analysis remains much the same as codes, being subject, however, to summarisation and theming to form broad conclusions about social-assemblages. In a longer period of fieldwork, which may characterise ethnography, it is expected there are multiple social-assemblages, and continuous and continual affective flows are common in and between them, thus enabling generalisations to be made about social life in the community of study.

A secondary distinction, important for this study, can also be made between aggregative and singular affects. Whilst aggregative affects in a social-assemblage may connect physical matter and social interactions into systematised entanglements, singular

affects may have no such meaning. Affective flows which are common, repetitive, or related in their affect to other affective flows, may form aggregations: collections of affective flows that together have broader meaning. This might relate to, say, foods having multiple meanings, and those meanings differing depending on context. Singular affect, however, is derived from a single affective flow which alone does not relate to the rest of the social-assemblage and is analysed to be isolated. This is comparable to an errant code in traditional social analysis: whilst errancy does not devalue the code, it may show deviations from broader social meanings which are of secondary interest. Fox and Alldred (2015) suggest that these singular affects, which fragment otherwise organised social-assemblages, create divergent 'lines of flight' and are indicative of unique, emergent, or disparate behaviours, cultural practices, experiences, or meanings. To capture those singular affects, which may be of secondary interest, this thesis intends to employ some form of 'messy sheet' to capture isolated affective flows which may not be of obvious relevance in or of social-assemblages according to this study's analysis but may serve as research and scholarly interests for the future.

1.3.4 Power in social-assemblages

This sub-section provides final theoretical synthesis of the thesis by situating me in the social-assemblage, recognising my presence facilitates and disrupts affective flow. I would become my own participant, my presence influencing affect economies and power in the social-assemblage, which must be acknowledged. A traditional ethnography is proposed.

When synthesising theoretical framing to this point, it is apparent that the study of, and my situation in, the social-assemblage, would be an organic, dynamic, and hectic experience. New materialist thinking, through social-assemblages, seeks to make sense of social chaos, which immediately seems an obviously messy experience, likely to be complemented by a messy analytical process. This makes sense: the social world is messy, and authentic study of it is likely to be a messy experience. This situates me in a complicated yet realistic research setting, over which I may exert power and influence. Concluding this theoretical framing of the thesis, this final brief consideration of the new materialisms concerns my state of being in the social-assemblages I seek to inhabit, capture, and interpret, and the power this may give me to shape and order the materialist nature of social inquiry.

If the social world is the product of social experience, structure, power, and influence, it can be reasonably assumed that affective flows which exist in social-assemblages must be at least somewhat directional; that is, there is a line of cause and effect in the relationships between the physical matter and social interactions. Though directionality is not always clear or obvious, the direction of an affective flow can be indicative of the source of power (or resistance to it). In this study, the question of directionality challenges how the materialisms of meat influence dietary culture, or whether individual behaviour dictates the use of such materials. These questions have been referred to as an 'affect economy'; the complex web of affective flows and the directions in which they flow between the animate and inanimate matter in the social-assemblage (Isham, et al., 2021). This web, sometimes described as an entanglement, is central to new materialist analysis of the social-assemblage and interpreting the analysis to answer research questions.

Such power relationships in social-assemblages can be considered a form of micropolitics. Affective flows between physical and social entities may be indicative of local or community governance, local cultural standards and expectations or perhaps microcosmic representations of power relationships at macrosocial levels. Fox and Alldred (2015) suggest that approaching research design with micropolitics in mind enables research to be developed in a bottom-up manner. This, they state, "*offers a strategy for developing methodologies – both to understand the world, and to change it*" (Fox & Alldred, 2015). This further supports adoption of post-anthropocentric thought as an analytical tool and conceptual frame for

interpretation, using a posthuman lens to 'see' meaning in the data by deprivileging human agency, and using those meanings to form interpretations about their implementation. Interpreting this to mean an alignment with participatory research, there is an overlap between New Materialist Social Inquiry and traditional ethnography.

As ethnographic practices are typically participant-led and owned (Francis, 1996; Russell & Barley, 2020), a traditional ethnography would minimise potential for my presence in the social-assemblages to disrupt the authenticity or accuracy of data collection, as my presence and movement would be directed by affective flows emulated by participants and would be recorded as such. The reflexive nature of ethnography would also enable me to voice, recognise, and make sense of my influence on the community of study, asserting more overt positionality and generating greater transparency to inform the analysis of the social-assemblages. This study adopts ethnographic methods of data collection as a means of capturing social-assemblages towards new materialist thinking around the cultural meanings of meat consumption.

1.4 Methodological positioning

This section makes sense of the topical, conceptual, and theoretical positionings of the thesis to inform research design. Acknowledging the new materialist conception of me as a participant in my dataset, and the role of power and resistance in social-assemblages, an ethnographic methodology was identified as appropriate for exploring cultural meanings of meat for planetary health. This section considers how the thesis interpreted contested ideas about ethnographic inquiry and seeks to build on extant methodological practices to conduct an ethnography characterised by meaningful researcher-participant power inversions.

1.4.1 Ethnographic inquiry

This sub-section introduces traditional ethnography and its associated research practices. It considers the nature of researcher-participant relationships in ethnographic fieldwork and relates this to the deprivileging of human agency to complement the conceptual orientation of the thesis around planetary health.

From findings of a longitudinal study of infant's perceptions of food, Liberman et al. (2016) conclude that "*Food is inherently social; foods that people eat are embedded in cultural systems*". This thesis assumes that diets are determined by cultural practice and perspective as outlined in a previous section on conceptual framing around culture and planetary health.

Ethnography means very literally to write [graphy] about people [ethno]. The practice of doing so is better expressed by the Association for Qualitative Research's definition of the term: "*the practice in which researchers spend long periods living within a culture in order to study it*" (2013). This is generally aligned with other definitions of the approach, which state that ethnography is the systematic study of culture using participatory research methods (Hammersley, 2006), characterised by prolonged periods of immersion in typically unfamiliar communities (Naidoo, 2012). Developed from the late 19th Century onwards, and largely as a tool for colonial exploitation, ethnography has a diverse and colourful history as social research methodology, and has been used to explore a vast range of cultural practices, beliefs, artefacts and phenomena (Agar, 1996), from traditional cultural topics such as human migration (Paerregaard, 2008) to more modern cultural phenomena such as 'stag parties' (Briggs & Ellis, 2017). Fetterman (2009) states that "*the ethnographer is a human instrument*", and that conceptualising the ethnographer in this fashion allows for holisitic social inquiry that embraces the sensitivities and perceptive qualities of that instrument. This may be considered to relate to the concept of the affective flows under new materialism, and the researcher's role in sensing, and making sense of, the affect economies which shape the social-assembalge.

The ethnographer will generally gain an emic perspective; that is, an understanding of the culture as an insider, as opposed to being an alien observer (De Laine, 1997). This can be seen from the earliest of anthropological studies; celebrated ethnographer Raymond Firth spent years living with the preindustrial First-Nations peoples of what are now the Solomon Islands in order to gain an understanding of Polynesian culture, undisturbed by overt Western influences (Firth, 1936). By living amongst this group for such a long period of time, Firth was able to integrate as a member of their community, gaining the emic perspective; he drew meaning from Polynesian cultural practices by living them, and seeing Polynesian culture "*from the inside-out*" (Handwerker, 2001). Firth lived the daily existence of an inhabitant of the Solomon Islands and was able to make commentary on Polynesian culture as an individual

who had experienced it, reporting his experiences of that community with overt recognitions of being an alien in an unfamiliar culture. Firth's study continues to be deemed an example of skilled ethnography nearly a century later (Gingrich & Knoll, 2018) for its recognition of biases, and their clouding of his emic perspective of Polynesian culture (Macfarlane, et al., 2021). This was largely achieved by Firth setting out a pre-ethnographic position statement declaring his interests and (what would later be seen as) biases, prior to immersion in the new unfamiliar culture (Laviolette, 2020). The recognition and partial mitigation of biases, as much as possible, characterises quality ethnographic research (Whittemore, et al., 2001).

In practice, ethnographers will typically engage in a culture, first as an outsider but gradually integrating with the group in order to gain trust. Data often takes the form of field notes, video/audio recordings, photographs, and reflective writings; generally, any form of evidence that supports the ethnographer's conclusions whilst inflicting as little impact on the normal behaviours of the group being studied (Brewer, 2000). Naturally, objectivity is a critical methodological concern to the ethnographer. Even with the best of intentions and the greatest separation from biases, the ethnographer's conclusions are influenced by their own cultural practices and identity, and it is often difficult to fully integrate with the culture to the extent that one no longer considers themselves to be an outsider. There is a relatively recent but expansive literature base of ethnographies used in health research (Oliffe, 2005), and developing but untested conceptual interests in using ethnographic methods in planetary health (Wilson, et al., 2018). The abstract, fluid, and dynamic nature of ethnography means that associated physical research practices are hard to define (Agar, 1996). Seeking to develop good ethnographic practice aligned with precedent in health research, however, some commentary surrounding the characteristics of traditional ethnography is here presented in relation to the basic descriptors provided by Lambert, et al. (2011). Twelve primary characteristics are identified according to this work, and are briefly commented upon in relation to how they will be embraced by this thesis in the conduct of a traditional ethnography, according to the conceptual-theoretical construction of the study as per planetary health conceptulations and new materialist theorisations. They confirm that a traditional ethnography (as opposed to instututional ethnographic practices) are suitable as the methodological positioning for this thesis. Lambert et al. consider that ethnography in health research is characterised in the following ways (italicised), with the interpretations of these characteristics presented below each statement.

Characteristics of ethnography (Lambert et al., 2011)

Useage 1: Designing the ethnography

Lambert's primary characteristics of traditional ethnography for health research are presented here to show how the study was explicitly designed to be traditionally ethnographic. The table is presented again in *2.1.3 Ethnographic methods* to illustrate how they were interpreted to conduct fieldwork, and again in *4.3.3 Ethnographic reflections* to evaluate their usage.

"Ethnography explores: it is about discovery"

This thesis seeks to discover the affect economies which surround meat and meat consumption, by exploring the holism of the social-assemblage in community contexts.

"Ethnography relies on collecting data in the natural environment"

This thesis will see me immersed in an unfamiliar community of food activists in their day-to-day activities, led by activists according to their normal patterns of work.

"Ethnography does not de-contextualise as with an artificially structured interview"

This thesis presents research questions answerable only to a unique conceptual-theoretical construction of the study: no questions will be prepared or asked of participants.

"Ethnography values multiple perspectives, including researcher and researched"

This thesis sees the social world as social-assemblages in which all people and matter has affect: that affect is the central axiom of the analytical process and will be valued.

"Ethnography observes what people do, it does not rely totally on what people say, but sees, visualises and creates a picture through first-hand experience of it"

This thesis considers that social interaction happens through physical matter: it can only be analysed by valuing physical matter and its representations in the social-assemblage.

"Ethnography uses a variety of different methods, multi-modes of data collection"

This thesis will make use of diverse data collection practices, including audio recordings, photographs, field notes, physical artefacts, sensory information, and video recordings.

"Ethnography sees that no variables are purposively manipulated"

This thesis has recognised the potentially disruptive and influential affect of the researcher in the social-assemblage and is employing positionality exercises to minimise it.

"Ethnography forms intimate relationships between the researcher and the researched"

This thesis seeks to explore a loose network of food activists over a prolonged period of a calendar year, presenting ample time to form close relationships with food activists.

"Ethnography embraces that phenomena cannot be analysed divorced from social and cultural context"

This thesis uses the concept of the social-assemblage to capture, illustrate and analyse the social and cultural context of life in terms of physical matter and social experience.

"Ethnography is about the immediate social and cultural contexts, and the broader socioeconomic and political contexts"

This thesis conceptualises meat as a planetary health challenge, connecting humans and the earth: it values national, social, economic, and political linkages between the two.

"Ethnography is guided by, and generates, theory"

This thesis uses an advanced theorisation of meat and meat consumption to make sense of research design and practices: these will be employed in the analysis and interpretations.

"Ethnography is about culture, holism, naturalism, and flexibility"

This thesis does not seek to generate concrete answers to planetary health threats of meat consumption, but rather explore cultural meanings of meat to respond to policy proposals, inform health promotion practice, and develop new ideas for life in the Anthropocene.

The ethnographic practices identified by Lambert et al. (2011) are shown to have direct relevance and suitability as methodological positioning for this thesis. By immersive ethnographic practice facilitating the holistic experience, capture and analysis of the social-assemblages, the physical matter surrounding meat and meat consumption is visible, supporting deprivileging of human agency in accordance with post-anthropocentric valuations of the new materialisms. The thesis adopts traditional ethnography as the methodology for this study. The characteristics of ethnographic practice as stated by Lambert et al. (2011) are considered later in the discussion chapter, relating them to post-ethnography evaluation and positionality, to make sense of whether the study embraced these qualities.

1.4.2 Positionality

This sub-section embraces the subjective, interpretative, exploratory, and introspective qualities of traditional ethnography. A pre-fieldwork position statement is presented, outlining extant biases and perspectives I held prior to entering the community of study, to support transparent analytical processes later.

Positionality refers to one's world-view and its relevance to a specific task or situation (Reyes, 2020). In the context of qualitative research, the researcher's world-view is a combination of their onto-epistemological assumptions (Jackson, 2013; Holmes, 2020), relating to their personal interpretations of the nature of knowledge and social reality. Such assumptions are influenced by a variety of factors, such as the researcher's ethnicity, socioeconomic background and nationality, and fluid factors such as the researcher's beliefs, knowledge, and experience (Manohar, et al., 2017). Chiseri-Strater (1996) suggests it is the researcher's recognition and interpretation of these influences in relation to the research topic, setting or participants that determine the influence positionality and subjectivity will have on the onto-epistemological framing, and subsequent credibility, of ethnographic work. This concept has been challenged. Pillow (2003) questions whether exercises to explore researcher positionality serve as "*confession, catharsis, or cure?",* framing postionality exercises as having a range of potential purposes, not all of which are congruent with ethical or impactful practice. Berger (2015) counters this, stating that the primary purpose of recognising positionality is to share it with ethnographic participants, enabling authentic ethnographic immersion and supporting the inversion of traditional researcher-participant power imbalances in social inquiry. Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) affirm this in their widely-regarded guide to ethnographic practice, asserting that positionality is key to ethical ethnographic work.

The researcher's positionality affects the research in a variety of forms. Development of the study in the initial stages, decisions made about research design and process, conduct during data collection, analysis of data and interpretation of findings are all subject to the influence of position (Foote & Bartell, 2011), which may be either beneficial or a limitation. As such, recognition and consideration of positionality can be viewed as the initial phase of reflective practice, aiding identification and embracing of bias (Vandenberg & Hall, 2011). An ethnographer concerned with identifying positionality recognises that their research is shaped by bias and embraces these influences (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

The positionality exercise illustrated here is a pre-ethnographic statement of position. Following a year of ethnographic immersion in the Birmingham Foodie Community, my positions shifted notably to reflect changes in both my role in the Community, relationships

with participants, and my appraisal of social life. These post-ethnographic positions are explored in *4.4.4 Positional development.*

Positionality in ethnography

Position is context-dependant and subject to interpretation in much the same way that ethnographic practice is context-specific and subjective. When a qualitative researcher recognises positionality, they recognise they themselves are part of the world they are researching, disputing the concept of a truly objective reality (Berkovic, et al., 2020). Ethnographic research assumes behaviours, beliefs, and cultural practices are the result of a socially constructed and subjective reality; recognition of position enables the ethnographer to accept their role in their own research and their interpretations of their ethnographic experience. In this thesis, with a new materialist theorisation of social reality, this means the ethnographer must identify and make sense of how his presence in the social-assemblage influences the affect economy by shaping and redirecting flows between physical matter and social life.

This recognition of the ethnographer's role in shaping the social-assemblage is important, particularly as ethnographic inquiry traditionally requires that ethnographic immersion happens with minimal disruption to the community of study (Gelling, 2014). That which happens in the researcher's presence during fieldwork should not be notably different to that which happens in the researcher's absence (Paradis & Sutkin, 2017). The active process of an alien researcher becoming a member of an unfamiliar community suggests change is required for the researcher to assimilate with the culture or practices of the community of study. The need to conduct this process with minimal disruption suggests it is the researcher who must 'change', where necessary, not the community of study or individual participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). In this sense, a change in the researcher's position can be seen as a critical element of ethnographic inquiry. Therefore, pre-ethnography and post-ethnography positions can be identified; the difference between the two also being of interest in analysis and ethnographic reflection. In this thesis, a pre-ethnography position statement is here presented in the review chapter, and post-ethnography reflections are considered in the interpretations chapter as an evaluation of ethnographic practice.

Positionality statement: Pre-ethnography

This paragraph is written in the first-person to reflect a personal statement of pre-ethnographic position. Determining positional influence of relevance to this thesis is challenging, given the ubiquitous nature of meat consumption and the relatively profound social statement that is made when deviating from this ubiquity (Cole & Stewart, 2016). Here, an ethnographer might typically acknowledge and examine demographic characteristics relevant to the topic of study.

Bourke (2014), for example, discussed how his positional exercises largely concern his identificaiton that he identifies as a "*white, heterosexual, cisgender male [who has] lived in the southern United States for most of [his] life*" in relation to his research on the experience of ethnic minority students at a mostly white university in Kentucky. Recognition of Bourke's demographic characteristics beyond ethnicity were considered relevant as they indicated that the researcher was very much part of the cultural majority in multiple forms. Acknowledging personal interaction with popular or dominant culture is typical of critical ethnography. However, in this thesis, my topic of inquiry reflects the popular and dominant culture (excessive meat consumption as a normalised part of the Western-patten diet) whilst my own position on the topic represents deviation from that cultural norm. Influenced by Bourke's paper on positionality, I briefly examined my own fixed demographic characteristics and concluded that most – my ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity – were of little obvious direct relevance to my research topic, although I recognise how these influences will shape my situation in the social-assemblages and ultimately influence the affect economy. That is not to say my position on this would not later change. I recognise that this aberrative approach to exploring my positionality was made with haste: this is explored in greater depth in the critical appraisal of my ethnographic practice in the discussion chapter.

Two 'classic' demographic characteristics, however, were of more obvious relevance to my ethnographic practice in the design of the study. The immersive and participatory nature of my ethnography would very much rely on my ability to become a member of a community which was primarily based in characteristically economically deprived urban areas which contrasted with my life and background in rural England, living in areas with higher-than-average household incomes and generalised financial security. Whilst I did not consider my background in this context to influence my approach to forming relationships with my participants or community of study, it was worth noting that my lack of a regional accent would make it immediately apparent to potential participants that I was not local to the area, and that my lived experience of food security was likely to be markedly different to that of most of my participants. I speak with a softened-received pronunciation accent, heavily influenced by American English due to my extensive travels in the United States, whilst my community of interest was envisaged to be largely people from the West Midlands, centred around Birmingham East. My doctoral supervisors warned me about this potential schism prior to the ethnography beginning, but ultimately there is little I can do about my accent. The month-by-month 'thick description' in the methods chapter describes in depth the openness and inclusivity in the community I studied, so this was actually not problematic at all.

A notable factor of positionality emerged when considering a fluid influence: I am vegan, studying meat consumption. This raised an interesting question: would I be able to explore meat consumption, a practice to which I have been opposed for half of my life and

have not myself engaged in for over a decade? Having been a strict adherent to the philosophy since early adolescence but living, studying and being friends with people who were not vegan my entire life, I felt that, in much the same way that my veganism had never limited nor influenced my ability to form friendships in a personal capacity, my beliefs would have little or no effect on my ability to form relationships with my participants. I had worked previously in food service jobs as an undergraduate student at Bangor University, that required me to handle and serve non-vegan foods, and this did not bother me. Regarding the potential for my beliefs to influence my data analysis or interpretation of findings, I concluded that this was likely a non-issue. I was inclined to believe that, had I only recently adopted the philosophy and was still in the stage of being a 'militant vegan' – a common phase to describe the early days of being vegan where one is typically hostile towards people who are not vegan – I would likely be unable to separate my personal beliefs from my research. Having been vegan for over a decade prior to the study, and having got this phase 'out of my system', I felt able to conduct the ethnography, confident in my ability to not let my beliefs interfere with my study.

It was evident from the beginning that the purpose of my ethnography would be to seek the emic perspective. My study was characterised as a traditional ethnography by my desire to become a member of the community of study, and the actions I had taken to achieve this. Conducting research in this way was initially unfamiliar to me. My research background prior to my doctoral study was situated in the field of radical behaviourism, using quantitative methods more squarely aligned with my primary discipline of health psychology. When conducting behaviourist intervention research in schools and laer conducting socioeconomic research with employers and employees in the private sector, I took the role of the objective outsider. Although both roles required a great deal of in-situ data collection, I had not previously described the physical act of collecting data as 'fieldwork' as there was no sense of 'insiderness'. In preparing my research proposal for ethical review, I began to use the term 'fieldwork' to describe the work I would literally conduct in the field; the field in this sense being community-based food projects. Noting doctoral study is often considered to be the stage in research education when a researcher develops epistemological identity through methodological preference (McAlpine, et al., 2013), I commenced the ethnography with an openness to exploring the social-assemblages and embrace the messy, complex nature of ethnographic research.

1.4.3 The Circuit of Culture

This sub-section presents the Circuit of Culture, a framework for analysis of material culture. It outlines how culture 'happens' at the 'moments' of interaction with matter, characterising culture as material production, identify, consumption, regulation, and representation. It defends adoption of this framework as the interpretative frame for the analytical outputs.

The Circuit of Culture was developed in response to cultural studies scholars seeking new ontological framings to make sense of the cultural relevance of emergent technologies (Hall, 1997). The seminal use of the Circuit examined the cultural positioning of the newly sold Walkman cassette player (du Gay, et al., 1997), developing a novel lens through which to interpret the cultural implications of new and unexpected materials being suddenly introduced in cultures which had not seen them before (Leve, 2012). This led to the development of the Circuit as a focus on the 'moments' at which material interactions happen. Rather than focusing on grand symbolisms as might be more traditional in cultural analysis according to the traditions of symbolic interactionism, the Circuit seeks to understand what material means at and during its point of use, assuming that social construction will occur from these experiences. Hall (1997) conceptualised these experiences and their subsequent construction of social life as 'cultural meaning', referring to the process by which micro-subjective social interactions with material manifest into macro-subjective shared understandings of cultural artefacts. The Circuit of Culture is characterised by five 'moments' of material interaction.
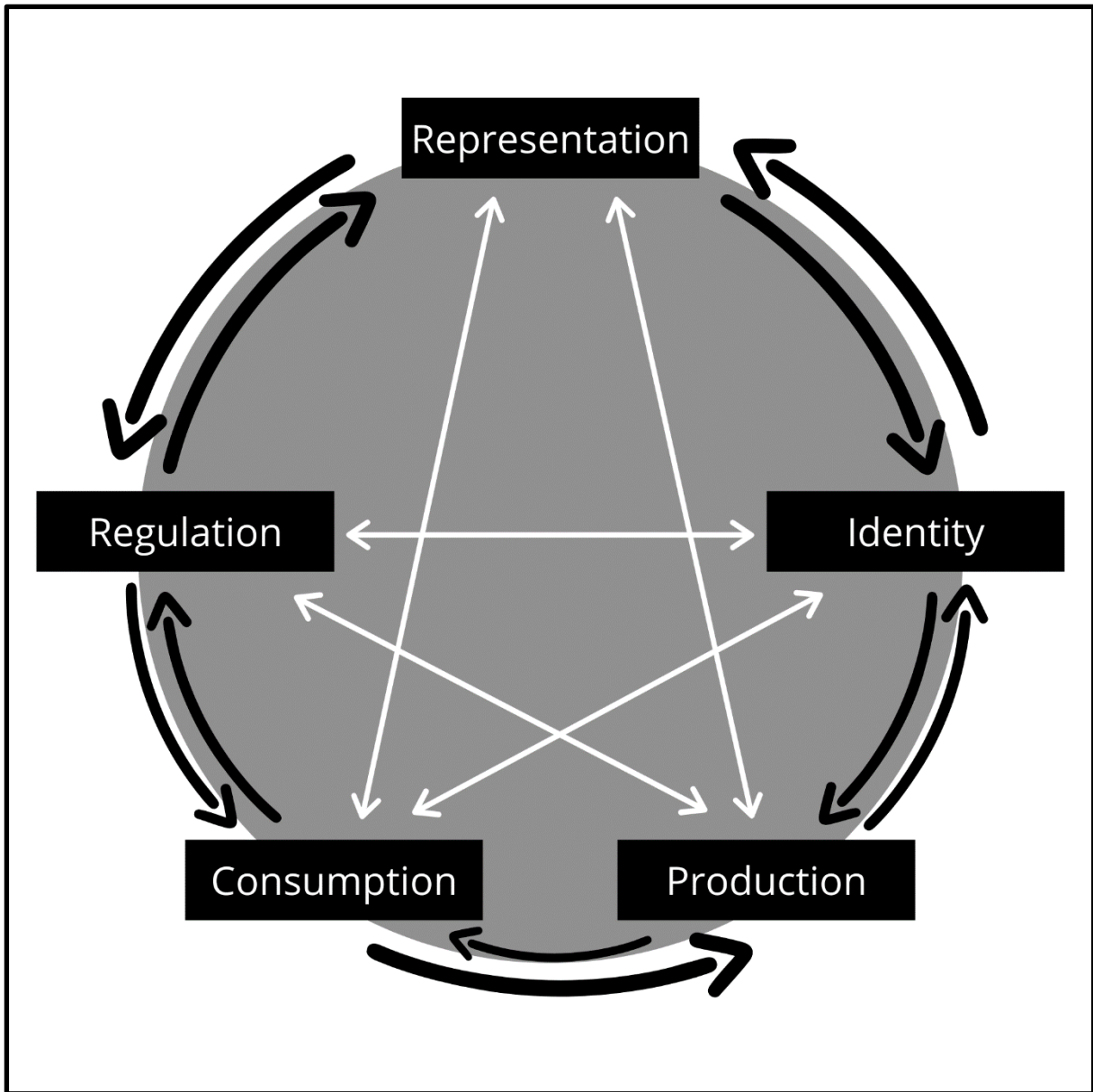
Figure 1: A diagram of the Circuit of Culture (Hall, 1997) showing the 'moments' at which material interactions occur, and how their interrelatedness creates cultural meaning. An original production of the diagram to support visualisation in this thesis.

Cultural production

Material as cultural production refers not merely to the means by which physical material came to exist (i.e., manufacturing processes), but how social actions and physical matter combined to produce the material, and in turn the affect the material has in producing culture. This moment is described by du Gay (1997) as the end-point of 'cultural economy': culture is assumed to structure social life, and processes which navigate those structures to generate material may be understood as a series of transactions which, in themselves, may develop

meaning. An example here may be the shared enjoyment of a parent and child baking bread together: though a physical product is technically 'produced' as the end result of the activity, the process of shared material interaction with ingredients produces cultural knowledge exchange, mutuality, closeness, and familial bonding. The Circuit of Culture seeks to examine the ways in which the social and physical processes of material production develop meaning through those transactions, and how those processes shape the affect the material subsequently exerts on further structuring social life. Material as cultural production asks how social life produces material through cultural structure, and how material shapes cultural structures to affect social life.

Cultural identity

Material as cultural identity refers to the capacity of material to position and situate social actors in cultural structures, and how processes, claims and experiences of social identity shape interactions with the material. Taylor, et al. (2002) state that the importance of cultural identity in material analysis is derived from the dynamic nature of the social actor at the moment of material interaction: social life will be navigated at that moment according to the social identity of the actor, thus the cultural meanings of material must be examined in the context of the identity of the individual interacting with it. Similarly, Woodward (1997) considers that the material itself shapes identity as per the construction of social life as described in the previous paragraph. An example here may be a person ordering a coffee in a café and asking for a list of dairy-free milk options. In doing so, the actor signals identity with a range of ideological, health and consumer identities. In the moment at which the coffee is ordered, the social actor must navigate a cultural structure – dairy milk as the default option for coffee – by declaring a need to diverge from the norm, and in doing so, shaping consumer identity. The Circuit of Culture seeks to examine how the structure afforded to social life by culture is partially shaped by material, and how identity as a form of social life is subject to material affect. Material as cultural identity asks how social identity shapes interactions with material, and how material determines and facilitates maintenance or change of social identity.

Cultural consumption

Material as cultural consumption refers not only to the physical ingestion or ownership of material, but rather how material is used in broader social contexts, and how material uses culture to exert, and shape affect economies. Leve (2012) notes that the scholarly traditions of cultural studies dispute the concept of consumers as 'dupes': they are recipients of consumer culture on the receiving end of a process that is of greater sociological relevance than the end stage at which material is consumed. To this end, consumers are understood to be active and dynamic social actors, not passive recipients of culture (Mackay, 1997). It may

be assumed that the ways in which consumption occurs determines other processes in material production: culture is multidirectional and may develop meaning in diverse directions. An example here may be a teetotal couple enjoying a night at a pub whilst watching a football game. The social experience is shaped by cultural structures: that watching major sports games is a shared and public activity and may be consumed in a location where alcohol is served. The couple, whilst not physically consuming alcohol in the physiological sense of ingestion, consumes the social experience via interaction with cultural structures but choosing to consume aspects of it selectively, consuming the camaraderie of the football match whilst rejecting consumption of the drinks associated with it. The Circuit of Cultural seeks to examine how material is used beyond typical notions of consumerism (Denzin, 2001), instead respecting consumption as a moment of selective social power. Material as cultural consumption asks how culture uses material to structure social life, and in turn how material may use social phenomenon to exert affect over cultural structures.

Cultural regulation

Material as cultural regulation refers to processes of the active and largely intentional structuring of social life, and how material interacts with such governance. Thompson (1997) further classifies this as social power taking two shapes: formalised regulation which might occur through political structures, law, policy and other macro-objective constructs, and informal regulation, which is seen in social customs, structural barriers, unofficial rules of etiquette, perceived norms, and other macro-subjective elements of social life. An example here may be a family eating in a restaurant following the relaxation of UK Government restrictions in public places following the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the formal regulations regarding the wearing of face masks may have been relaxed, informal social expectations govern their use in public places and particularly venues where other people are eating. The family self-regulates cultural consumption in compliance with social expectations by wearing masks whilst walking from the restaurant entrance to their table. The governance which is imparted on material will ultimately shape its consumption and production, and the material's capacity to influence social identity, highlighting the interrelatedness of the constructs of the Circuit (Leve, 2011). Material as cultural regulation asks how formal cultural structures, and informal cultural standards, shape the movement of material, and to a lesser extent, how the material might shape governance and control of social life.

Cultural representation

Material as cultural representation refers to the discourses, verbal and conceptual, which surround social life as determined by the cultural structure afforded by material. The ways in which material is presented, voiced, promoted, and rejected influence its usage (consumption)

and future processes resulting in its existence (production). Similarly, material communicates the cultural structure of social life: once material has developed meaning, it too can represent social phenomena and 'speak' to that effect. An example here may be a guest at a dinner party politely declining a desert, mindful of a current regime of intended weight management. In voicing their declination to consume the desert (deviating from the cultural production of the dinner party, and the social regulations which govern appropriate behaviour at such an event), the guest invites discussion of their consumption and their personal interpretations of associations between food and health. The absence of the desert when the other guests are served similarly communicates compliance with cultural structures surrounding body aesthetic and other social functions of weight management. Material as cultural representation asks how culture structures the ways in which social life describes and discusses material, and also how the presence or absence of material communicates the structure of social life.

Onto-epistemological relevance

The Circuit of Culture has been criticised since its early publication, largely for its use of 'arbitrary points' in determining cultural meaning (Fine, 2002), resulting in some scholars finding themselves in a position of arbitrarily placing analytical outputs into the framework simply to feel they have covered all the moments at which material culture may occur (Leve, 2012). There may also be some contention regarding the use of this cultural framework to make sense of the analytical outputs of a new materialist analysis. The Circuit assumes that material exists for human benefit: it influences the cultural structures that shape human social life and is in turn shaped by those structures for human gain. The new materialisms, conversely, emphasise the value of social posthumanism and theoretical reorientation of the social world towards valuing non-human entities, assuming under post-anthropocentric discourses that doing so will benefit wider physical and social actors, including but not limited to humans. This presents a conflict between the two theoretical constructs. Whilst the Circuit 'sees' material for human gain, the new materialisms value material for posthuman gain. This thesis, however, uses post-anthropocentric conceptions of consumption to make sense of and reconcile this conflict. It adopts the new materialisms as the sole analytical tool for making sense of ethnographic data, strengthening the post-anthropocentric valuation of material by using social-assemblages to place material at the centre of social life, and privilege the human. It then makes sense of those materialist interactions according to the Circuit of Culture, placing post-anthropocentric valuations of material into a framework which will be of greater use when determining the implications of those findings for human and planetary gain.

In this sense, the thesis seeks to find cultural meaning which will be of post-anthropocentric value, using the Circuit of Culture only to structure material inquiry as established by scholarly precedent. The thesis adopts the Circuit of Culture only to serve as a

'question and answer' frame for the interpretation of new materialist analytical outputs, preserving posthuman privileging for planetary health. To this end, the thesis presents a more manageable breakdown of the research question according to the Circuit of Culture at the end of this chapter.

1.4.4 Towards the ethnography

This sub-section reconciles demands of ethnographic tradition, with the reality of conducting ethnographic research for planetary health in contemporary contexts. Drawing together the topical, conceptual, theoretical, and methodological positionings of the thesis, this sub-section confirms the aims and objectives of the study and defines the research questions.

According to van Maanen (1995), ethnography is "*a wonderful excuse for having an adventurous good time while operating under the pretext of doing serious intellectual work*". Although this definition is used humorously, it speaks to the nature of this thesis: the challenging planetary health threats it concerns, the complexity of the health promotion and policy actions which might address them, and the overwhelming nature of exploring a culturally-dominant, ubiquitous practice for which there is little established scholarly precent. The key word in van Maanen's definition is 'adventurous', characterising ethnography as an unpredictable, messy, unstrucutred research methodology. These characteristics, however, are reflective of culture itself, and of the complexities of the social-assemblages this thesis seeks to explore. The earlier reference to the absurdist poem *The Walrus and the Carpenter* (Carroll, 1871) in the acknowledgements reflects my experience of valuing, designing and doing ethnography: embracing messy, confusing, seemingly unrelated matter and social events to make sense of the social world, from the perpective of those who experience it.

Ethnography concerns the study of culture from the emic perspective: the lived experience of the people in that social context. The researcher becomes an active participant in a community and draws conclusions about culture from what they have seen, heard, and witnessed. In this thesis, the community studied was the 'Birmingham Foodie Community': people associated with community-based food projects; non-profit, charitable organisations that facilitate community development and engagement through the production, acquisition, and distribution of food. In doing so, they privilege environmental needs to support human welfare, characterising their work as post-anthropocentric according to the working definitions presented by this thesis. By decentring people in the process of developing food security and sustainability, they privilege environmental sustainability on the assumption that some form of interdependency exists between humans and the earth. The parameters of this 'Foodie Community' was defined through identification of the unwritten 'rules' of membership in the following chapter.

In health research, ethnography is a developing approach that is growing in popularity (Rashid, et al., 2015). Whilst its application in other disciplines will often see ethnography exploring a culture in its totality, in health research it is common to use the approach to investigate the cultural characteristics and value of a specific practice, in a format often

described as a 'focused' ethnography (White & Siebold, 2008). Ethnography is particularly suitable for studies that make no predictive claim, and studies for which a hypothesis is either inappropriate or unnecessary (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). Described as inductive, ethnography seeks to recognise themes and patterns in qualitative data in order to influence theory, rather than using theory to drive hypothesis testing (Wilson & Chaddha, 2009). The primary aim of understanding ideas and beliefs about a specific health behaviour, meat consumption, in relation to broader dietary and mainstream culture, from the perspective of those who engage in the behaviour without making any predictions, makes traditional ethnography an appropriate methodology for this thesis.

The study design was overt participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). I was immersed in the community being studied and actively engaged in the activities concerning food security and sustainability. This involved me very literally assisting in manual tasks in the capacity of a volunteer of various community-based food projects. Community-based food projects were identified as a suitable community for ethnographic study of cultural meanings of meat consumption as they are highly diverse, representing a microcosm of West Midlands society, and represent post-anthropocentric activity in community development and health promotion. Whilst I was identifiable as a researcher, it was hoped that using a participatory research method would encourage rapport between researcher and participant (Musante & DeWalt, 2010) thus facilitating elicitation of more accurate and genuine verbal accounts of participants' interpretations and perceived cultural values of meat consumption. The study conceives of the spaces of ethnographic immersion as social-assemblages according to New Materialist Social Inquiry (Fox & Alldred, 2015), and uses a bespoke post-anthropocentric analytical process to deprivilege human agency to make sense of ethnographic data. The outputs of this process are interpreted using the Circuit of Culture framework (Hall, 1997) for use in health promotion practice and planetary health development.

The study aims were as follows:

- To identify a community of specialist interest in food security and sustainability.
- To become a member of that community to support ethnographic fieldwork.
- To collect a diverse ethnographic dataset to generate 'thick description'.
- To use those thick descriptions to perform a new materialist analysis of meat.
- To describe cultural meanings of meat according to those analytical outputs.
- To consider ways in which the cultural meanings of meat may be used to shape, inform or dispute currently proposed health promotion or policy activity.

The study research question was as follows:

What are the cultural meanings of meat in the Birmingham Foodie Community?

For the purpose of interpreting findings and outputs from the new materialist analytical process, the research question is further broken into ten sub-questions aligned with cultural analysis under the Circuit of Culture framework (Hall, 1997). These questions are as follows:

Cultural meanings of meat *(As interpreted using the Circuit of Culture)*	**Cultural production**	*How is meat culturally produced?*
		How does meat produce culture?
	Cultural identity	*How is meat culturally expressed?*
		How does meat express cultural identity?
	Cultural consumption	*How is meat culturally used?*
		How does meat use culture?
	Cultural regulation	*How is meat culturally controlled?*
		How does meat control culture?
	Cultural representation	*How is meat culturally communicated?*
		How does meat communicate culture?

Figure 2: A table describing the further breakdown of the research question in accordance with 'moments' of material interaction according to the Circuit of Culture framework (Hall, 1997).

Chapter 2: Methods

This chapter presents the conduct of the study, characterised as a traditional ethnography in an urban community of food activists, known as the Birmingham Foodie Community. I spent a calendar year as a full-time volunteer of various food activism organisations, participating in routine activities and one-off events. The study design was based upon the positioning of the thesis outlined in the review chapter, and was developed to support the deprivileging of human agency according to new materialist traditions. Following a six-month informal scoping exercise to gain membership of the Birmingham Foodie Community, an evaluation informed development of ethnographic practices for the main study. The fieldwork phase followed, undertaken over twelve months, generating a large, diverse multi-media dataset.

2.1 Study design

This section describes how the study was developed according to the positionings of the thesis. Considering challenges of planetary health related to material, power, and culture, a traditional ethnography was planned in which I would engage in exploratory community immersion. The theoretical focus on the deprivileging of human agency was achieved by developing a bespoke post-human, new materialist analytical process, to make sense of the creation of social and cultural meaning from the relationship between the social and physical worlds. The outputs of this process are themes later described in the results chapter.

2.1.1 Theoretical praxis

This sub-section considers the implementation of theoretical constructs outlined in the review chapter and relates them to research practice. Primarily focusing on data collection techniques which retained an inverted researcher-participant power structure, it is argued that a multi-media, multi-site traditional ethnography enabled exploration of social-assemblages.

As a means of producing knowledge, new materialist ontology challenges the anthropocentric approach traditionally applied to social inquiry. Much like other forms of scientific inquiry, in the social sciences, knowledge has typically been produced from the interpretations of the data by the researcher who collected it. Applying various forms of theoretical reasoning, a social scientist will attempt to make sense of that which is not common sense and deepen understandings of that which is assumed to be common sense. This is often geared towards attempts to identify order or patterns in the data set, towards making generalisable statements about social life or the social world. In this sense, traditional social inquiry places the researcher as the imposer of order. New materialism questions the 'anthropocentric privilege' of this process and considers the researcher to be animate material of the social-assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2016). By recognising the role of the researcher in the production of the data set according to the production and disruptions of affect economies, new materialism recognises the influence of methods and means of data production on the affect economies which connect not only the animate and inanimate elements of the social-assemblage, but the relationship between those elements and the researcher (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). This approach is well-aligned with principles of traditional ethnography which consider the researcher to be a participant in the study. Attempting to write about social experience as it is lived and capturing it in-situ, an ethnographer will be actively though unintentionally recording their initial observations and thoughts about the affective flows in the social-assemblage of which they are one element, amongst many animate and inanimate physical entities.

Concerning the conduct of ethnographic research, which is typically considered 'messy' and unstructured, Fox and Alldred (2015) state research employing a new materialist approach must "*attend not to individual bodies, subjects, experiences or sensations, but to assemblages of human and non-human, animate and inanimate, material and abstract, and the affective flows in these assemblages*". The primary purpose of conducting research this way would be to identify affective flows that connect "*the material and the cultural*". Ethnography as methodology, the witness-cum-recording of the lived experience as it is happening, is well aligned with this concept. To realise Fox and Allred's vision of the new materialisms in planetary health research, this ethnography characterised social-assemblage

through immersion in a network of food activists in the West Midlands, conceptualised as the Birmingham Foodie Community.

- **Humans** in this ethnography were food activists undertaking actions to support food security and sustainability in the West Midlands, the customers on the receiving end of food activism, and the contacts related to the Birmingham Foodie Community in regional and sometimes national contexts through phone and email correspondence.

- **Non-human** entities included all matter captured in food activism, including the food itself, the consumables used to serve it, kitchen equipment and facilities, community spaces and buildings, vehicles used to transport food, activist clothing and other organisation-branded attire, activist marketing material and other community objects.

- **Animacy** was captured in the physical actions of the food activists through food acquisition, preparation, serving and consumption. Other integral activities included cleaning, participation in organisational meetings, developing community spaces, and having activist social experiences such as organisation trips to the pub.

- **Inanimacy** was observed through the taking of photographs of matter, literally void of physical movement, which included most of the non-human entities described above. This could also include documents provided by activists which served as inanimate proxy for social animacy, such a meeting minutes, marketing resources, and photos.

- **Material** was considered to be anything and anyone physically existent, including the human and non-human entities. As the analytical process was planned to be an on-screen activity, all material had to be capable of digitisation and was recorded as photographs, scanned documents, audio recordings and occasionally as videos.

- **Abstract** elements of the social-assemblage concerned my own reflections, emotional reactions, and sensory responses. Most of these were recorded in writing as ethnographic fieldnotes, but some were captured through audio recordings when I chose to speak my thoughts directly into the Dictaphone following fieldwork sessions.

The application and implementation of New Materialist Social Inquiry is also explored in its use in the analysis of the ethnographic data, in sub-section 3.1.1 Analytical praxis, aligned with Lambert's characterisation of traditional ethnography in health research being guided by, and generating, theory (2011). These theory-to-practice justifications should be viewed in the context of seeking to develop and deliver a truly theory-informed ethnography.

2.1.2 Participants

This sub-section outlines the participant base in the Birmingham Foodie Community as defined by this thesis, and how it was realised as the Birmingham Foodie Community: an informal but loosely structured network of food activists in the regional West Midlands, using food to achieve a range of health, environmental and social justice outcomes.

Recruitment

Emergent sampling was employed: participants were individuals present at the time of data collection. This referred to food activists, people using the food services they operated, and other community stakeholders who were in activist spaces whilst I was present. Suri (2011) states emergent sampling is particularly suited to research where the researcher will commence fieldwork without the emic perspective, such as in a traditional ethnography. It was assumed any persons present at the data collection venues were there through association with one of the community projects operating services at the time. As such, their participation was suitable and sufficient for the study: no participants were actively sought, and no attempts were made to encourage participation. The initial participants were found in four community organisations, from which further organisations were identified through a form of snowball sampling by exploring community networks (Noy, 2008).

Participation criteria

All participants belonged to one or more of the following categories, aligned with the stakeholder model of community food systems according to Campbell (2004).

- People working with one of the community projects, mostly in an unpaid voluntary capacity, hereby referred to as 'activists'.
- People using the services of one of the community projects in a customary capacity, hereby referred to as 'customers'.
- People associated with one of the community projects in an expert, managerial or supportive capacity, hereby referred to as 'contacts'.

All participants, regardless of categorisation, were:

- Aged 18 or older. The activist organisations had distinct volunteer recruitment policies that required volunteers to be aged 18 or older. Children were not permitted to use the food services unaccompanied by a parent. I automatically excluded from data

collection any person either judged to look younger than 18 years of age or for whom there was reason to doubt their adulthood.

- Engaged as a stakeholder of a community organisation based in the West Midlands. No geographic or residential criteria was imposed. Most participants were physically resident in the regional West Midlands, but some activists were connected to the Community through national or global links, operating and living in other areas.

- Knowledgeable of their rights as a research participant. Participants were made aware of their rights as a research participant via dissemination of participant information sheets (see Appendix A).

- Capable of withdrawing from the study without prejudice.

No participant was:

- Known to be under the age of 18 years old.

- Unable to speak English. There were no fluency requirements applied, but it was assumed that informed consent could not be gained by people unable to read the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A).

- Unable to withdraw from the study without prejudice. It was agreed that any person who was indicated to be unable to comprehend their right to withdraw from the study was excluded without question. In practice, this did not happen in the ethnography.

Participant consent

Due to the ethnographic nature of the study, documentation of informed consent was not obtained, and was assumed to be provided on an 'opt-out' basis. The decision to undertake research without actively obtaining written consent from individual participants was not taken lightly or without good cause but had been informed by methodological positioning. I acknowledged the standard requirement in UK research practice in the social sciences for all participants to provide written consent (Agre & Rapkin, 2003; Agre, et al., 2003) but also recognised the incompatibility of this practice with traditional ethnography (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007). The processes employed to assure informed consent were developed to adhere to the British Sociological Association's (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice (BSA, 2002). Informed consent beyond written record was advisable for a range of reasons.

- The ethnographic nature of the study required that I act and observe with minimal disruption in order to ensure that behaviours that occurred during my observations were not significantly different to those which occurred during my absence. Repeated

requests for written consent would have hindered food activism and would have been highly disruptive. This is aligned with the BSA's guidance that researchers "*should attempt to minimise disturbance to those participating in research*" (BSA, 2002).

- The ethnographic nature of this study required that I behave as an ordinary member of the group being studied in order to gain the emic perspective. Repeated requests for written consent to have ordinary conversations about food activism would not have been behaviour typical of activists and would have hindered formation of rapport and relationships between me and participants.

- The BSA, whilst providing no explicit commentary on ethnographic research, stipulated that informed consent consists of "*what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be published and presented*". These elements of informed consent were assured by a complex range of measures beyond written consent forms, which are evidenced throughout this chapter.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) (2004) provided more explicit commentary on consent in this context, and stated that "*consent can be assumed in instances where the respondent is free to converse or not with the researcher and is free to determine the level and nature of the interaction between participant and researcher*" (American Anthropological Association, 2004). In this study, however, consent was not freely assumed. Though written consent was avoided for reasons of methodological practice, informed consent was still assured through realisation of Faden and Beauchamp's claimed three primary components of informed consent (1986). Disclosure, capacity and voluntariness (Faden & Beauchamp, 1986) have been reinterpreted by the AAA to support ethnographers in contemporary research practice (American Anthropological Association, 2004), reframed as 'communication of information', 'comprehension of information' and 'voluntary participation'.

Communication of information was supported through the dissemination of leaflets, flyers, and verbal conversation in community settings (which were recorded). The communication of information was documented and verified in writing by authorised representatives of the community projects (see Appendix B). During data collection, simple phrases such as "*have you read the participant information sheet on the table?*" were asked and recorded with responses, in informal conversation to assess participants' access to the information. As the fieldwork phase took place over a calendar year, additional questions relating to the longevity of informed consent were also asked, such as "*it's been a while since we talked about it, so I'm just reminding you that my study is still going on, and I'm still recording our conversations together, is that okay?*". This practice became standardised relatively quickly, and at no time in the fieldwork phase did any participant respond in the negative. Indeed, from around the fourth month, participants started telling new activists about

the study and actively engaged in conversations about it. Participant Information Sheets (see Appendix A) were disseminated from the first day of fieldwork, and I checked their availability and positioning in community spaces routinely throughout the year. They were frequently thrown away by activists cleaning food preparation and service areas, and I had to repeatedly print more of them to disseminate in those spaces, the practice of which gained attention from participants who subsequently joked about it, thereby cultivating a general cognizance of the ongoing nature of the study.

Comprehension of information was evidenced by regular monitoring of this system. During data collection, simple phrases such as "*are you aware that you don't have to take part in this study?*" and "*remember, you can tell me to turn off the Dictaphone at any time*" were used in informal conversation to assess participants' comprehension of their participant's rights. As with questions about the communication of information, at no time in the fieldwork phase did any participant answer in the negative. A single documented occasion was experienced in which a participant eating a meal at a community café approached me to ask me to not take photos of her. When I explained that I was only taking photos of food in the kitchen, and not of customers, and showed her the photos I had taken to substantiate this, the customer was satisfied with the response and engaged in a discussion about my research, of which she was supportive. For the purpose of safeguarding, this isolated interaction was reported to the gatekeeper of the relevant community organisation, and for the purpose of academic transparency, was discussed in a documented conversation with my doctoral supervisors.

Voluntary participation was evidenced by the very nature of a study that did not require participants to do or say anything at all. No participant was actively encouraged to participate in the study and covert recordings did not take place at any time. Simple phrases such as "*are you aware that you are being observed as part of a research project?*" and "*are you happy for me to voice record our conversation?*" were used in informal conversation to assess participants' awareness of their voluntary participation in the study. Although I was initially hesitant about repeated use of these phrases, and worried that they might make my ethnographic relationships inauthentic, activists were overwhelmingly supportive and often made humorous observations about the phrases, voicing their confusion regarding "*god, is that still going on? Haven't they made you a doctor yet?!*" and "*aren't you bored of us by now?*". Some participants also made humorous remarks about my frequent photo taking and suggested I was cultivating an Instagram account of food photos. The very active approach to meeting these three standards of informed consent contributed to the camaraderie between me and participants and strengthened our relationships.

The BSA states that in the case of studies that require prolonged fieldwork, informed consent should not be considered a "*once-and-for-all prior event*", but as a process that must

be continually reviewed throughout the duration of the study (BSA, 2002). In this regard the measures implemented supported informed consent frequently and continually; a benefit that would likely not be seen had written consent been obtained. The measures developed to ensure ongoing informed consent supported participants to develop humorous understandings of, and jokes about, the ethical governance of the study, thereby making it a regular talking point amongst activists, further contributing to the frequency and continuity of active discussion of participation.

Participant withdrawal

All participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time without reason. As no participant's name was recorded, the use of pseudonyms was employed when taking field notes and in the transcription of audio recordings. The 'thick description' provided later in this chapter conforms with these pseudonyms of natural persons, real places in Birmingham and the regional West Midlands, and the community organisations to which they belonged. Withdrawal from the study was to be facilitated by participants simply informing me of their desire not to be included in the study, but this did not happen at any time in the fieldwork phase. I was prepared to not question a participant's request to withdraw and had planned to inform the withdrawing participant that, by the nature of a study that employed the recording of anonymous audio data with a Dictaphone, their voice may still be recorded but verbalisations would not be used in data analysis. As no participant requested it, this process was not enacted at any time. The total anonymity afforded to participants by the lack of details recorded meant that it might not have been possible to retrospectively destroy data from withdrawn participants.

Participant benefits

As participants were not required to do or say anything beyond that which they would in my absence, compensation for participants' time was not necessary. This study aimed to explore cultural meanings of meat consumption in communities in order to advance and improve the wellbeing of people in those communities through advanced knowledge that could support planetary health interventions. Participants benefited indirectly as a result of their participation. Many participants had no prior contact with academia or researchers before the ethnography. The experience of making connections with a researcher and being able to ask questions of a scientific nature may have been of some benefit to participants. The activist organisations also benefited directly from my participation as a volunteer: during the fieldwork phase, I contributed over 1600 hours of my time to supporting food activism, of which 1382 hours were formally recorded as fieldwork. It was made clear on Participant Information Sheets that no benefits or remunerations were to be given for participation (see Appendix A).

2.1.3 Ethnographic methods

This sub-section describes the forms of data the ethnographic fieldwork collected, and the practices associated with collecting them. The study employed diverse data collection methods to produce a large, multi-media dataset, including audio recordings of natural conversation, field notes taken during fieldwork, photographs, and material artefacts contributed by participants. These methods are presented in reference to the characteristics of ethnographic practice as defined in 1.4.1 Ethnographic inquiry.

The ethnographic nature of this study meant the scheduling of data collection sessions was entirely dependent upon the direction, interests, and activities of the participants. All of the community organisations hosted events on at least a weekly basis. Ethnographic immersion and data collection took place for an average of thirty hours a week for the forty-six-week duration of the fieldwork phase, although this was interrupted by my taking personal vacations abroad for six non-consecutive weeks across the year. This generally saw me undertaking the ethnography four days a week, typically three of which would occur Monday to Friday, and one on a weekend day, although this was highly variable. During the summer months, time spent in ethnographic immersion increased significantly as I took a more pronounced role in the Community. Outside of fieldwork, considerable time was spent transcribing audio recordings, managing the large data set, and writing post-session reflections as fieldnotes.

As an ethnographic study, data collection could have continued indefinitely, the longevity of fieldwork providing further ethnographic immersion and facilitating greater emic perspective. For the purposes of study management, however, it was planned that the study would take place over the course of a calendar year, commencing January 2017 and ending in the final week of December 2017. This enabled the observation of and participation in food activism across seasonal trends and allowed me to be part of various cultural events and occasions such as Easter, Christmas, and various religious festivals the community organisations supported. The longevity of the ethnography also enabled me to witness key life events, including a death and the subsequent funeral, a wedding, various baptisms, birthday parties and the anniversary celebrations of the community organisations themselves.

Audio recordings were captured using an encrypted Dictaphone owned by the University, which hung around my neck using a lanyard. It was visible to participants at all times, except when I was wearing an apron and would usually move it to the side of my body to make it apparent that audio recordings were being made. As outlined in the previous sub-section, active phrases were used routinely to alert participants to its ongoing use. Audio recordings were made selectively so as to avoid generating unmanageable amounts of data for

transcription and analysis, and the Dictaphone was turned on whenever I felt the conversation was of obvious relevance to meat, food activism, food security or food sustainability. The Dictaphone was turned off whenever conversation was either of obvious irrelevance to the study, or when participants were discussing particularly sensitive matters.

Fieldnotes were taken by me on-screen, inputted during data collection sessions via Bristol Online Surveys (BOS: a password-protected and University-approved online questionnaire platform) on my smart phone. The fieldnotes were then automatically saved to a BOS account to which only my supervisors and I had access. This negated the need to take handwritten notes, reducing potential disruption to food activism.

Photographs were taken frequently, of everything and anything which was deemed matter in the social-assemblage. This typically took the form of photos of food, in preparation and serving. All photographs were taken on my personal smart phone, and often in multiple capture iterations: this often meant that by the end of a fieldwork session, I had a couple of hundred photographs, often consisting of multiple copies of the same image. I dedicated time following each fieldwork session to review the photographs, delete multiple copies of images, and ensure that participants images were not included. There are some images of participants included in the data set, but these were taken by organisations according to their respective policies on photography and uploaded to public-facing social media platforms or websites. To respect anonymity, none of those photographs are used as illustrations in this thesis.

Material artefacts in the form of documents, signs, notice boards and other resources were collected according to the permission of the community organisations. Only those documents which were public-facing and freely available were included in the dataset. Many of these documents are meeting minutes from volunteer meetings (often later made available via the organisation's website) or boards communicating community/organisation impact.

Videos were collected sparingly as these would be challenging to analyse. These consisted only of activists physically preparing food. No participants' faces are seen in these videos.

Characteristics of ethnography (Lambert et al., 2011)

Useage 2: Conducting the ethnography

Lambert's primary characteristics of traditional ethnography for health research are presented here to show how the study was designed according to recognised ethnographic methods. In this context, the table below represents planned methodological praxis. This table was presented in *1.4.1 Ethnographic inquiry* to illustrate use of these ideas to justify synthesis between the theoretical, conceptual and methodological positionings of the study, and will be considered again in *4.3.3 Ethnographic reflections* to evaluate their realised usage.

"Ethnography explores: it is about discovery"

The spaces of data collection were determined by food activists and their normal working patterns, lending to discovery of new social-assemblages around food.

"Ethnography relies on collecting data in the natural environment"

By giving control of the places, tasks, and context of day-to-day interactions to participants, the sites of data collection were the natural environments of food activism.

"Ethnography does not de-contextualise as with an artificially structured interview"

The use of a simple audio recording device being turned on during naturally-occurring conversations which happened in the course of food activism lent to a highly contextual and natural data source, avoiding artificially constructed qualitative inquiry.

"Ethnography values multiple perspectives, including researcher and researched"

The use of both participant-centred data (audio recordings, photographs, videos) and researcher-centred data (fieldwork notes, reflections, own voice in audio recordings) facilitated and valued multiple perspectives of the researcher and the researched.

"Ethnography uses a variety of different methods, multi-modes of data collection"

The original intention to collect diverse data was qualified through explicit techniques to collect data using audio recordings, videos, field notes, photographs, and artefacts.

"Ethnography observes what people do, it does not rely totally on what people say, but sees, visualises and creates a picture through first-hand experience of it"

The use of photographs, videos, and material artefacts gave visual context for life in the Community and created a holistic picture of the lived experience of food activism.

"Ethnography sees that no variables are purposively manipulated"

The scoping exercise confirmed that Community activities were typically managed by a site lead, who determined the process and operations for food activist tasks. My ability to potentially manipulate life in the Community was therefore sufficiently constrained.

"Ethnography forms intimate relationships between the researcher and the researched"

I was open to exploring new and unexpected sites of interaction in the Community, including those in social settings where more intimate relationships were likely and did occur.

"Ethnography embraces that phenomena cannot be analysed divorced from social and cultural context"

The adoption of New Materialist Social Inquiry to "see" the sites of food activism as social-assemblages intentionally married social and cultural context with physical events.

"Ethnography is about the immediate social and cultural contexts, and the broader socioeconomic and political contexts"

In addition to the planetary context in which food activism occurs, I was open to discussion of broader political contexts, such as those of the topical ongoing Brexit debacle.

"Ethnography is guided by, and generates, theory"

The complex social theorisations outlined were not only used to design a bespoke analytical process, but were used to guide recommendations for public health activity.

"Ethnography is about culture, holism, naturalism, and flexibility"

I identified a Community which had a unique worldview and approach to planetary health threats, and I was open to exploring these holistically.

2.1.4 Data management

This sub-section describes how the vast, diverse, multimedia data set was recorded and protected according to the research governance requirements of Birmingham City University. Data was stored in an encrypted OneDrive account hosted by the University, and each fieldwork session was recorded in a survey form hosted by Bristol Online Surveys.

Data was managed according to the research regulations of Birmingham City University. The audio recordings, taken via an encrypted Dictaphone owned by the University and used exclusively for this study, were transferred from the Dictaphone to a desktop computer on university premises within 48 hours of each data collection session, as per the agreement made with the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. Where fieldwork took place Sunday to Thursday, the data upload to a University desktop typically occurred the following morning, when I would stop by my office at City South Campus on the way to a fieldwork session or had other academic engagements such as teaching. Where fieldwork took place Friday or Saturday, the data upload had to wait until the following Monday morning.

After transcription of the audio recordings and videos, the raw files were provided to the Data Compliance Officer of the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences, to be subject to encryption according to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (Cornock, 2018; Mondschein & Monda, 2019). Physical copies of the signed Organisation Access forms (see Appendix A) were also handed to this person for protection on the University campus, where they are archived in accordance with University regulations.

2.2 Scoping phase

This section presents the planning, purpose, and findings of an informal pilot study, primarily used to gain access to the Birmingham Foodie Community, but also to identify challenges of ethnographic practice prior to the fieldwork phase. This took place part-time over a period of 6 months, from July to December 2016, as a period entitled the 'scoping exercise'. No data was collected, although early ethnographic field notes were produced and used to inform reflections which later developed ethnographic practices in the fieldwork phase. The scoping exercise confirmed suitability of the Birmingham Foodie Community as the study sample.

2.2.1 Exploring the community

This sub-section audits my pre-doctoral research skills and experience, and the subsequent need for me to undertake a loosely structured pilot study to inform development of the fieldwork phase. The purpose of the phase is identified, and specific outcomes are described to guide conduct of the scoping exercise.

The scoping exercise took place from July to October 2016; ethical approval was considered unnecessary as no data collection took place, nor did the researcher act in the capacity of a representative of Birmingham City University. This was clarified in consultation with the study supervisors and the Faculty Research Ethics Officer. The exercise was an informal assessment of the potential and suitability of local community-based food projects to participate in the study. My relationships with the projects were, subject to assessment of their suitability, to be formalised after ethical approval had been granted. Five aims of the scoping exercise were identified.

- To establish working relationships with a variety of community food projects in the West Midlands that could lead to participant recruitment pending ethical approval.
- To identify challenges to the proposed ethnographic methodology.
- To identify which forms data will take and how it might be collected.
- To identify how involvement in the study might be of benefit to participants.
- To identify ethical challenges in support of submission of the ethnography to the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee.

The aims were further refined to eighteen questions which in turn generated twenty-nine questions related to the development of the study, particularly in reference to submission to the faculty ethics committee and defining of any potential community.

Exploratory research

When a research topic demands novel methodology, poses unusual recruitment challenges or is otherwise unique, reliance on the relevant literature to guide the development of the study may not be possible (Babbie, 2007). If no similar study exists, there might be little extant literature concerning research practices with which to compare or contrast. In such cases, adoption of an exploratory approach to social research may be necessary. Considered to be suited to studies of which direction is unclear, exploratory research aids the conceptualisation and practical development of unique research (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). Stebbins (2001) suggests that the aim of exploratory research is "*to gain only the degree or familiarity with the*

properties of substances and procedures that is needed to manipulate them". In this sense, exploratory approaches to the design of ethnographic studies can be seen as a means of investigating the potential or suitability of participants, venues, research settings, and collaborators, without collecting data or otherwise commencing fieldwork. This thesis was shaped in such a fashion using the scoping exercise: research design progressed mostly as a result of me spending time in the potential field as part of an exploratory exercise. For a study to develop as a result of experience rather than the literature is not a novel approach to social research design. Exploration as design process has been an established means of developing social research since at least the 1960's (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) albeit as an element of grounded theory, not ethnographic research (Heath & Cowley, 2004). Timmermans and Tavory (2007) point out that, whilst methodological tensions exist between grounded theory and ethnography, the latter requires some form of 'ground' upon which to operate, and it is ultimately pragmatic to embrace some of the more unstructured elements from grounded theory in the initial phase of ethnographic inquiry to guide the development of an ethnography. This approach, of loose initial exploration to shape design of ethnography, is supported by Bryant (2017), who describes the value of 'grounded *theorizing*' in the early development of ethnography. This thesis employed such grounded theorising via exploration as social research process in the initial stages of designing the study, but not as the study-proper. This linkage between a grounded study-priori and an ethnographic study-proper is what Stebbins (2006) refers to as concatenated exploration, deriving initial value from the openness of the initial study design, and later rigour from the structure of the planned ethnography.

Conceptualising community

The first stage of entering the concatenated exploration was the consideration of the operational definition of community. Having been reconceptualised repeatedly throughout the course of modern social science (Crow, 2014), the term 'community' is now considered too vague and broad in nature to have any specific definition. Attempts to define community, and differentiate community from society, broadly fall into two schools of sociological thought: those which see social groups bound by fixed geographic factors, and those which view people bound by demographic or interest-based commonalities. Poland and Mare (2005) simplify this dichotomy by describing communities formed from 'common locations', and those formed from 'common ties', although the former might refer to broader deterministic influences beyond mere spatial geography, including kinship, familial relations, and broader territorial claims. Tonnies' view of the irrelevance of this deterministic and largely place-based concept of culture (1887) has been highly influential in Western social science for the last century, with Loomis' contemporary translation (2002) describing the obsoleteness of geographic communities in an increasingly globalised world. Based around common interests, Tonnies saw communities as

groupings characterised by mutural sense of belonging, which transcends geographies whilst also recognising they exist. Though theorised during the industrial revolution, this view of community is representative of life in the 21st Century, when the advent of cellular technology easily facilitates communities which span continents (Stevenson, 2002), world cultures (Nieckarz, 2005) and the virtual-physical nexus which characterises society in the digital age (Wellman & Gulia, 2018). Supporting Tonnies' dynamic view of community beyond 'common location', it was felt that an interest-based community formed on mutual interests and sense of belonging, would be an appropriate community of focus for this ethnography. Speaking to academic colleagues working in cognate areas of scholarship, and searching local community activity websites, revealed no obvious established or defined community in the regional West Midlands. To seek some form of community based on 'common ties' around food sustainability for this thesis, concatenated exploration was used to identify social groups, individuals and organisations that might together be conceptualised as a community.

2.2.2 Joining the community

This sub-section describes how initial access to the Birmingham Foodie Community was gained via a single contact, and how immersion in the Community was subsequently achieved via exploratory networking. Focus is placed on my physical presence in Community places and spaces, and how this facilitated my later confirmed Community membership.

Making contact

In June of 2016, an academic colleague in my base unit, the Department of Public Health and Therapies (then the Department of Public and Community Health) at Birmingham City University, informed me of an email she had received from a representative of a local food project based in Birmingham, inviting her to have lunch at a community café close to the City South Campus to discuss a potential research collaboration. My colleague forwarded the email to me and invited me to join the lunch meeting, openly responding to the lunch invitation by describing that she would be bringing me and another colleague to explore potential for an ethnographic study I was designing. At lunch, the representative from the community project discussed his (unrelated) research interest with my colleagues, and conversation later moved onto my potential involvement in his organisation to begin exploring food in community contexts in Birmingham: a concept to which he was very welcoming. The representative, Michael, asked me to look at the organisation's website, identify volunteering activities I might be interested in supporting, and to email him with details. I did this over the following days and joined him and another leading figure in that organisation, Celia, to run a community café the following week.

Initial access

Michael and Celia were well-connected in the organisation, OSFEC Herndon, and a wider network of community food projects throughout the regional West Midlands. This provided ample opportunities to connect with other groups, events and activity with individuals and organisations using food to support community development. It was immediately obvious that this network of people, who I came to recognise as food activists, and their organisations were suitable as the focus of my ethnography. Their volunteering activities largely concerned the running of community cafes, food markets (a reimagined food bank but with greater focus on human dignity), urban growing and dumpster diving. The 'common ties' which connected them were, essentially, the decentring (but not necessarily deprivileging) of human agency by using food to fulfil a range of health, environmental, and social justice outcomes. Their focus on manipulating the food system, rather than eating behaviour, to bring about improved food security, food sustainability and (to a lesser extent) food sovereignty, was aligned with the

post-anthropocentric orientation of the thesis, asserting that urgencies in human welfare and wellbeing can be supported by privileging focus on 'other-than-human' and 'more-than-human' material in the food system. In this sense, the volunteering work being undertaken was a form of posthuman activism: the study participants involved in the development and delivery of food services are hereby referred to as 'activists'.

The first day of the scoping exercise, I spent the morning making soup with Michael and Celia at Littleborough Community Centre, where they were running a 'Pay What You Want' (PWYW) community café, using food donated by supermarkets from their surplus stock. Celia explained that the 'Pay What You Want' model was used by OSFEC Herndon and many of the other community organisations associated with this area of work, to support inclusion in food services and generate food security regardless of means.

2.2.3 Defining the community

This sub-section qualifies the parameters of the Birmingham Foodie Community, primarily via adoption of conceptual community 'boundaries'. These parameters enabled me to make sense of the scope and position of the informal network of food activists, without diminishing focus on the topical positioning or regional placement of Community food activity.

After a morning of voluntary work in the kitchen, I was invited to join another associated food project for the afternoon. OSFEC Herndon was catering lunch for the latter project, the Green Growers: an urban farming project based on a scrap of land at the edge of a hospital site, formed from a now-defunct health promotion and wellbeing project from the 1980's. Activists at the farming site, which was composed of several large greenhouses and a small storage building, informed me that the site was originally founded by the City Council (in collaboration with what I interpreted to be a former Strategic Health Authority) during a brief period in the mid-1980's when the Local Authority took an interest in socioecological approaches to wellbeing. After funding was exhausted, activists had kept the site functioning and producing food for the following thirty years and was now well-connected with OSFEC Herndon and several other community food projects. This conversation opened four valuable lines of interest to the developing theoretical orientations of the thesis.

- Firstly, the openness of the activists to share the story of their organisation and talk about their experiences of supporting community development initiatives in the context the wider politics of local health, suggested that ethnographic data collection with this group would be relatively straight-forward. Without prompting or mention of my role as a researcher, the activists readily gave a comprehensive history of their work and its relationship with broader macrosocial structures and events, indicating to me a willingness amongst food activists to talk openly about food security, food sustainability and community development in food and nutrition. From this early interaction in the scoping exercise, **it was evident that elicitation and capture of natural conversation would be simple, facilitating ethnographic data collection.**
- Secondly, this story was shared over a buffet lunch provided by OSFEC Herndon, following an exchange of fresh produce from the urban farming site. It was immediately visible that activists from the two groups knew each other and were engaged in informal reciprocal agreements that saw sharing of food between the two organisations as a form of asset-based community development. From this first day of the scoping exercise, **it was evident there were established but informal links between community food projects which concerned material and social exchange.**

- Thirdly, activists conversed about other people and community food projects not present in that space at the time, referring to events they had hosted (or planned to host) together, and making in-jokes which did not make sense to me but had clearly been developed from experiences prior to this social-assemblage. From this, it was clear that a broader network of food activists and food activist organisations existed beyond the two with whom I was sharing the buffet lunch at the urban farming site. From this early immersion in a social-assemblage, **it was evident that an informal network of food activists and activist food organisations existed in Birmingham**.

Finally, the experience of being immersed in that first ethnographic event, albeit an informal one in which no data was collected, made the social-assemblages of the experience readily visible, aligning the event with new materialist conceptions of the social world.

- **Humans** were food activists from OSFEC Herndon and the Green Growers, who spoke of their connections with food activists from other organisations not present.
- **Non-human** entities included the buffet lunch foods, the space and location of the urban farming site, the gardening equipment and greenhouses, and cooking utensils.
- **Animacy** was seen in conversations between activists, cooking practices, urban farming activities, cleaning up the food after lunch, and activists sitting to eat together.
- **Inanimacy** was observed in the passivity of the urban farming site and the matter which was not used or interacted with during the lunch, but facilitated social interaction.
- **Material** was seen in the physical-social nexus to create food security through community development, reflecting the earth-human nexus of planetary health.
- **Abstract** constructs were seen in reference to people and matter not present, discussion of values, history and motivations, and the planning of future activism.

It was during this lunch that I took my first field note, which served only as a reflection upon which to further design the ethnography, as ethical approval had not been sought from the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee to collect or analyse data.

"There was an obvious community spirit; people clearly enjoyed being involved and I believe it gave them some sense of purpose or usefulness. The individuals felt they were contributing to their community and saw themselves as being involved citizens."
                    A reflection from informal observations to inform the scoping exercise.

Following lunch, I was invited to join the projects again. The schedules of regular and irregular events were explained in order to expose me to a variety of experiences. Celia, who had accompanied me to the urban farming site, described the value she felt my study and I would gain from seeing a diverse range of community food activities (though she described this as 'volunteering', not activism). I was also given access to a closed Facebook group for volunteers which detailed all upcoming events. Subsequent scoping exercise sessions were equally as successful. As the exercise progressed, the activists associated with the community food projects began to form relationships with me, and an open rapport emerged.

"My conversation with Jadine was nice; she was interested in my study but avoided pretending to know anything about it like most people do. Much of the interesting conversation comes through taking smoke breaks but talking in the kitchen is also useful. I feel like everything is quite relaxed and laid-back, and making audio recordings would be quite straight-forward."

A note from informal observations to inform the scoping exercise.

As the scoping exercise progressed, I identified and accessed new projects by connecting through activists, and some customers of the food projects, to explore the network. By the time fieldwork commenced in January 2017, eight food projects consisting of hundreds of people had been positively identified and confirmed as being part of the study.

Whilst not explicitly recognising themselves as such, I began to see the network was a community, in the sense of Tonnie's organic conception of communities as people sharing a mutual sense of belonging, connected through 'common ties' which here referred to shared beliefs, motivations and interests in food security and food sustainability. In terms of the material basis of community, the organisations, and to a lesser extent the activists, shared resources, labour, spaces, and infrastructure, characterising the network as a caring, philanthropic grass-roots activist community. Without explanation, I began to refer to the now-identified and increasingly better-defined network as the *Birmingham Foodie Community*.

Though the thesis focused exclusively on food activists in the West Midlands, many of the organisations were connected to other similar communities in other cities across the world. The initial project through which access was gained, OSFEC Herndon, was affiliated with a larger international organisation that was replicated in various European countries, Israel, and Australia. Other projects connect to international aid organisations carrying out similar work in developing nations or worked with supranational governmental organisations. As part of ongoing conceptualisation of the *Birmingham Foodie Community*, positioning the community in wider national and global contexts aided determination of how immediate local activities related to broader social and political frames, as per the characteristics of ethnography.

2.2.4 Community membership

This sub-section makes sense of the six months of experience in the scoping exercise, outlining the changes which occurred in the conduct of the fieldwork phase as a result of insights gained in early exploration. Conclusions from entry, exploration and early investigation of the Community informed the subsequent data collection.

In answering the twenty-nine questions to determine learning from the Scoping Exercise, I was able to assess the suitability of the (at that time poorly defined) Birmingham Foodie Community as the focus of the ethnography. From this point on, the thesis will refer to the 'Community', capitalised to describe the Birmingham Foodie Community and not community as a common noun or abstract concept. Having become an ingrained member of the Community during the scoping exercise, an unexpected and unplanned outcome, it was apparent that not only did the Community exist but that it had the willingness and practical infrastructure necessary to be the focus of the study. Food activists had a story to tell about food security and food sustainability, and they were willing to allow me to be part of it.

In addition to aiding the conceptualisation of community, the exercise bought about development of a number of practical considerations: notably, challenges to research ethics. An examination of possible means of documenting consent concluded that obtaining written consent was likely to disrupt group activities. As described earlier in this chapter, the ethnography would require me, with my dual role as overt researcher and food activist, to act and observe with minimal disruption in order to ensure that the behaviour of food activists which occurred in my presence during fieldwork sessions, was not significantly different to those which occurred during my absence. Repeated requests for written consent would hinder the operation of the community food projects and would be highly disruptive. The need to assimilate and become a member of the community would require me to seek to act as an ordinary member of the group being studied to build rapport with activists: repeated requests for written consent was not behaviour typical of people in these groups. The basis of these practical limitations demanded a non-traditional approach to ensuring and documenting participant consent, as outlined earlier in this chapter.

The scoping exercise also answered the important question of whether I felt personally able to work in an urban environment with which I was in no way familiar. The concatenated exploration provided me with the requisite time and flexibility necessary to experience a wide range of environments in which food activism happened. After only a matter of weeks into the scoping exercise, I felt a personal investment in the sense of belonging that defines the Community. Rationalising that ordinary Community members would not be expected to participate in all scheduled activist events and would be able to spend time with whichever

projects they wished, I concluded that I would be reasonably permitted to avoid any sites or situations in which I did not feel comfortable or welcomed. I felt safe navigating and exploring the Community, and the practico-discursive spaces of food activism.

Commencing fieldwork

On the basis of my interactions with the Community during the scoping exercise, I was able to answer my questions about the proposed methodology and, in doing so, satisfy the requirements and interests of the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. I applied for ethical approval of the refined study in November 2016, which was granted the following month in preparation for the fieldwork phase to commence in January 2017 (see Appendix C).

Recognising that data collection in the fieldwork phase would be much the same as the activity undertaken during the scoping exercise, little preparation was necessary. The ease of transition from concatenated exploration to confirmed and approved ethnographic fieldwork suggested that the 'grounded theorizing' process proposed by Timmermans and Tavory (2007) had value in supporting the development of a traditional ethnography.

After spending six months accessing, establishing relationships with, and becoming part of the network, I was considered to be a member of the *Birmingham Foodie Community*, deeming the use of exploratory research as social research process to be a success. Stebbins (2001) suggests that concatenated exploration as research process is typically employed by "*a lone, albeit enthusiastic, pioneer*", which may be reflective of the desire I felt to form strong working relationships with a diverse group of food activists, in order to identify and define the Community. Having done so, the study-proper was certainly novel; it fulfilled the requirements of the original brief but did so in a unique and highly original fashion via exploration of a conceptual community formed from 'common ties'. In seeking a community to study, I was able to critically appraise Tonnies' definition of community (1887) in a 21st century context. Ironically, this older definition may be more accurate that those proposed and published more recently. With a clear vision of what community means in the contexts of food activism, ethnography, and participatory observation, I was able to develop the study as I further defined and refined my understanding and experiences of the Birmingham Foodie Community.

2.3 Fieldwork phase

This section presents an overview of the calendar year of fieldwork spent working in food activism in the Birmingham Foodie Community. This took place full-time over a period of 12 months, from January to December 2017. Capturing the seasonality of produce, availability, taste and dietary culture, a year immersed in the Community was valuable for exploring nuanced ways in which food was used as a material of community. This included numerous celebration events, such as a community fun day and a funeral, and traditional cultural events, such as Easter and Christmas. Fieldwork is presented chronologically and month-by-month.

Writing purpose

This thesis has defined ethnography as "*the practice in which a researcher spends long periods living in a culture in order to study it*" and conceptualises ethnography as a methodology which should situate the ethnographer in a social-assemblage in which his power is recognised, captured, and explored, but is ultimately subject to the will and interests of the community in which he is immersed. I value this method chapter as a means of communicating with the activists of the Birmingham Foodie Community, the story of the year of work we undertook together, and how their work shaped my emic perspective of food activism. I have written this section specifically to appeal to the interests of activists via a structure communicating the conduct of the study as a month-by-month account of the fieldwork phase, read as narrative prose. Photographs from the fieldwork sessions are also provided to illustrate our work. This part of the thesis represents the 'thick description' characteristic of ethnography. It has been intentionally written so as to make sense to, and be enjoyable for reading by, the activists who took part in the study. To this end, academic terminology and writing style is avoided. The purpose of this month-by-month story of the fieldwork phase is as follows.

- To communicate the study as an ethnography: my ethnographic practice, relationships with individual activists, groups, organisations, and the community.
- To justify conceptualisation of the Birmingham Foodie Community: illustrate the parameters, membership, development, and work of the food organisations.
- To show the development of the fieldwork phase: demonstrating the originality of the study, collection and management of a large ethnographic dataset and the nature of the research exercise as one determined by the interests of the community of study.
- To evidence and illustrate my membership in the Birmingham Foodie Community: showing gradual integration, membership confirmation, requests by the community for me to undertake leadership roles, and eventually lead changes in the community.

Writing process

The month-by-month structure would not necessarily or naturally contain the traditional elements of a method chapter of social research, including participants, materials, and procedures. A separate account of these elements was written to be integrated into the narrative prose of the month-by-month account. Two separate descriptions of the fieldwork phase were initially written. The first, a detailed month-by-month thick description, followed a structure designed to ensure that no month took prominence. The second was a detailed breakdown of the traditional elements of a method section as it would be written in a typical scholarly paper. The two sections were integrated to form flowing narrative that might engage the interests of food activists who took part in the study, whilst also conforming to scholarly conventions for academic rigour. This is represented by integration of the following contents.

Month-by-month chronological account	Traditional elements of methods chapter
- Month - Engaging title fitting of narrative - Reflection of the general movements in the Birmingham Foodie Community - Two case studies of prominent events, people, interactions, or developments that would inform subsequent practice - Reflection of development of ethnographic practice - Summary of month in relation to research questions	- Participants - Primary (background, involvement, motivations, relationship with researcher, impact) [7 participants] - Secondary (involvement, impact) [20 participants] - Materials and resources - Procedure - Informed consent and ethics - Choosing activities - Discriminating between data to be captured and data to be ignored - Writing field notes - Making audio recordings - Taking photos or videos of food - Taking photos or videos of people - Recording and storing data - Transcription

Figure 3: A table describing the writing process and integration of traditional and narrative forms of ethnographic illustration, to build 'thick description' of the year of ethnographic fieldwork in the Birmingham Foodie Community.

Guidance for the reader

The month-by-month account of my year living and working with the Birmingham Foodie Community is presented with a view to illustrating the authenticity and legitimacy of this study as a traditional ethnography, which I have characterised in this thesis according to twelve properties of traditional ethnography in health research (Lambert et al., 2011).

The twelve characteristics of ethnography are again shared here to give context to the value of the month-by-month story of our work in food activism, and the role I played in it as an activist-scholar. I return to this table in 2.3.5 Ethnographic learnings after the month-by-month story, to share examples and reflect on my ethnographic work.

Characteristics of ethnography *(Lambert at al. 2011)*	
Ethnography is about discovery	Ethnography happens in natural environments
Ethnography does not de-contextualise	Ethnography values multiple perspectives
Ethnography visuals first-hand experiences	Ethnography collects diverse forms of data
Ethnography sees no variables are manipulated	Ethnography forms intimate relationships
Ethnography embraces physical/social context	Ethnography recognises broader contexts
Ethnography is guided by and generates theory	Ethnography is holistic, natural and flexible

2.3.1 Winter

This sub-section begins the month-by-month illustration in the first week of January 2017, starting with connections made in the scoping exercise. My peripheral role in the Community became more prominent in this early stage, allowing for my greater community immersion by meeting wider community actors and exploring new food activities.

Image 1: Beef stew and dumplings, the meat dish offered at Littleborough Community Café on the 22nd of January. Served with hand-cut potato wedges and brussels sprouts. Produced by Caroline and Bill to use up a range of pantry ingredients to make room for new stock coming that afternoon.

The fieldwork phase commenced on Monday 22nd of January, following completion and appraisal of the scoping exercise, incorporating planned changes as a result of the informal development of the study. I entered the fieldwork phases as an established and recognised member of a number of third sector food organisations, ranging from community cafes and urban growing projects, to foraging groups and dumpster diving societies. It had become clear to me that, whilst not formally established, there was a strong network of food activists in the West Midlands which could be considered a special interest community. I commenced data collection referring to this group as the *Birmingham Foodie Community*, of which I was a confirmed member.

Fieldwork commenced as an extension of the scoping exercise, with changes only seen in the administration and practicalities of data collection. Distributing Participant Information Sheets and requesting Permission of Access from prominent community figureheads was undertaken without hindrance, and activists did not challenge these formalities. It was clear that committing to six months of volunteering work to establish relationships with people and groups was of benefit to the conduct of the fieldwork phase: activists were not fazed by the bureaucracy of the research process and were open to discussing it, often making it a matter of joviality, and using it to make jokes about my involvement. As had been the case during the scoping exercise, the fieldwork phase began with heavy interaction with Our Saving Food Everywhere Campaign Herndon (OSFEC Herndon), as the organisation had been identified as a central hub of the Community according to my early conceptualisations. The single largest organisation in the network, the most financially secure, and arguably the most well-connected, OSFEC Herndon would further facilitate my mobility in and exploration of the Community and enabled access to other organisations working in food security and food sustainability.

The prominent activists from the scoping exercise became the initial primary participants in the fieldwork phase. Celia and Michael immediately became familiar figures in my day-to-day activities, which were initially based primarily at Littleborough Community Centre where OSFEC Herndon ran a regular community cafe. I met Celia on the first day of the scoping exercise and we immediately had rapport, finding that we had much in common. Celia was a retired schoolteacher and a highly involved social activist. She was of an Irish Catholic background and was the matriarch of a large Birmingham-based family. Well-connected and known widely in and beyond the Community for her tireless social activism, Celia had developed a mixed reputation as both a 'doer' and a 'meddler', her high-impact work in community development dogged by repeated allegations of exciting and stirring power-struggles between Community organisations. Celia seemed to know everyone. Throughout the fieldwork phase, I continued to meet people who had known her for decades. Through her primary role at OSFEC Herndon, she had become a recognised leader in the Community. Her

role, however, was largely undefined, and I would later come to understand that this was somewhat self-determined. Openly vocalising that she had no practical skills, Celia commonly referred to herself as a facilitator or organiser, replicating these roles in other local causes such as the Time Bank and a Save Our Library campaign. She was understood to have a controlling power at OSFEC Herndon, despite not being on the Board of Trustees. Once characterised by the phrase "*she makes Trotsky look conservative*", Celia was a devout adherent to the political far left, and found great solidarity with the identity politics movement. Though we differed in our political and philosophical leanings, I recognised Celia as a well-meaning and influential community leader. Celia had a keen sense of asset-based approaches to community organisation and was a skilled communicator, voicing her passion for community work and her strong beliefs in the value of food in social justice.

Michael was an artist from the south of England, and one of the very few obviously middle-class people in the Birmingham Foodie Community. Described by other volunteers as a "*trustafarian*", Michael originally came to Birmingham to be a freelance artist, having never been in paid employment or having responsibilities of any sort. He would frequently voice his opinion that he was not adequately skilled for paid work and would make jokes about his living off a trust fund and the stereotypes this engaged. He assimilated with other new-age artist types in the Dowlish area, a post-industrial part of the city known for gentrification and being attractive to affluent millennials. This is what led to him connecting with OSFEC Herndon: although Dowlish was not a part of the city frequented by food activists or the activist organisations, it wawas the base of third sector support services, non-profit consultancies, and other such entities. Originally connected to OSFEC Herndon through one of those services, Michael became a silent trustee of OSFEC Herndon and was inadvertently left responsible for the organisation in July 2016 when the original founders suddenly relocated and left the Board of Trustees. Though I agreed with his self-assessment of his poor leadership skills, I got on well with Michael from the outset of the fieldwork phase and found him highly amenable.

A third central figure in the ethnography, emerging from the end of the scoping exercise, was Caroline. A professional advocate helping people with learning difficulties to navigate the welfare system, Caroline was originally from Portsmouth and had moved to Birmingham to study English at Birmingham Polytechnic in the 1980's. She met her partner, had a child, and stayed in Birmingham. Caroline had a very active life and schedule, involving herself in many fitness and religious activities, geographically centred around Littleborough. It was never firmly established how she came to be part of the Community, but it was likely inevitable given her commitment to third sector work and local activism in Littleborough and surrounding neighbourhoods. Caroline was part of a number of food organisations, notably a series of ad hoc community cafes at St Gerald's church, where she was a parishioner, and the Littleborough Community Café by OSFEC Herndon. We initially worked together to run

lunchtime and dinnertime community cafes on Fridays at Littleborough Community Centre, but later took ownership of a Wednesday lunchtime café too. Caroline was very transparent about her motivations and, despite working in a community comprised largely of non-religious people, stood by her belief that doing right by others was a duty compelled by God. Using the excesses of inequitable consumption, food waste, to support vulnerable people was her practical interpretation of social justice according to her religious beliefs. Caroline was open about her strong commitment in adhering to a personal behavioural framework and basing one's conduct on something other than haphazard decisions. She was vocal about her support for the diverse forms this might take, comparing her religious beliefs and associated activities to my veganism, and recognised that together we could achieve great impact for our goals despite differing motivations. My relationship with Caroline strengthened through our work together at the Littleborough cafes. A vegetarian, Caroline shared interests with me beyond our foodie activities and we often had much to discuss.

I was initially surrounded primarily by these well-established figures in the Community: all people with strong personalities and overt, well-defined ideological leanings. As I became a part of the Littleborough Community Café team, I got to know some of the customers rather well. Toria was a customer of OSFEC Herndon and occasional volunteer, limiting her activities to clearing tables at the end of a café. She was a highly resourceful woman who typically took unusual leftovers home to reheat and repurpose, seeing value in the strangest of foods and believing that all food had a good use. Toria hated secondary waste and would frequently take odd combinations of food home with her, to make sure no edible food was thrown away. Another customer, Susan, was an older woman from the relatively distant neighbourhood of Humbleton who, despite living nowhere near Littleborough, would travel every day to be at the café on time. She openly spoke of her passion for food activism and vocally identified as a committed activist who praised the Birmingham Foodie Community for helping her to develop new skills and knowledge. She had mild learning difficulties and was grateful of the inclusion she experienced at Littleborough Centre. Susan was a rather important character in my understanding of the Community, despite her relatively small role, as she frequently voiced her enjoyment of her 'activism' despite not physically delivering food services. Susan understood the title 'activist' to include people who were physically present in spaces where food services operated, and 'activism' to include the eating of food that would otherwise go to waste. In this sense, Susan represented the Community's holistic vision of food activism, which included consumption.

An informal network, the Community was not subject to any central governance or planning. A loose network of affiliated organisations and people, the community was not answerable to any form of standardised governance beyond food safety regulations, and even this was questionable as most of the organisations were legally unincorporated and largely

invisible to authorities. The parameters of the Community were undetermined, and the result of my introspective conceptualisation. The Community was integrated into broader third-sector movements in the West Midlands, such as the communities of refugee welfare activists, environmental activists, and animal rights activists. For the purpose of focusing the ethnography explicitly on food, parameters were set which determined the boundaries of my ethnographic immersion. The scoping exercise had helped me to identify relevant activities which would see me engage in food acquisition, food preparation, food distribution and food production. I also recognised however that total immersion and authentic engagement as a volunteer of most of the organisations would require me to regularly interact with people and groups on the periphery of these parameters: limiting ethnographic activities to those solely concerned with food organisations would limit data collection and fail to capture the application of these activities in the wider third sector.

Audio recordings were taken throughout the fieldwork phase and the ethnographic practice of capturing them developed over time. Initially, audio recordings were captured as extended data sources, containing over an hour of recording. I soon realised that the practicalities of this procedure were unsustainable, as the time required to transcribe them would limit data collection severely. Fieldwork undertaken throughout the calendar year totalled 1382 hours spent in the field; the overt recording of conversations was selective as collection of audio recordings to cover the entirety of the fieldwork phase would have been practically impossible and needlessly invasive. Selective recordings were taken, with the Dictaphone being turned on only when conversation was of direct relevance to the research questions, ethnographic practices, or wider discussions about food, health, or consumption.

To ensure active informed consent and participant engagement I frequently used the phrases approved by the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee, such as "*I'm turning the Dictaphone on now, okay?*" and "*I'm going to record this*", providing participants with the ability to ask for the Dictaphone to be turned off if desired. At no time throughout the fieldwork phase did any participant make such a request. Activists became familiar with the presence of the Dictaphone, which hung on a string around my neck. They also gained familiarity with the "*red light*"; a flashing red light on the device indicating that it was recording. In conversations regarding sensitive or personal topics, such as those about food insecurity or tensions in and between activist organisations, I asked for explicit permission to record.

It was immediately evident that the fieldwork phase was something of a success, as my membership in the Community remained confirmed and I was collecting appropriate data. It was clear that the ethnic, cultural, and social diversity in the Community would provide contacts and networks necessary to facilitate a comprehensive experience. Participants took well to the formal data collection approach and took interest in the virtues of the study, whilst also respecting my inability to provide them with research outcomes so early into the fieldwork

phase. As such, participants quickly developed a vested interest in the study and expressed their excitement in reading this thesis, following its eventual publication.
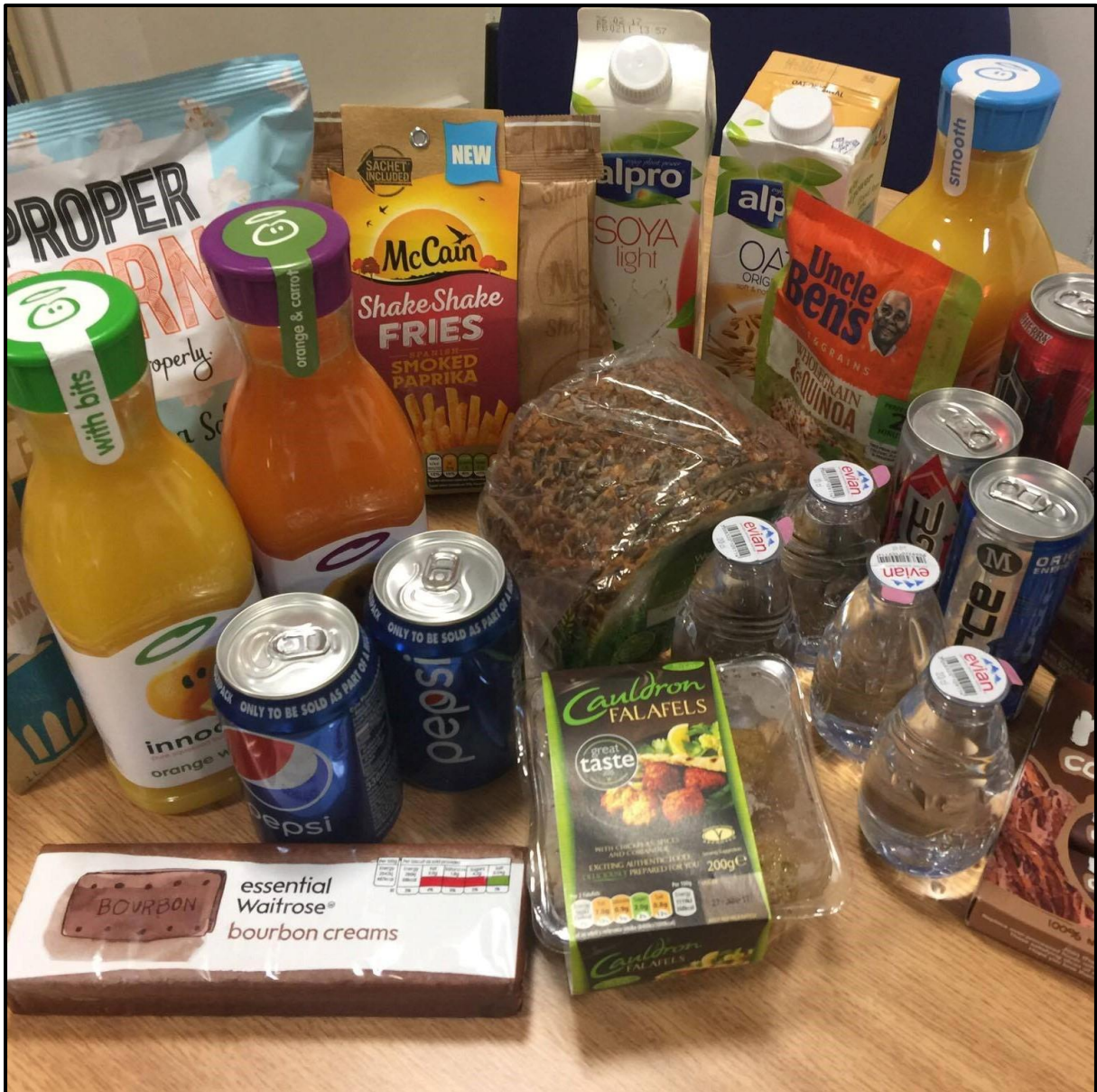
Image 2: A selection of vegan treats 'held back' for me by Shirley and given to me as I left a day of fieldwork in Littleborough on the 23rd of January. Activists looked after each other: they would identify food in the supply chain might be appreciated by other activists to reward each other for their work.

Image 3: Bunny chow on the 3rd of February. A vegetable curry served in a hollowed-out loaf of bread, to be consumed as an edible bowl following the meal. Inspired by South African activist Samantha when asked to make use of a bulk interception of bread from a national chain supermarket.

My interactions at Littleborough Community Café continued throughout the month of February. The Community began to recognise that I was a reasonably skilled cook capable of producing resourceful and tasty vegan and non-vegan dishes. Participants took interest in my personal dietary choices as a vegan, and my position as a researcher working in a field with an obvious conflict. They often found it humorous that I was a vegan studying meat consumption, and some referred to my research as being pursuant of the title "*doctor of meat*". As I met more customers and became closer friends with the other activists, I began to further appreciate the value in the community organisations, particularly seeing the social impact of the community cooking ventures. Participants were keen to talk about their experiences and how being involved in such organisations had changed their lives.

"I suppose that's what differentiates this project from others, the normal food banks. It's not about poverty, it's an eco-project. It's more like a - food justice is the word they typically use, I guess. You don't need to be poor to eat good food."

Celia, social-assemblage 5

After a month of being primarily based at Littleborough Community Café and the other food services where food prepared there was distributed and eaten, I sought to broaden my ethnographic immersion. Confident in my ability to collect appropriate and useful data using my developing approach to data collection, storage, and recording, I felt able to expand the study into other areas of the Community identified in the scoping exercise. Celia was particularly helpful in this regard, supporting me to make connections she thought would give me a more holistic view of the Community. In order to undertake broader fieldwork, I was required to discriminate between ethnographic experiences which would be of relevance to the research questions, and those that were not. Criteria for inclusion in the study were activities which would provide experiences which were of obvious direct relevance to the research questions, development of ethnographic practice and refined conceptualisation of the Community. Determining the usefulness of opportunities was challenging as the relevance of an activity was not always clear until it was taking place. In much the same way as any other activist would engage in activities which were of interest to them, I became familiar with seeking opportunities relevant to my interests (here meaning useful and appropriate data collection) and avoiding those which were not.

February saw the early stages of developing my relationship with Justin, a figure that would later become a primary character in the ethnography. Justin was a white British man born in Birmingham in the 1960's. He moved to London as a teenager and developed a cockney identity and accent, firmly establishing himself culturally as a Londoner (which he affectionately referred to as "the Smoke"). After working in corporate sales in the City of

London for thirty years, Justin returned to Birmingham following the breakup of a long-term relationship to live with his mother, Shirley, in their old family home near Littleborough. He became involved in OSFEC Herndon in March 2016 through his mother's connection with Celia, which had been established at least thirty years prior when they knew each other as mothers of children at the same school. After being involved in OSFEC Herndon for less than six months, Justin was quickly established as a leader in the Community. His authentic character, knowledge of corporate organisations, and "*cheeky chappie*" personality (as described by Celia) helped him form strong relationships with the private-sector supermarkets and restaurants who donated much of the food to the Community organisations. The owner of an industrial transit van, he had access to a scarce resource which was invaluable in the logistics of food activism and transport of materials, as the Community organisations lacked financial capital and could not purchase vehicles. His jovial approach to Community work was beneficial in a network where relationships were formed first on friendship and mutual trust, through the 'common ties' of food security and sustainability, and later confirmed formally. My relationship with Justin was easily the strongest and closest of my ethnographic connections, and I considered him the single-most influential participant in the study. Justin's impact in the Community was considerable. He was frequently quoted as being the leader of the Community and various organisations in it, and many people sought his support and guidance.

In February, I met Katherine and the Friendly Foragers; a group of food activists who scoured green spaces in Birmingham looking for naturally-growing edible plants. My first experience of this took me to Epping Reservoir, where we spent three hours picking berries, nettles, and edible weeds. Of particular interest during this experience was picking pineapple weed: a plant which grows in urban and industrial spaces, such as the cracks between concrete slabs in car parks, but can be brewed to make an exotic tasting tea. The foraging walk provided an excellent opportunity to test a new procedure for the capture and recording of ethnographic field notes. I wrote such notes throughout the fieldwork phase in order to capture experiences that could not be described in audio recordings and photographs, including sensory information, emotional experiences, and initial developing thoughts. Whilst I had no desire to take such field notes covertly, I was conscious of the potential for my notetaking to disrupt activism. This was initially mitigated by a useful excuse: at the beginning of the fieldwork phase, I smoked heavily and regularly took smoking breaks during fieldwork sessions, providing a reason to leave food-related activities briefly and go outside. In the absence of participants in secluded smoking areas, I was able to write field notes without disrupting activities or influencing the behaviour of activists. In early February 2017, however, I stopped smoking permanently and no longer had a legitimate reason to leave the room.

"I thought, I've been vegan half my life and I managed to give up all that, even though none of that is addictive, necessarily. I managed to give that up overnight, and I thought, why can't this be exactly the same?"

Me, explaining my behaviour to Susan, social-assemblage 4

I developed a field note collection system using the Bristol Online Survey platform and integrated the system into an app on my phone. This system enabled me to take fieldnotes without concern: I could write fieldnotes on my phone without disrupting other activists or influencing their behaviour, whilst also making it clear through body language and active phrasing that I was writing about the activities we were doing together. The development of this process was made transparent. I asked participants to provide feedback on the system and regularly informed them that I was writing field notes. This provided unintentional cues, further eliciting useful discussion about food and consumption; when I took my phone out of my pocket for personal communications or to take field notes, activists would frequently question my actions and question which part of our conversation I was writing about. In providing honest answers to those questions, such as telling activists of the topic I was writing about, they would then engage in further discussion about food security and sustainability.

Michael: *"Are you recording everything today?"*

Jake: *"I record things all the time. I record everything, though. I sort of record things that are of interest generally."*

Michael: *"Ah, okay. Alright, no problem. At least we know you're doing it".*

Michael and I discussing the data collection practice, social-assemblage 6

Although the capture and recording of field notes was systematic in its approach, the content of field notes was subject to individual experience and was not structured in any way. Many field notes were written as chronological accounts of a particular fieldwork session, whilst others were post-session reflections on ethnographic practice. Many field notes served as written cues to support my understanding of the context of audio recordings and photographs, posing questions for further consideration in the development of an analytical approach and interpretation of the analysis.

February saw me develop new relationships with emerging participants and strengthen relationships with existing characters. My emerging friendship with Justin presented a novel social challenge. He would repeatedly invite me to drink with volunteers after a 'shift', usually on a Friday afternoon. I began to question the legitimacy of this activity and wonder where my researcher-participant boundaries ended. Could there be ethnographic value in becoming part

of the social life of the Community? I asked my doctoral supervisors from their thoughts on this, and although we agreed that it may not be seen as traditional, if the pub was the space where activists discussed their ideas and plans for the development of their work, then it was a space of ethnographic value in making sense of the culture of the Community.

Image 4: The 'Fruitful Boxes' on the 10th of February: a scheme operated through a partnership between multiple organisations, creating crates of food that could be 'purchased' using the PWYW concept, and delivered to peoples' homes through a network of volunteer drivers on Friday evenings.

Image 5: Chicken stew with salad and artisanal bread donated by a local bakery, served as dinner on the 3rd of March at St Gerald's. A reconstituted meal formed of chicken in mushroom sauce, and a vegetable curry, served at lunch to ensure the zero-waste principle was met.

The spring saw big changes in the Birmingham Foodie Community, as OSFEC Herndon prepared to open the 'FoodStore': a social supermarket from which customers could shop from intercepted waste food on a grand scale. The setup of this operation was to mimic a conventional supermarket but run on the Pay What You Want economic model used by most organisations in the Community. Many activists started questioning whether the organisation, and the neighbourhood for which it was effectively a Community hub, was ready to take on such a large-scale project. Until this point, the Community, and the organisations of which it was comprised had been largely informal, avoiding formal bureaucratic processes such as formal business planning, and being merely mindful of, but not paying much close attention to formal regulatory practices such as food safety inspections. The opening of the FoodStore would require the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon to engage in more conscientious decision making, obligating them to take greater legal and financial responsibility and treating activism with greater seriousness. As such, March was a time of excitement and worry, as participants became more enthused about the changes taking place in the Community whilst also exhibiting concern regarding their implementation.

On the 18th of March, Celia was celebrating her birthday with a large party in Dowlish. She had opened the invitation to all of the volunteers at OSFEC Herndon, and a range of other organisations in the Community. The party was to be hosted by an Irish heritage association, an appropriate venue given the large number of Celia's relatives coming from Ireland to celebrate the occasion. I arrived early in the morning of the party to support the cookery: Celia had naturally requested that OSFEC Herndon cater the event. Unusually, Celia left few instructions and left us to be creative with the catering for her party, which she was celebrating with her twin brother, Timothy. Faith, Russell, and I spent the day preparing food for in excess of 200 guests. Faith and I made cold buffet items. Having always disliked party food, I felt a little uneasy with this task.

"I fail to understand why this food is considered celebratory. Food that would normally be considered part of the poor man's lunch makes its way to the party platter as a rite of passage and, for some reason, people look forward to it."

A field note, social-assemblage 10

Russell cooked the 'main' meal: a carvery. This involved roasting an enormous turkey and cooking some large cuts of gammon and pork sous-vis. Having not seen such quality meats offered to the cafes for cooking at Littleborough, I was initially surprised to see these otherwise luxurious foods. It initially seemed unfair that the café at Littleborough had been receiving poor cuts of greasy chicken for the past few weeks, whilst Celia's private birthday party got the premium joints of meat. Russell shared these concerns, but also reasoned that

Celia was a prominent figure in the Community, which would quickly fall apart without her. We agreed that the Community had as much, if not more obligation, to support the activists running the organisations, as it did for the customers receiving the food from them. After preparing enormous quantities of food, I went home to change and returned in the evening for the party. As expected, it was a heavily intoxicating affair. Russell was responsible for the carvery. In professional fashion, he put on his chefs-whites and hosted a full carvery, with a selection of white and red meats, potatoes, roast onions, and other seasonal vegetables.

"Everybody was very impressed with the food. Even as a vegan, I felt a much greater sense of celebration from this aspect of the food that I did from the lousy sandwiches and party platters; the carvery had a much more celebratory feel and conveyed the occasion well"

A field note, social-assemblage 11

Russell did an excellent job and managed to do so relatively unassisted. I had packed an overnight bag as the plan was that, unable to drive after drinking, I would stay at Justin's house. This was a notable development in my ethnographic practice. I had to question the legitimacy of a researcher engaging this personally with participants and had to consider whether I had already 'gone native', a term which I recognised was loaded with controversy in ethnographic scholarship, concerning relationships between ethnographers and their participants. This forced me to question the act of 'going native': frowned upon by some ethnographers but considered the ultimate goal by others. I discussed this with my doctoral supervisors before and after staying at Justin's house for the night, and they expressed only mild concern for my personal safety, which I assured them was not problematic. I also agreed with my supervisors to engage in reflection about this part of the ethnography and to make sense of it in field notes.

"I have questioned the legitimacy of a researcher sleeping at his participants' house. Does this challenge the professionalism of my research practice? Should I feel ashamed or embarrassed for having done the practical thing? Without this option being available to me, I would have to leave relatively early and not have a drink. This way, I can enjoy the party with my participants and, as I've been telling people all along, be one of them. Perhaps this was the first sign that I can, or even should 'go native' in this ethnography."

A field note, social-assemblage 12

Examining data collection from Celia's birthday party the following day, I recognised the usefulness in this exercise and determined that engaging in the social life of the Community was likely to result not only in collection of a richer dataset through broadened

opportunities, but a richer understanding of the culture of food activism. Ultimately, this aspect of the ethnography required me to accept that food activism was not just the physical activity which took place in the food services and their preparation: the mutuality which formed the 'common ties' of the Community was to be found in the peripheral social life of activists. Reflecting upon this in my field notes, I considered parallels between my own social interactions with participants and the interactions participants had with each other in my absence. Their occasional disengagements from the social life of the community were legitimate and reasonable. I sought to incorporate these social customs into my ethnographic practice for true immersion in the Community. To this end, I concluded that social interactions with participants would not be limited by conventions of 'traditional' researcher-participant relationships, but by limitations of my personal life, akin to the limitations experienced by other members of the Community. Central to my development of close friendships and social experiences in the community was Justin's family: his mother, Shirley; his brother, Aaron, and stepmother, Pat. Wheelchair-bound following a stroke, Pat and was highly dependent on Shirley and would often accompany her during Shirley's food activism. I developed a fond friendship with Pat, and we had regular camaraderie: her relationship with Justin and other members of the community was contentious and it was widely known that she was disliked by Justin. Pat was initially hesitant about my involvement in the Moore family but soon came to accept me as part of their lives and activism. This acceptance further confirmed my having gone native. Pat's inclusion in the ethnography was also useful as she was one of the few voices in the Community to have a constant presence in Community spaces, whilst openly identifying as not being an activist. This meant that I was able to regularly capture her views on how the Community supported, or sometimes exploited, food activists, and the impact of activism on their families and personal lives.

At this stage, photographs became an important aspect of the dataset, creating a visualisation of the Community that transcended descriptions I could provide in my field notes. These photographs would later become a critical part of the analysis, portraying the inanimacy of matter in the social-assemblages of food activism, critical to determining how social interactions in the community were facilitated by material. The majority of the photographs taken were of food, though photographs of venues, equipment, and other materials of relevance to the research questions were regularly taken. Photographs of food taken at community cafes were, where possible, accompanied by photographs of menus describing the food. The presentation of meals was of interest, resulting in the dataset containing many photographs of meals during cooking and prior to being served. Some of those photographs have been carefully selected with reference to the illustration of my experience of the Community, and how it changed throughout the fieldwork phase. I here draw attention to the first photo which appears at the beginning of each month of this thick description and implore

readers to observe how they change from month to month with seasonality, but also with the developing professionalism, skills, and knowledge of the Community chefs. March gave me the opportunity to see meat used as both a material of the everyday and a material of exception. What I found interesting was the contrast in the use of meat, and food generally, in situations where it was considered a material of sustenance and a resource for survival, such as the community cafes, and a material of celebration and indulgence, such as the party.

Image 6: Faith, a new activist to numerous organisations in March, slices a gammon during the preparation session for the catering for Celia's birthday party on the 17th of March. Celia was an important figure in the Community, and we prepared a special meal to celebrate her birthday.

2.3.2 Spring

This sub-section transitions the fieldwork phase through to a stage in which the cohesive nature of the food activist network became more evident. An event in the Community forced collective revaluation of how food activist organisations and local food systems work, creating a division in the Birmingham Foodie Community.

April

A death in the community

Image 7: Stroganoff made with chicken donated by a national restaurant chain, served with potato wedges on the 21st of April. The chicken came pre-cooked, meaning activists could only use it in shredded form as it did not retain its texture well.

By April, the FoodStore was approaching opening day as final works were undertaken to prepare the space, including the breaking through of the wall between the FoodStore and the neighbouring warehouse, which would be an activists-only storage facility and food preparation area. As the FoodStore became the new 'big thing' in the Community, other operations of OSFEC Herndon and associated organisations started to wind down in scale due to diminished interest from Community leaders as the FoodStore commanded their attention. It also meant that food sources were decreasing, as food supply was diverted to stock up the FoodStore in preparation for the opening event. This made many activists who ran those services, myself included, feel somewhat isolated from the excitement of the FoodStore. However, my close relationship with Justin (who had taken responsibility for physical development of the space) and Shirley (who had taken ownership of the management of the FoodStore) ensured that I had access to the facility.

Shirley was a British woman in her early 60's from Birmingham. She immigrated to Australia as a Ten Pound Pom in the early 1970's and returned to Birmingham in the early 1980's, to start a family. She was the matriarch of the Moore family. After working as a dental hygienist and child carer for decades, Shirley retired after her husband passed away and she later married Pat. She became involved in the Community in early 2016 through her long-time acquaintance with Celia, who she had known from the late 1960's when they ran children's events together at the local primary school in Littleborough. Shirley was the 'mother' of the Community and many activists habitually called her "*mom*". Initially involved in the running of a food market (a pop-up reimagination of a food bank which required no referral and sought to provide a range of fresh and ambient foods) in Littleborough, it was soon recognised that her motherly character and sympathetic nature lent her to being highly suitable for leading food services for OSFEC Herndon. A regular food market was opened in her own house at the end of March, and she opened her home to the people of Birmingham in an activity affectionately called 'house shop'. Shirley enjoyed the social interaction and cultural diversity of her activist work and loved getting to know her 'shoppers'. Shirley was highly reliable and trustworthy, never letting anyone down. As such, the Community came to see her as a comforting figure who could be relied on to get things done. Whilst it created a great deal of work for her, dominating her life and home, Shirley appeared to enjoy this dependability and her reputation as a Community 'mom'.

On Friday 14th of April, I went to the pub with a group of volunteers to celebrate a successful Easter event. Particularly excited about the trip to the pub was Fran. A devout food activist who loved being part of the social life of the Community, Fran was a woman the same age as me, who had profound and multiple learning disabilities, and also limiting physical disabilities. Her mother Petunia stated that Fran had the mental development of a six-year-old child. Fran was prone to tantrums and, though she enjoyed activist life, often struggled to make

sense of the abstract and typically overwhelming challenges activists addressed. Petunia used food as a means of keeping Fran happy: a point of controversy between activist friends as it was felt by some that this tactic, which Petunia openly described as being "*distraction through food*" might compromise Fran's health. A well-known and proud local eccentric, Petunia was known to be a compulsive hoarder who extended this behaviour to her food. Her initial involvement in the Community was based primarily on her ability to use the services to access large quantities of food for this purpose, although this later transitioned to Petunia and Fran being involved in activism once they experienced the kindness and support of activists. Petunia was a kind and caring woman but had a reputation for being a little manipulative when questioned about her food hoarding. Fran was particularly excited about the trip to the pub as she had been so proud over the past few months to call herself a volunteer of OSFEC Herndon, but her role had been sinecure until April. Because of her physical disabilities limiting her ability to support physical activism, her only task was to be driver's mate to Petunia as she delivered Fruitful Boxes on a Friday afternoon. At the Easter tea at St Gerald's, however, Fran was able to spend time with Christina, Faith, and I, talking about things people in their mid-twenties typically discuss, joking and having fun with her activist friends. She buttered hot cross buns and got involved in the jokes with elderly veteran activist Bill, as he pretended to be upset that she'd stolen his job. For the first time, she was able to take pride in being an activist and contributing to a successful Community food event. To mark her achievements, we went with her to the local pub, a short walk from Littleborough Centre, for a drink on that Friday evening. It was Fran's birthday the following weekend and various Community organisations had worked together to plan her a birthday party at St Gerald's.

On Saturday morning. I went to the mall to buy Fran a birthday present in preparation for her party the next day. I stepped out of my car at the mall to be bombarded with text messages from various activists: Fran had unexpectedly passed away. The night before at the pub, Petunia had taken a photo of us together, and it would be the last photo ever taken of Fran. Petunia had long taken great pride in her relationship with her daughter, often referring to herself as "*mother of the famous Fran*" when meeting new customers at the café. She knew that she and Fran didn't offer much in the way of physical activism, but they had become an integral part of the Community and a symbol of what food activism in Birmingham was all about. Their inclusion and welcome in the Community was representative of the food being about more than just feeling full and eating good meals, but about including people who were socially isolated, desperately lonely, and supporting people to be an active part of their local food system. It also gave parents and carers like Petunia the chance have brief respite and feel like a colleague rather than a full-time guardian. They represented a network of people who cared deeply about each other and supported each other through hardship.

News of Fran's death spread quickly and affected people not only across the county, but nationally as word got to members of various organisations for people with learning disabilities, of which Fran had been an active member. The following day was due to be a celebration her life; instead, Fran's 27th birthday party became a day to mourn her death.

"Fran was not a big player in the Community, but she was someone who was universally loved by everyone in our group. She was a participant and part-volunteer of many of my projects that make up the Community. She was also a big part of the church at St Gerald's, I'm not sure how Caroline and Christina will feel at the moment."
A reflective audio recording, social-assemblage 17

Experiencing the death of a close participant and discussing her passing with Petunia forced me to reflect on the human importance not only of food activism, but of the physical spaces involved in the Birmingham Foodie Community. It was in those places of inclusion, diversity and welcome that Fran and Petunia had social experiences through food, finding comfort and connection in the social-assemblages I was seeking to explore. Because of this stark consciousness bought about by Fran's death, I started capturing these spaces, taking photographs of venues, equipment, and other materials of relevance to the research questions beyond merely pictures of meals to be served. I realised that the spaces exerted affect and formed part of the affect economy that shaped the social experience of food.

Fran's funeral was held at St Gerald's Church, where some of the Community food services took place, later in April. OSFEC Herndon was asked to cater for the wake, so Caroline, Christina, Faith, and I prepared Fran's favourite foods. Caroline spoke of Fran's relationship with food during the funeral service.

"I want to remember Fran by a Facebook post she put up a few months ago, because you all know, she loved her Facebook posts, even if she weren't all that good with her spellings. The post just read, 'I am cup of tea', and I really think that just says it all. You know that moment when you're enjoying your tea, and it makes you feel warm and safe, and you just feel like it's a part of you. I know you'll remember 'I am cake' too, she was definitely one for cake."
Caroline delivers a eulogy at Fran's funeral, social-assemblage 19

I had seen the use of food in celebration in previous months, but April saw me experience food to celebrate life and mourn death. I also witnessed, for the first time, the Community and all of the organisations that form it, come together in mutual sadness to mourn Fran's passing. For the first time, it was obvious to people other than me that there was a Community here: the network was not merely a few organisations connected through similar

lines of interest, but a budding and prosperous Community which could achieve more through formally recognising those links which bound people and groups together. The more obvious visibility of this during the funeral service got activists talking about how their network was a Community, and observations of how a few of Fran's activist friends had taken the lead on preparing to celebrate her life whilst some Community leaders had not engaged at all.

Image 8: The Easter foods Christina, Faith and I prepared with Fran on the 14th of April, the day before she died. Fran buttered hot cross buns and engaged in the camaraderie of food activism, feeling part of the group, and celebrating her contributions that evening with a drink at the pub.

Image 9: 'Lola's pasta carbonara' served with salad on the 10th of May. The pasta in a cheese sauce was prepared as a single dish, then split in two: ham was added to this half to make a carbonara, and additional cheese, sundried tomatoes and onions were added to the other as a vegetarian option.

After opening in late April, the FoodStore became an immediate success, and under Shirley's management, it flourished. Generating huge PWYW donations from customers, the financial sustainability of the new venture was assumed to be secure, and the social impact was obvious. People from all walks of life were using this community facility to feed their family and be part of their rapidly developing alternative local food system. This had the unfortunate effect of exacerbating a sense of isolation in the Community amongst those who were not part of the FoodStore team. For some such activists, this feeling of unintentional exclusion manifested into anger and resentment towards the success of the FoodStore and those who ran it. This frustration and lack of control was felt most by Celia.

Whilst I initially saw her as a slightly controlling force for good, this near-mid-point in the year of field work saw my perceptions of Celia change. Celia had long been an important but controversial figure in the Community, whose popularity had been slowly decreasing over time as new activists entered the organisations, introducing new ideas which rather diminished Celia's initially influential political ideologies of activism. Whilst she was a symbolic figurehead in some organisations, she was increasingly viewed as untrustworthy: an activist with good intentions blinded by national party politics, current affairs, and big ideological positions she strongly believed in but did not seem to fully understand. Celia's far-left ideological leanings aligned with authoritarianism, which could be seen in her approach to community development and supporting vulnerable people. I once captured a sentiment to this effect in an audio recording, in which Celia declared that "*people can't be left to look after themselves, you've just got to make decisions for them*". Described by community chef Russell as "*a woman hell-bent on controlling everyone and everything in Birmingham*", Celia was rapidly becoming an unpopular figure as her bitter resentment for the growing success of the FoodStore became more apparent. Outside of Celia's influence, the FoodStore became a symbol of the power of bottom-up community development under Shirley's leadership. It was clear to me and other activists that the development of a rift in OSFEC Herndon was inevitable.

Justin kept me informed of the developing divide in the leadership of OSFEC Herndon arising from this rift, which concerned differing views in the Board of Trustees about how best to handle what they recognised as Celia pursuing a "*divide and rule*" strategy to take control of the FoodStore. This was partially supported by some false allegations orchestrated by her daughter Tracey and exacerbated by new far-left-leaning activists Celia had recruited. At the end of the month, Shirley mysteriously and unexpectedly resigned from her volunteer activist role at OSFEC Herndon, and the FoodStore immediately closed. Activists across organisations, including those running the FoodStore, were provided with no explanation, and Community organisations reliant on the FoodStore as the physical and symbolic hub of the Community, were devastated by the sudden closure of the facility. The Community food supply suddenly ground to a halt.

Justin informed me that Shirley had resigned amidst a seemingly planned false allegation of racism, which concerned her denying access to her 'house shop' and the FoodStore to customers of Asian heritage. Activists who were told about this were immediately sceptical, as Shirley, a staunch advocate of racial equality and cultural appreciation, was well-known for her role at the Community 'mom' and routinely opened her own home to serve as a social supermarket which anybody could enter to get food. The allegation, which was unfounded and lacked evidence, was voiced to be a "*her word against mine*" situation between Celia and Shirley. As the quiet rumour spread and became widespread gossip, Celia was eager to promote the allegation. In defence of his mother, this resulted in Justin becoming part of the argument. Justin was on the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon, which was unsure about how to handle Celia's influence and was disappointed by the inertia of the other Board members to investigate the conflict. He became wary of the motivations of the other Board members, including Michael and Farmiga, and began to distance himself from them.

To Celia's dismay, activists, customers, and the wider Community quickly sided with Shirley, refusing to believe that the woman who had opened her home to the people of Birmingham and recruited a multicultural team to run a high-impact Community food service in her own house, was responsible for an act of racial discrimination. The Community became suspicious of Celia's claims. With Shirley gone, Justin distancing himself from the questionable leadership of OSFEC Herndon, the Board of that organisation maintaining silence, and the FoodStore still being closed, there were growing tensions in the Community. OSFEC Herndon had been the central organisation serving as a hub of the activist network: without it functioning properly, the food supply was heavily disrupted and other Community organisations had to temporarily stop running their food services. It rather began to feel that the Community was somewhat "*falling apart*", in Christina's words, and this was of great concern to activists. Lacking real leadership in the Community, Caroline and I quickly became de facto authority figures, taking greater responsibility for the apparent lack in governance, logistics and infrastructure. As I took on more responsibility, I realised I would soon have to pick a side too.

Caroline and I were not alone in our desire to keep the Community alive by providing some stability at OSFEC Herndon during this month of uncertainty. Christina, Faith, Bill, Petunia, and Russell all expressed desire in sustaining OSFEC Herndon and the associated organisations for as long as possible, though we knew the collapse was somewhat inevitable and actively discussed this frequently throughout May. This process of change saw Russell for the first time emerge as something of a leader. Russell had worked as a professional chef for over thirty years. His life story was not entirely clear, but it was understood that he had worked in restaurants in London and Birmingham in executive kitchen roles. When diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in his late fifties, Russell ended his employment to undergo treatment and was subsequently unable to secure employment. He attributed this to an inability to get

occupational insurance based on his health conditions. It was not clear how he became part of the Birmingham Foodie Community, but it was universally understood that he was "*the last man standing*": the last person supporting OSFEC Herndon who had been involved since the concept first came to Birmingham. It was for this reason that being witness to the dividing Community over the summer was particularly challenging for Russell, the sole remaining original founder of a rapidly collapsing social network. Russell's role in OSFEC Herndon and various other organisations was poorly defined, and it was generally perceived that Michael and Celia held him back from achieving his full potential. Russell was an accomplished chef. He was involved in the community events but had been removed from regular community café services due to a lack of kitchen management skills. He was eager to demonstrate his cooking skills, which were indisputably the best in the Community. Russell saw great injustice in social inequalities, particularly regarding access to good quality food, and made sense of food activism through his devout Christian faith, frequently voicing the phrase "*god be with you*" when serving his meals to communicate his spiritual interpretations of food security. His understanding of food activism was very localised and personal; he believed there were simple solutions to be found in community cookery, to address national and international challenges. Russell found a good circle of close friends in food activism and his involvement mitigated his experience of chronic social isolation, which he openly self-declared as "*being desperately lonely".* Russell was described by Justin as a "*tireless puppy*" and was well-known to care deeply about food security, sometimes to the extent that his enthusiasm became exhausting to others. Never being one to give up in the face of endless adversity, Russell became a constant in the Community and was considered a skilled, knowledgeable, and reliable figure. As the Community he loved was falling apart around him, Russell began to question his role and started talking about what was to come next.

Having experienced the relative stability of the Community organisations and their connections through the network of food activism throughout the scoping exercise, I was quite surprised by how quickly and easily the Community was fragmented by a simple conflict about a racism allegation between two activists. The argument also drew my attention to the dependencies in the Community, particularly in the physical-social nexus as other organisations beyond OSFEC Herndon began to suffer without food being supplied due to the closure of the FoodStore. My relationship with Caroline further strengthened during this month as we worked closely together to provide some continuity in the absence of cohesive organisational leadership.

I had long sought to be a member of the Community without changing it, initially conceptualising my ethnographic practice in the community as being a passive experience where I would give my time and take my data without causing hindrance to existing members. By May, however, I had become not only an established member of the Community, but an

emerging leader as Caroline and I began to think about new ways of delivering food activism beyond the micropolitics which stifled Community leadership. Did I owe a responsibility to these people beyond my obligations as a researcher? Had going native meant that I was now too invested to simply stand back and watch as the Community split in two?

Image 10: Russell making nettle soup on the 19th of May as part of an arts and heritage event for a local third sector organisation beyond the Community. He was keen to show that meals can be made from the most unusual of ingredients, including those grown naturally which can be picked for free.

Image 11: Homemade vegan ravioli served with potato wedges, pomodoro sauce and a garnish, served on the 14th of June. The interceptions were poor that day, meaning that pantry ingredients needed to be used to maximise meal production. Christina and I made fresh pasta for the ravioli.

As the summer approached, it was apparent that a divide had developed in the Community. Shirley had resigned from the FoodStore following a period of tension with Celia, which appeared to be a power struggle concerning Celia's loss of control over the FoodStore under Shirley's leadership. Justin was torn between his passion for food activism in OSFEC Herndon and his loyalty to his mother who had been hurt by the inertia of the organisation's leadership. It was obvious that at some point, Justin would snap. This happened in June, when Justin quit OSFEC Herndon following allegations of professional misconduct in the form of discrimination. From a position of my own growing influence in the Community as Caroline and I took greater responsibility to salvage and maintain the failing food services, I watched as the two sides grew further apart. As OSFEC Herndon rapidly split in two, so did the wider Community as activist organisations felt obligated to choose a side. It had come to the point where I, now an ingrained member of the Community, would have to do the same.

When Justin quit his role at OSFEC Herndon, the organisation was suddenly thrown into turmoil as Justin had been responsible for all the food interceptions (collecting food from suppliers, such as supermarkets, restaurants, wholesalers, and the urban farming projects), deliveries and food transport. This forced Celia to verbally recognise how valuable Justin had been to the Community, uttering the now-famous phrase "*he's very good at driving the van*", and see that much of the good social impact we had achieved as a network would not have been possible without his commitment. I had rather hoped that her verbalisation of Justin's skills and dedication as the Community logistician would help her to resolve the tensions she had caused with the Moore family, but this was not to be realised. The reality of the situation hit the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon, and they desperately asked around looking for solutions that did not readily exist. Justin owned a large transit van which served as the primary vehicle for the logistics of the Community food system: he would intercept food and take it to primary food hubs where it would be sorted, purchased, eaten, or packaged to be further transported to other organisations or sites in domestic cars. The individual organisations of the Community lacked financial capital to purchase a new van, and the tensions between organisations resulting from the increasing divide meant they would not share financial assets to purchase one together. As the leaders of various Community organisations desperately searched for answers, Caroline and I took it upon ourselves to access food.

Prior to the divide in the Community, Caroline had planned for several community cafes at St Gerald's to take place throughout the months of June and July, in preparation for weekly cafes to occur over the summer holidays. These were to be supplied with food from OSFEC Herndon, Brompton Barrow Boys (another urban farming site growing only vegetables) and the Friendly Foragers. Many activists supporting this partnership had been members of the congregation at St Gerald's Church, which was to host the cafes in its adjoining church hall. With the logistical challenges ongoing at OSFEC Herndon, Caroline and I were forced to

source food wherever we could find it, becoming ad hoc delivery volunteers and using our own cars to transport food around the city. With some forward-planning and innovative resourcefulness, we managed this process surprisingly well, and the cafes at St Gerald's were an immediate success, with far greater customer numbers, PWYW donations and a better sense of community than anything we had done before in Littleborough. This was partially because we gave Russell a more central role in the cafes. Without Michael and Celia's scepticism of his skills, and with Caroline and I leaving him in charge of the kitchen at St Gerald's, he was empowered to use his decades of culinary knowledge to make effective and efficient use of the limited foods we were able to source, to create tasty meals customers enjoyed. I took the role of kitchen lead in Caroline's absence during her holiday abroad, and she covered things during my holiday at the end of June. In a space outside of Celia's control, and with logistics outside of the remit of OSFEC Herndon, the cafes were a highlight of our week, and we attracted a great many community partners to join us for lunch. This led us to question whether we really needed OSFEC Herndon at all. If we could run a successful café and create this social impact without them, did we need to remain part of that organisation?

Justin was bored and miserable without food activism and the Community. He spent his days at home catching up on his personal life, which had taken a back seat whilst he was busy growing OSFEC Herndon and establishing the FoodStore. But without his activist work he had little identity and no cause, which he made clear during our twice-weekly meetings when he would join us at St Gerald's for the alternative cafes. Describing himself as OSFEC Herndon's "*persona non grata*", he felt that his forced resignation had been part of a wider planned strategy to remove the Moores from the Community. He also voiced concern that my close friendship with him would likely result in me being forced out too, something that he knew was both a threat to me as a researcher dependent upon the Community to generate my dataset, and me an activist with the desire to influence change. Throughout June, Justin and I met twice a week after the cafes, trying to work out what had gone wrong in the Community and how it might be addressed. Justin suggested that we should contact George Jones, the founder of Our Saving Food Everywhere Campaign and figure head of the national movement with which OSFEC Herndon had a loose affiliation. I was torn between doing something and doing nothing. As an ethnographer committed to not influencing my community of study, I felt obliged to stay out of the tensions. But if I did nothing, there would soon be no Community left to study. Justin and I reached a compromise, agreeing that something had to be done to rectify the issues that had resulted in the rapid demise of the Community, but that revolutionary action would be used as a measure of last resort only. Instead, the most obvious action to consider first was the reformation of the hub of the Community, OSFEC Herndon. Justin acknowledged that Caroline, Russell, and I felt obliged to at least attempt to save

OSFEC Herndon before we attempted anything new. I agreed to speak to the other dejected activists to start to move things forward with the possible reform of OSFEC Herndon.

As I left Birmingham to take a summer holiday in the United States in late June, I felt a sense of change as I began to contemplate how the Littleborough activists and I might reform OSFEC Herndon. Were we doing the right thing in giving OSFEC Herndon one last chance, or were we flogging a dead horse? Was it time to start something new in its place?

Image 12: A 'shepherdess' pie made by me and Caroline on the 2nd of June using limited resources we had to run a café during the interruptions in the Community food supply. Note the seaweed that Russell advised us to use to add depth to the flavour: an unusual inclusion which paid off in taste.

2.3.3 Summer

This sub-section focuses on how the division of the Community transitioned the fieldwork phase from being a passive observation, to a more active critical research exercise. The Community went through a period of substantial restructuring, and participants asked me to be actively involved in developing novel forms of food activism.

Image 13: A tuna sandwich with pasta and salad, served on the 7th of June. The oven in the community centre was in a state of disrepair and there was no money to buy another, so Mandy and I made use of the microwave to cook pasta and otherwise serve cold dishes until it could be fixed.

I returned from a brief visit to the United States in early July to be greeted by a Community which had fallen apart. The basic infrastructure of the Community food system had failed: in the absence of Justin's logistical skills, food interceptions had stalled and there was a growing food shortage. Without Shirley's insights into local social life and the needs of her 'shoppers', customers became hard to attract, and even the most vulnerable people sought support elsewhere. Littleborough Community Café, once the flagship food service of the Community, was now home to '*the dregs*', a derogatory term used by even the most liberal and progressive of activists to describe the new custom base which consisted of known petty criminals, people with substance use issues, and vulnerable people who were well-meaning but needed complex social support far beyond that which the Community was able to provide. It is difficult to communicate what 'the dregs' meant, as it was used in a derogatory sense but was also understood in a social justice context. Although many food services in the Community were delivered in socioeconomically deprived areas of Birmingham, they attracted a broad diversity of people from all walks of life, including more affluent people whos' PWYW donations subsidised the cost for everyone else. With the food supply diminishing and the food quality disappearing as more skilled and committed activists fled OSFEC Herndon, those affluent customers stopped coming to cafes and food markets, leaving a remaining custom base that consisted only of people who were experiencing severe chronic food poverty and had nowhere else to get food. Those people, unable to contribute much to the Community, were recognised for their vulnerabilities and were not seen as a burden: the term 'the dregs' reflected, I thought, the anger felt by the remaining activists regarding the intra-Community conflict scaring away the broader diversity of the customer base which had long characterised food activism.

When coming back to activism after my holiday, I continued supporting the original community cafes in Littleborough under OSFEC Herndon. A constant air of hostility and angst was present in every food service, as if we were being watched. Some participants, notably Celia, Farmiga, and Michael, became increasingly anxious as it became clear that all was not well. In other spaces, such as the ongoing series of alternative cafes at St Gerald's, and the inactive but discursive Moore family, disillusioned activists such as Justin and Shirley developed greater anger as complex power struggles came to a boiling point. There was a clear demand for change from the Community. Activists, customers, and Community contacts recognised that the now toxic OSFEC Herndon was at the centre of a dying network. Reliant on that organisation for the bulk of the food supply in many organisations, it was clear that an overhaul was necessary to sustain the Community.

The active discussion of the problems Community organisations were facing forced, for the first time, participants to voice their recognition that the network existed at all. The Community food system stagnating had bought to their attention the connectedness of organisations, the people who ran them, and the assets they used to support food security

and food sustainability. Now that I was an integral part of those conversations, my use of the term "*foodie*" to describe activists through a sense of cultural 'common ties' to form a Community, was picked up by Caroline, Russell, Justin, and Shirley, who then began using it themselves. I had to question my role as researcher here, as my scholarly theorisations about the Community had now been shared with participants, who had started to see themselves according to my theoretical conceptualisations of them in this thesis. Although I did not talk about new materialist concepts such as social-assemblages, activists began to discuss similar ideas to this, talking about how the tensions in the Community had highlighted the importance of 'stuff' in food services, similar to how this thesis makes sense of the physical-social nexus, and the earth-human nexus under planetary health. This made me very aware of the power I was exerting in the social-assemblages, and I had to question whether my theorisations about the activists, and their discussion of those ideas, was a form of assigning order to social life.

Quiet discussions about power, authority, agency, and control in the Community continued in secret, and mostly at the pub following food services which were now broadly split between those controlled by OSFEC Herndon, and the alternative '*underground*' cafes at St Gerald's. It was felt by many activists that the solution to tensions in the Community was to be found in addressing the top-down management of OSFEC Herndon. I personally felt that change could not be achieved by overhauling OSFEC Herndon due to the heavy influence of Celia's well-meaning but controlling personality, and Michael's weak will, but I felt obliged to exhaust every possible line of action before discussing pathways to something new. Justin felt this could only be achieved by challenging the authority of the Board of Trustees of the organisation, by providing a bottom-up alternative. Knowing that we were the Community's only hope for bringing about meaningful change, Justin and I prepared to do this, in a period Justin referred to as "*the revolution*": a term that caught on just as quickly as "*foodies*".

I was not alone in feeling uncomfortable in needing to choose between two sides. The original Littleborough kitchen team (Caroline, Christina, Faith, Bill, and me) had discussed the impending split for some time and felt compelled to act, though we were still running the twice-weekly cafes in Littleborough to support continuity for customers. Though I knew deep down that the Community could only be reformed by the revolutionaries breaking away and forming a new organisation, I felt obligated to support potential rehabilitation of OSFEC Herndon.

Justin, Shirley, Russell, Caroline, Christina, Faith, Petunia, and I, with the support of numerous other activists upset by the demise of OSFEC Herndon, drafted a statement of grievance, incorporating the complaints, feelings, suggestions and advice provided by activists from all branches of OSFEC Herndon. It was decided that, as the person with the supposedly 'best' verbal skills necessary to sustain oneself when challenged in debate, I would be the figure head and signatory of the statement. After review by the other Littleborough cafe activists, I sent the statement in an email to George Jones, founder of the Our Saving Food

Everywhere Campaign, and leader of OSFEC UK, the umbrella organisation intended to support the local OSFEC projects.

George Jones lived in Leeds: I did not meet him in-person during the fieldwork phase, though we spoke frequently over the phone and via email. An unfortunate cult of personality surrounded George which he did not support, and, despite his genuine and self-acknowledged lack of leadership skills, many Community members saw him as an idol of food activism. George and I developed an unusual relationship which would see him performing support rather than giving it, him knowing that I would act in the best interests of the Community regardless of his advice which was often too aspirational to be realistically practicable.

After sending the email on the morning of the 17th of July, I received a phone call from a very angry George less than an hour later. He expressed his outrage, the letter confirming and evidencing suspicions he had held for some time. OSFEC Herndon being one of the largest organisations in the UK bearing the name of his founding concept, George was outraged by the poor conduct of the Board of Trustees. He pointed out to me that the absence of proper governance at OSFEC Herndon, which could have easily resolved tensions had it existed, posed legal threats as good governance was essential for compliance with the food safety element of food activism, for which he had recently fought a court case on behalf of his own OSFEC project. As no OSFEC projects existed in London, Birmingham was the largest city home to George's concept, and he was frustrated that the OSFEC Herndon Board of Trustees had allowed tensions to grow which threatened the national reputation of his founding ideals. George asked me to call a Volunteers Meeting for activists at OSFEC Herndon and any other associated Community organisations affected by the tensions. This, he said, would create a space for all activists to air their grievances and discuss strategies for the rapid and overwhelming change necessary to prevent the total collapse of OSFEC Herndon. Despite upset and personal threats from Celia and Farmiga in the following days, I called the meeting.

Farmiga was a prematurely-retired social worker and self-proclaimed community organiser. She was a vegetarian and refused to engage with non-vegetarian food, running a meat-free community café for OSFEC Herndon in Kettletown, an affluent part of the city. Farmiga held far-left views and got along well with Celia for this reason, leading to them both becoming recognised as the aggressors of the Community split. Initially a part-time activist for OSFEC Herndon, Farmiga later became a paid Trustee with Michael's support. Farmiga's shocking and at times outrageous conduct during the summer months when her authority was threatened by George Jones's involvement was one of the most surprising character changes throughout the ethnography. Initially a mild-mannered and quiet activist content to spend her days cooking vegetarian lunches, Farmiga became an aggressive and unpredictable threat as her and Celia's control over OSFEC Herndon was challenged. I did not consider threats posed by her or Celia to be of any concern to me and proceeded regardless.

On the 21st of July, the Volunteer Meeting took place. Forty-five food activists from all over the West Midlands came to discuss their thoughts on OSFEC Herndon and its place in the wider food activist network, representing all branches and services of OSFEC Herndon and most of the associated Community organisations. For the first time, Caroline, Russell, and I realised we were not alone. Activists from across the county shared our concerns and upset. As chair of the meeting, I had structured the event and agenda to give every person the opportunity to present their views and suggest ways forward. Much of the initial discussion was highly negative and did not reflect well on the existing leadership of the organisation.

"Russell expressed his belief that there must be a "can do" and "will do" commitment and drive from the Trustees, which is not currently the case… [he] felt that a business approach was desperately needed to resolve many of the issues the [organisation] faced. He also felt that many volunteers with qualifications, skills and professional experience were not having their knowledge respected by Trustees, which led to many volunteers being simply ignored."

"[Caroline] agreed with Den that the lack of governance had left the project weak and vulnerable throughout its expansion and felt that the time had come for the Trustees to agree to basic policy and procedure. She expressed her frustration with the lack of a business plan or operational strategy."

Meeting minutes, social-assemblage 55

After airing grievances, and expressing shared concern, it was clear that the activists had a mutual sense of both upset and motivation to achieve change. There was a feeling of revolution: we now formed a majority, capable of outnumbering the leadership of OSFEC Herndon. Capitalising upon that mixture of anger and enthusiasm, the meeting then transitioned into discussion of how the problems could be addressed and how we might bring about change. Every person was given a chance to suggest solutions, and although the suggestions were largely for positive change, there was an underlying message that the current Board of Trustees required dissolution to introduce greater diversity in leadership.

"Jack concluded that many concerns and aspects of praise had been raised, but in a positive and constructive manner. It was clear that everyone present wanted [OSFEC Herndon] to grow and succeed. He suggested that, on the advice of the co-directors, concrete actionable points be suggested by the volunteers."

Meeting minutes, social-assemblage 55

The activists agreed upon twenty-six actionable points to be demanded of the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon. It was agreed that these points, which were felt to be reasonable and easily implementable, would serve as a final ultimatum and that failure to act upon them would result in the conclusive demise of the organisation.

Structure

- Intro - House rules -
- 3 minutes talking
- Key themes.
- Discussion of themes.
- What should we do to take things forward.
- What do we want the project to be.
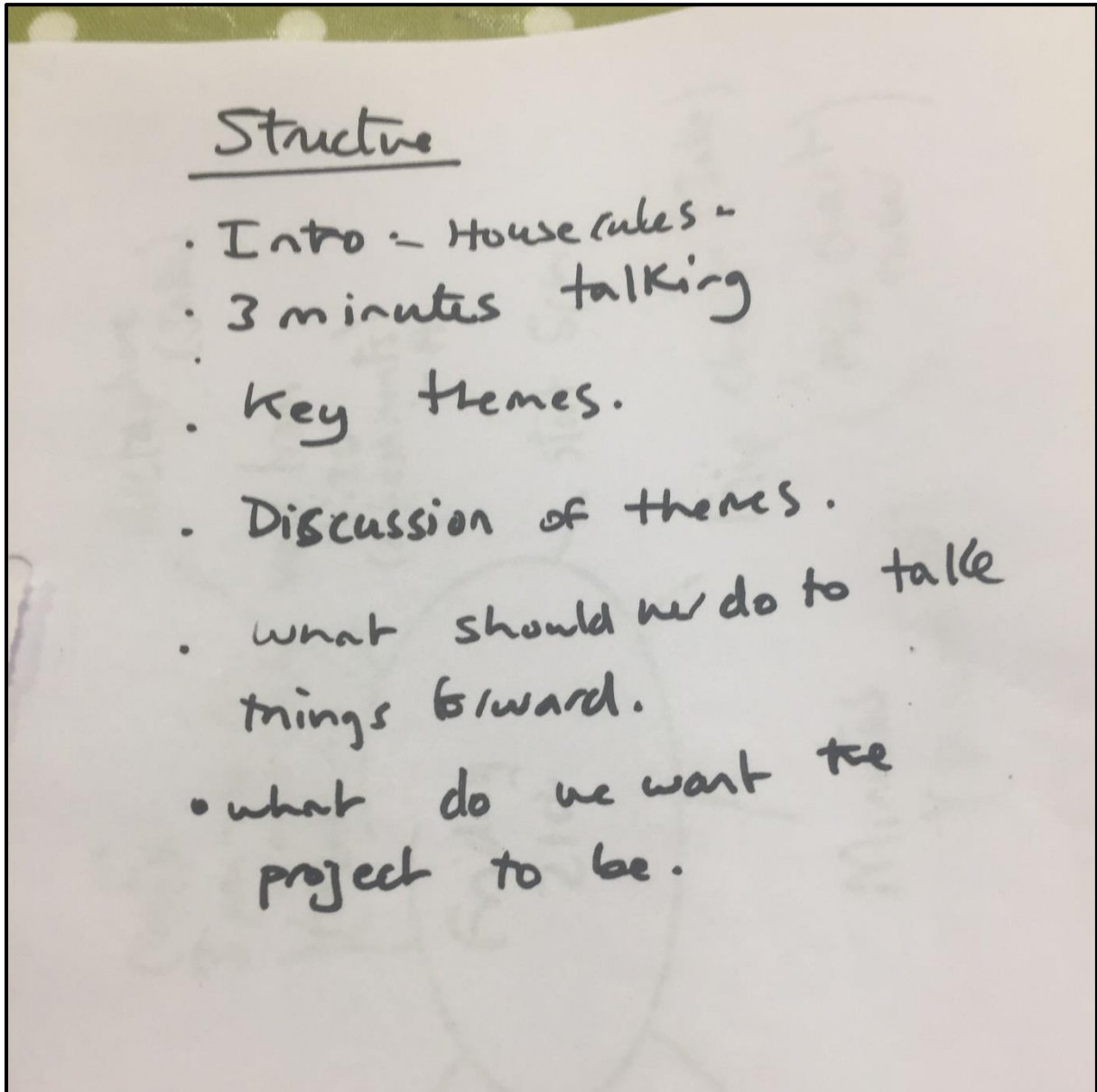
Image 14: Petunia wrote a basic structure for the Volunteer Meeting on the 21st of July, conscious that poor planning could easily lend to the meeting being overpowered by the activists who supported the current leadership. By structuring the meeting, everyone had an opportunity to raise their views.

Petunia and I typed up the meeting minutes and sent them, with the list of demands, to the Board of Trustees for their consideration. As we left the meeting at Littleborough Centre, there was, for the first time in many months, a sense of collective agency. Volunteers felt empowered by the meeting and recognised they were not alone in wanting to bring about positive change. I however remained sceptical and left the building to go immediately to my next meeting.

I arrived at Shirley's house that evening to discuss the back-up plan that would bring about the revolution, should the reform of OSFEC Herndon fail: the founding and incorporation of a new central organisation to replace it. Shirley, Justin, Jadine, and I sat in the conservatory in Shirley's house and discussed our plans to initiate such an independence movement. I made clear my position: having chaired the Volunteers Meeting at OSFEC Herndon earlier that night, I was prepared to only move ahead with founding a new organisation should the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon not act upon the twenty-six demands made by the volunteers, as failure to implement those simple changes would indicate the total irreparability of the organisation. This was understood and respected, with Justin, Shirley, and Jadine agreeing not to progress any of our potential plans until the Board of Trustees had time to respond to the demands from the Meeting. Recognising that a positive response was unlikely, we went ahead and planned the new organisation, a social enterprise in the form of a Community Interest Company, similar to OSFEC Herndon.

"This meeting was called by Justin Moore – former OSFEC Herndon Executive Co-Director - and agreed by all above to establish the merits of breaking away from OSFEC Herndon, whilst still being part of OSFEC in order to fulfil a niche in the market for both users and activists following operational differences and an irreparable breakdown in communication with certain individuals within the Herndon project."

Meeting minutes, social-assemblage 56

We each outlined our personal visions for what a new OSFEC-style organisation would be and how it would operate to reform the Community. We agreed on three core principles: that all services would be offered on a Pay What You Want model, that everyone would always be welcome, and that organisational governance would see a bottom-up structure empower activists to take control of their local food systems. This would be the founding and universal philosophy of the new organisation, here referred to as a 'company' to reflect our valuation of social enterprise in achieving social impact whilst retaining the structural benefits of private enterprise. The list of twenty-six demands provided to the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon effectively provided a recipe for forming a new company which would be run for food activists, by food activists, and meeting the demands were integrated into our proposal. Justin

typed up the proposal to send to George Jones, and we left the meeting on the agreement that nothing more would take place for two weeks, when the deadline would pass for the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon to have replied to the demands of the Volunteer Meeting.

The Volunteer Meeting, though a powerful mechanism for motivating activists, angered the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon, despite George Jones' explicit instruction to allow it to go ahead. Sensing ever-growing hostility, I informed Celia that I would not be supporting the café on Friday 28th of July as I felt the need for things to cool following the meeting. Although there was a sense of growing tension between Celia and I, she was understanding and we spoke openly about our admiration for each other's values, recognising that our differences lay in how we thought communities were best developed and people were best supported.

Instead of supporting the café, Shirley had decided that she, Justin, Jadine, and I would go out for lunch at a fancy restaurant, to enjoy a meal ourselves as brief mental respite from worrying about the food we were currently unable to provide for other people. We met for a lovely meal and reflected on the previous week. At the end of the meal, Justin received a call from Oscar Morris, the on-retention solicitor for OSFEC UK, and George Jones' personal lawyer. Justin left the room to speak privately. He returned half an hour later to inform us of the outcome of the call: following receipt of our operating proposal OSFEC UK had approved the creation of a new company, using their name, under the leadership of me and Justin. Shirley, Justin, Jadine, and I were delighted to receive this news and felt the need for celebration. We had to remind ourselves, however, of the agreement that the new company would only be formed if the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon did not show commitment to reform. We decided on a name for our new proposed venture: if the proposal went ahead, we would be Our Saving Food Everywhere Campaign Sterling (OSFEC Sterling).

I entered the fieldwork phase as a confirmed member of the Community and felt comfortable in my position as a volunteer of a number of organisations. The events of July, however, had seen me transition from member to revolutionary, and from revolutionary to leader. I was now a recognised authority figure in the Community, and the Community had chosen Justin and I to lead the formation of a new company to serve as a Community hub and reignite the Community food system. I questioned the professional legitimacy of taking control of aspects of my community of study and concluded that critical ethnography and action research both called for this form of researcher-involvement in addressing problems experienced by communities. Thus, there was an established credibility and acceptance of such activities in research, despite my initial lack of intention to bring about change as a result of my involvement. July was certainly the 'peak' of the fieldwork phase. This month saw the beginning of what Justin termed the '*revolution*': the movement to reform the Community by challenging the authority of a small group of people who held immense power but took little

responsibility for their actions. The month could be summarised as being characterised by a growing independence movement seeking bottom-up community development through the establishment of a new company and the demise of an existing top-down regime. I knew that these changes would result in significant shifts in my data collection, moving the focus away from OSFEC Herndon, and towards new opportunities as the hub of the network was replaced.

Image 15: I do not remember what this dish was, from the 28th of July, but it was vegan and delicious. Eaten at the upscale restaurant where Shirley had suggested she, Justin, Jadine, and I have a meal to remind ourselves of the importance of food activism and the work we were undertaking together.

Image 16: Chicken and bacon spaghetti, made by Jane on the 11th of August. This was the first meal Jane had produced on her own and she was proud of it, serving the dish to over 40 customers. Her success was later celebrated at the pub to recognise her first day leading the community kitchen.

The 4th of August, the deadline for the Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon to respond to the demands outlined by activists at the Volunteer Meeting in July, came and went. Nothing was said and little had been discussed about the points raised in the Volunteer Meeting. Farmiga, who had never before worked in Littleborough, was suddenly present in the community centre every day, and Caroline suspected she had been sent by the Board of Trustees to monitor us. We continued to support the café in Littleborough twice as week, as we waited for the Trustees to respond to the demands. Although the planning of OSFEC Sterling had begun, they could not be launched until the Trustees of OSFEC Herndon responded to the demands from the Volunteer Meeting. This happened in the second week of August, when Michael sent around an email to the attendees of the Volunteer Meeting, responding to some of the twenty-six demands in the most inert form. Each response explained why the failure of critical elements of OSFEC Herndon had occurred but did not commit to doing anything about them. Most of the concerns raised at the Volunteer Meeting were not addressed or even acknowledged. Caroline printed the emailed response and passed it around the café at Littleborough centre so activists and customers could read it. There was a general sense of disillusion and disappointment in the response from the Trustees. I informed Justin, Shirley and Jadine of this disappointment, and we agreed the compromise had been fulfilled. The Board of Trustees of OSFEC Herndon had failed to commit to reforming that organisation: the new company, OSFEC Sterling, could be launched.

It had been decided that the prospective announcement of the formation of OSFEC Sterling, which Shirley termed the "*Big Reveal*", would take place on the 9th of September, at a community event at St Gerald's. The delay was necessary as trading could not legally begin until incorporation had been approved by Companies House, which was expected around the 9th of September. Shirley and Jadine were clearly deflated by the concept of waiting a month to do this. They had lost much of their energy and enthusiasm through being required to keep quiet their excitement about the new company. Shirley particularly was very put down by the concept. On the assumption that she would return to serving the Community at some point, she had her 'shoppers', chronically food insecure people who relied on Shirley for food, messaging her regularly asking when her 'house shop' was starting up again. Knowing that it was a critical time in the development of the new company, Shirley maintained her silence despite knowing people were becoming desperate for food. One of her shoppers described their support for this, using the phrase "*I won't sell my soul for a box of cornflakes*" to describe her ceased loyalty to OSFEC Herndon, and enthusiasm for supporting OSFEC Sterling.

On the 22nd of August, we went to a car boot sale near the airport, to sell non-food items to raise revenue for the new company. We raised a small amount of money to cover initial expenses, such as the setup costs. Whilst fiddling with my phone and checking their website, I realised that the '*Big Reveal*' may come earlier than planned, as Companies House

had approved our application to incorporate a Community Interest Company, making this news public. Sharing this news with Justin, Jadine, and Shirley, we were not sure what to do as the 'Big Reveal' would require preparation not yet completed. We agreed to stick to the original schedule and delay the 'Big Reveal' for a couple more weeks.

After returning from the car boot sale, however, we sat around Shirley's house thinking about what do to next. Everyone was deflated by the concept of waiting for the '*Big Reveal*'. For reasons I was unable to explain, I suddenly felt a surge of energy, and loudly exclaimed "*fuck it, let's do it now!*". Immediately, everyone brightened up and was equally energised. The four of us voted unanimously and decided that we would bring the '*Big Reveal*' forward to right there and then. Justin and I wrote out the announcement letter, which we then sent to George Jones and OSFEC UK. George immediately posted the letter in the national OSFEC virtual message board. I set up social media accounts for the new company, which started getting followers immediately. People from OSFEC Herndon started to read the announcements coming out of the new company social media sites. I asked the other founders to start liking, sharing, and posting rapidly in order to form an unplanned thunderclap. Social media started whirring and Justin suggested that "*somewhere, Celia's head is exploding*" in response.

After the technology was done, we gathered for a final celebratory discussion about the announcement of the new project. Shirley and Jadine were elated by the news. After so many months of upset and disappointment, I was happy to see these two women, who cared so deeply about food activism and the Community finally regain their enthusiasm. A post soon appeared on the OSFEC Herndon volunteers group Facebook site from Tracey, Celia's daughter, expressing her curt and unpleasant reaction to the '*Big Reveal*'. After this, activists from various foodie organisations flooded the post with comments of support, positivity and offers of help. The post was quickly removed by Celia when it became obvious that OSFEC Sterling would, as expected, have more friends than enemies.

"Celia always disliked the dignity and autonomy afforded to shoppers and diners in [OSFEC Herndon] by Justin and Shirley, and now that a new company exists totally outside of her control (or influence), she will likely become more frustrated over time. It's both fascinating and sad that food – the whole central function of OSFEC Herndon – has become nothing more than a device with which to control people."

A field note, social-assemblage 72

That evening there was a quiz night at St Gerald's. I was on a team with Caroline, Jadine and Hilda, Jadine's friend and fellow food activist who had been avoiding the Community for a while in hopes of avoiding the hostilities. We knew Celia would turn up and so she did, wandering around the room looking for friends. She came over to our table and

dryly congratulated us on our news, asking whether this meant I would be ending my work with OSFEC Herndon. I told her that I would update her and the Trustees the following day at Littleborough Community Cafe. Celia asked Caroline if she would be joining OSFEC Sterling, but Caroline stated that she knew nothing about it and hadn't considered anything yet: an untruthful response to minimise potential for a public argument in the middle of the church hall.

The next day would be my last as an activist at OSFEC Herndon. I was anxious about how I was going to be treated. Celia was floating, hoping to get information about the new company, though she asked few questions. Seemingly coincidentally, Farmiga decided to use the kitchen to cook for an event at the weekend. She asked a number of questions about the new company's venues, suppliers, activists, and other partnerships. I simply stated that information would be made public in time. Before she left, I gave Farmiga my letter of resignation from OSFEC Herndon, and also said a civil, polite, and meaningful goodbye with Celia, who despite everything, I did still admire for her beliefs in food activism and her commitment to community work. I had mixed feelings about giving Farmiga the letter as it was worded strongly, but I also felt that the information detailed in it needed to be said.

"Like others before me, and surely many after, I have seen that the winds of change are blowing. Fortunately for me, they are blowing in the direction of something far less controlling and far more liberating."

The resignation letter, social-assemblage 73

I had spent nearly a year with OSFEC Herndon, and the organisation had certainly developed some dependencies on me. I felt obliged to provide an explanation of why I no longer wished to be involved. My final day at Littleborough Community Cafe was the liberating experience I anticipated. I left Littleborough for the last time feeling positive about the future of the Community, in my new role as a director of OSFEC Sterling.

"I am pleased to bring my time at Littleborough Café to a close. When I think back to the 'good old days' – around March and April time when the Fruitful Boxes were done at the centre, and Shirley was running the boutique – and compare it to now, it seems a different world. A place that used to be full of happiness and laughter is now a miserable space where people come to be sad and upset together."

A reflective field note, social-assemblage 73

The use of food as a material of control was prominent at this stage of the ethnography. There was a micropolitics to food that I had never before considered; driven by ideology and beliefs about how best to bring about change. Celia's downfall was the result of her attempts

to control food supply chains in an alternative food system designed to challenge the concept of unjust control in the food system. In pursuit of gaining control of the Community's assets in order to control food activism, Celia had lost sight of that which was important: using the food to create food security and food sustainability, improving health and wellbeing in Birmingham.

Image 17: Shirley and Justin stock the food at the car boot sale on the 22nd of August, sourced from Justin's contacts in the Community supply network. He spoke frequently about his carefulness not to 'tread on toes', ensuring that OSFEC Sterling did not disrupt food supply for OSFEC Herndon.

Image 18: A 'Vernon special', served on the 18th of September. Vernon learned to cook in prison and his dishes were tasty and resourceful, using his good sense of herbs and spices to produce basic but effective dishes with the minimal resources which would be available in prison settings.

The '*Big Reveal*' at the end of August effectively concluded the '*revolution*'. The Community was no longer a cohesive and functioning network. The demise of OSFEC Herndon, the original hub of the Community, had created disconnect between food projects, and it was immediately obvious that the spokes of that network, the peripheral organisations, community partners, and third sector groups reliant on the Community for food, expected Justin and I and to form a new hub by rapidly developing OSFEC Sterling. This was not an easy task. Many organisations were disillusioned with the Community after hearing the stories of false allegations, petty rivalry, malicious rumours, and the other unpleasant situations which had led to the split between OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC Sterling. In addition to building a new company with scarce resources, we would also be faced with the challenge of rebuilding faith in the Community. This fast became a reality, as volunteers from OSFEC Herndon, notably Caroline, Christina, Russell, Faith, Petunia, and Bill came to join OSFEC Sterling.

Justin and I commenced establishing new supplier relations. This meant convincing supermarkets, restaurants, and wholesalers to give us surplus food which was safe for consumption but going to be destined for waste, for free. This was not an easy sell, and I developed an appreciation for George Jones and the OSFEC UK for pioneering the process of forming partnerships between food activist organisations and private companies. Justin, however, was an excellent salesperson, and his "*cheeky chappie*" personality Celia had once admired, was of great use in developing rapport with suppliers and community partners. This was a period of learning for me: as we embarked on the creation of a new company to sit at the centre of a broken Community, Justin and I began to learn from each other. He developed from working closely with me a greater appreciation for the social determinants of food security, and an understanding of contemporary concepts in social justice, such as diversity and inclusivity. I learned a great deal from him too, developing new business skills and becoming an emerging social entrepreneur as I observed Justin establishing new connections with suppliers and community partners. I tested these myself and successfully established relationships between OSFEC Sterling and three chicken suppliers. By the end of September, OSFEC Sterling held contracted community partnerships and supplier relations with several national supermarket chains and numerous restaurants.

After receiving a letter from Farmiga requesting information about OSFEC Sterling, Justin and I went to say a formal farewell to Michael at the FoodStore and respond to her concerns in person. We also needed to hand over our old OSFEC Herndon assets, such as branded clothing, documents, and some cooking equipment. Finally, the FoodStore was reopening, with a new group of activists to run the facility. Though he lacked the skills necessary to adequately lead OSFEC Herndon, Michael was well-meaning and maintained a civil acquaintanceship with Justin. As such, we felt Michael was the right person to whom to pass over our OSFEC Herndon assets and wish a final goodbye. Like many of the artists

involved in the Community, Michael was seemingly motivated by money: his artistic interests generated no income. He was a paid Trustee of OSFEC Herndon, complementing his openly-recognised life as a '*trustafarian*'. The involvement of artists such as Michael, was often a poorly-planned attempt to capitalise on the relative financial potential of social enterprise in food activism, and incorporate their art into it, thus creating a charade of valuable artistic endeavour that was generally disliked by food activists. As his official role as a Trustee of OSFEC Herndon was quickly taken over by Celia's unofficial role as self-appointed organisation manager, Michael's responsibilities and powers eroded and he fast became obsolete in the Community. As such, he became the Community's ceremonial punching bag, taking the blame for the demise of OSFEC Herndon which was not really his fault. On this day, however, Justin and I were visiting to wish him the best of luck and reiterate our stance that, though we felt Michael was responsible for allowing others to usurp his control and wield it irresponsibly, we knew he was not personally responsible for the tensions in the Community. We had a friendly conversation with Michael about how we, as new leaders of OSFEC Sterling, wished to learn from his mistakes to ensure the growth of a new sustainable business with responsible governance. He gave us some advice and wished us luck. Michael left the Community two weeks later and was not heard from again.

My relationship with Justin was tested at this time. Our role at OSFEC Herndon saw two activists become two friends, and our role at OSFEC Sterling saw two friends become two business partners, working in close proximity to build a social enterprise from no funding or assets. Justin had a messy, risk-tolerant, and haphazard approach to this task, which conflicted with my methodical, cautious, risk-averse approach. We argued on numerous occasions, almost always concerning situations where Justin had made a hasty decision without consideration of the impact it would have on the Community, or whether it was compliant with the three principles the founders of OSFEC Sterling had agreed. We were frequently tested by both malicious influences in and outside the Community, and the stresses of being the figureheads of a fast-growing organisation. We often found however that speaking openly to each other resolved our differences, and we maintained a close friendship. This was actually agreed to be of benefit to OSFEC Sterling's reformation of the Community: because the company had only two directors, each with opposing sociocultural orientations and strong personalities, Justin and I were required to actively discuss every decision and engage in a system of constant compromise. This generally resulted in the company taking actions which were ambitious (under Justin's influence) but with planned cautiousness (under my influence), supporting us to comply with the three founding principles and develop the company rapidly.

I also continued to be close friends with Shirley. Shirley was my "*Birmingham mother*" throughout the duration of the ethnography. She referred to me as "*other son*" and I called her "*Mother Shirley*". We had a close relationship built primarily around our mutual belief in bottom-

up community development and a rejection of authoritarian approaches to helping vulnerable people. Our mutual disappointment in the demise of OSFEC Herndon strengthened our core resolve to support vulnerable people in Birmingham. We also enjoyed a busy social life together, respecting each other's roles and skills and recognising each other's limitations. Shirley became a trusted confidant and close friend with whom I would maintain a close friendship after the ethnography ended.

With the rapid reformation of the Community came new food activists. Dee was a retired schoolteacher who supported OSFEC Sterling's new permanent community café at St Gerald's. She enjoyed learning new cookery techniques from Russell and was known to be hard working, frequently having community cook-offs with Russell to see who could use the intercepted food to make the tastiest dishes. '*Australian*' Aimee was a friend of Shirley's: they had lived on the same street in Melbourne sometime in the 1970's and reconnected when they both lived in Birmingham after the millennium. I liked Aimee a lot. She was a straight-talking, no-nonsense community organiser with a background in social work and Christian mission, keen to engage in the Community but believing in an equitable approach, which saw her link Christian organisations and the food activists to form high-impact partnerships for mutual benefit. She was central to the establishment of a food market at her local school in the socioeconomically deprived area of Walpole, and regularly invited OSFEC Sterling to collaborate with events at Penton House, her Christian mission centre. New activists became new participants in the ethnography, and it was pleasing to see established participants take ownership of the study, explaining involvement, procedures, and participant rights to newcomers. I was physically present to answer questions and fill in the gaps.

At the same time, activists we had known at OSFEC Herndon were torn between allegiances. Justin and I had explicitly committed and published in writing our dedication to the activist workforce across the Community, expressing our desire to see volunteers support both OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC Sterling and not be forced to choose between the two. We believed that there was no need to pick sides in a '*battle*' where both parties were aiming for the same outcomes, albeit with very different methods of doing so. OSFEC Herndon did not respond in kind, and reports reached us of volunteers who remained there (and partner organisations) being forced by Farmiga to choose between ending all ties with OSFEC Sterling (and our partner organisations) and their involvement at OSFEC Herndon. This was of particular concern to Lucy, a university student and the lead of Waste-Not Warriors, a dumpster diving organisation. She was a peripheral figure in both OSFEC organisations. Lucy was torn ideologically between the two projects and later chose to focus on other external forms of food activism in order to avoid unnecessary conflict.

In an atmosphere of positive energy and enthusiasm about the new reformed community, I wished to capture the excitement and change by broadening the photographic

element of my data set. I had avoided taking photos of people and aligned the practice with the accepted processes of the organisations with which I was working. Some organisations had designated 'official' photographers, who followed guidelines produced by the organisation when taking photographs. This typically meant taking photographs where faces could not be seen, and identity could not be determined. In photographs where faces had been unintentionally captured, I made case-by-case decisions on whether to include the photograph in the data set or destroy the file. In cases where the photograph was determined to be of use to the study, the faces of individuals were blurred.

As the scope of data collection grew, so did the data set. Where I might previously have been collecting a handful of photographs every day, now I was taking hundreds of photographs each week and needing to narrow the selection for inclusion in the data set. Audio recordings, however, became of better quality: whilst I might previously have been more involved in running community cafes and doing my activism in the kitchen, now I was more involved in the leadership and administration of activism, which could take place in quieter settings. This made it easier to transcribe the audio recordings, without the noise of clanging pots and pans in the background. I recognised that a study with such a broad data collection remit covering multiple data forms would require structured data management; the traditionally 'messy' nature of ethnographic research would need to be organised to analyse and interpret the dataset in a systematic and informed manner. I had long accepted that the study was little more than '*managed chaos*' and recognised that systematic data management would facilitate the following stages of the ethnography beyond the fieldwork phase. Following data collection sessions, I recorded the details of the day using a bespoke system that I had transformed into an app for easy access, as is described earlier in this chapter.

It may be useful here to reflect, in the ninth month of the ethnography, how I was changing as an activist, a researcher and now a social entrepreneur. My original vision of standing quietly in the corner of a kitchen in a community centre, listening to activists talk about food, had long disappeared, and I was now somewhat running the Community I had previously sought not to influence beyond that which was unavoidable. Reflecting on that influence, I might again point to activists, notably Justin, Shirley, Jadine, Caroline, and Russell, actively requesting me to take on a leadership role in the Community, which was certainly never intended. I also began to develop greater sympathies for Celia and Michael. As more food services were launched and delivered by activists in OSFEC Sterling, under my legal authority, I developed a better sense of the risk carried by Community leaders and their urge to control activism which happened in their name. This risk was never spoken of or realised by activists when we worked together at OSFEC Herndon. Perhaps it should have been.

The month of September was characterised by my transition from food activist to social entrepreneur, managing a growing company, an evolving Community and in my capacity as a

researcher, a vastly growing data set. There was a real sense that the study was somehow getting bigger in all contexts. I was conscious of both the need to continue containing the study to the Community, and the desire to see the Community itself develop in a sustainable manner. As autumn came to an end and the final season of the ethnography began, I started to consider how, or indeed whether, I could ever leave the Community now.

Image 19: On the 1st of September, Shirley decided it was too beautiful a day to have 'house shop' in her actual house and moved the food outside so her shoppers could enjoy their shopping in the good weather. This photo, as with others, was taken according to the process outlined previously.

2.3.4 Autumn

This sub-section addresses the end of the fieldwork phase, as I sought to bring relationships with food activists and their organisations to a close. It also captures the seasonal cultural activities associated with the end of the year, including Christmas festivities. The fieldwork phase ended on the 22nd of December 2017.

Image 20: Dee shows off her roasted vegetable and mozzarella pastries on the 13th of October. Russell was jealous because he had made a large seafood paella, but Dee's vegetarian dish was more popular. They held a 'pudding-off' after the main course to decide a 'winner' for the OSFEC Sterling café at St Gerald's, which Dee won.

When the '*revolution*' began, the founders of OSFEC Sterling envisaged slow but steady growth of the company, as a customer and activist base emerged organically. Rather expectedly, however, things took off more rapidly. As more people came forward expressing their disillusion by OSFEC Herndon, it became clear that the '*revolution*' had greater impact than we imagined: we were not alone in having been ostracised and neglected by the ineffective Board of Trustees. There was demand and support for OSFEC Sterling's ongoing efforts to rebuild the Community. By the end of October, OSFEC Sterling had established five community cafes and two food markets, operating these services in new areas of the city where food activism had no presence before. With new Community services came the return of old Community partners: connections were reformed with many of the other food activist organisations that had broken their relationships with OSFEC Herndon, including the Green Growers, Friendly Foragers, Waste-Not Warriorsm and Brompton Barrow Boys. New partnerships were also formed. 'The Heavens' was a community centre in Queensville which had been developed from an abandoned residential property and was now used as the headquarters for a community heritage scheme. OSFEC Central established a new community café at The Heavens, run by Vernon, an ex-convict head chef who had learned to cook in prison. Seas of Silver was a refugee support organisation, which Shirley supported by sending the non-food items intercepted by OSFEC Sterling to families in crisis. With the establishment and implementation of ever-developing infrastructure such as virtual communications, solid governance, policy, and an expanding network, I was being contacted almost every day by new organisations seeking our support and wanting to work with OSFEC Sterling. For the first time, it appeared that everything was going to work out. We began to feel like the Community could be salvaged, rebuilt and come back bigger than before.

On the 17th of October, we held a party to celebrate Justin's 50th birthday. This would be the first large post-'*revolution*' social event, and we felt it would be revealing; having invited almost everyone in the Birmingham Foodie Community, we wondered who would come. Shirley pointed out that a good turn up was indicative of support for the reformation of the Community. That evening, I went to Shirley's house for a pre-party celebratory bottle of champagne, then went to the pub with the Moores for the party. Unsurprisingly, it was a popular event, and almost everyone we invited showed up. It was pleasing and affirming to see volunteers and food activists that were part of both OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC Sterling talking, catching up and sharing their experiences; much like Fran's funeral, this occasion provided an opportunity for the community to come together, only this time in celebration. We saw volunteers that had not been involved in some time, including those that had dropped out of the Community all together amidst the hostilities and tensions over the summer.

New prominent figures emerged in the month of October, who had not been part of the Community before the '*revolution*'. For these people, I imagined that the experience must be

unusual, to be surrounded by stories of people they didn't know and had never met. Two such activists where mother and daughter Deborah and Priscilla. Deborah was introduced as an old friend of Petunia's from a time when they had worked together in the 1980's for a learning disabilities charity. Deborah and Priscilla became customers of the café at St Gerald's Church in June, after catching up with Petunia at Fran's funeral in April. Deborah and Priscilla started supporting the café at The Heavens and worked with Vernon to deliver a weekly community café, soon becoming ingrained figures at OSFEC Sterling. After spending most of her life caring for her two daughters who had disabilities, in her early sixties Deborah found a new lease on life through food activism and, despite her reserved personality, surprised everyone by soon becoming an enthusiastic team member for Waste-Not Warriors, readily jumping into industrial dumpsters at 2am under cover of darkness to intercept the frozen delicacies of the day. By late November, Deborah's knowledge of the security mechanisms on industrial supermarket bins in the Black Country was unrivalled, and she would join the Warriors a few times a week to salvage edible, in-date frozen foods which had been thrown away by the high-end national supermarket chains. She passed on most of this food, all that which she and Priscilla did not personally need, to OSFEC Sterling, where it became prized food due to its high quality. Deborah would point out that the food, which went into the supermarket bins frozen, could not possibly '*go bad*' if it was salvaged in a frozen state late at night and put into a Community freezer before it thawed. With Deborah's extensive insights into the wasteful industrial practice of high-end supermarket chains, and the activist methods to address them, her culinary knowledge was held in high esteem in the Community.

Her daughter Priscilla was a student with cerebral palsy, who was highly involved in disability spots, particularly wheelchair basketball for which she was the coach of a local team. Tenacious, funny, and sharply quick-witted, she quickly becoming a very popular figure in the Community. Priscilla enjoyed learning how to cook and being taught new culinary skills by Russell, which also gave Russell an opportunity to share his decades of knowledge and skill and start to support a new generation of food activists to take over our work. Knowing I was vegan, Priscilla would regularly ask Russell to teach her to make vegetable cakes with vegan recipes, and through her heavy involvement in OSFEC Sterling, we enjoyed many courgette cakes, carrot cakes and (on a special occasion) a butternut squash cake. Priscilla referred to food activism and her role at OSFEC Sterling as her 'work' (i.e., posting on social media about a "*busy day at work*") and would describe her activities as though they were gainful employment, which Justin and I were pleased to see giving Priscilla a sense of social involvement and agency. Both Deborah and Priscilla soon became very popular members of the newly reformed Community.

October came to be a month of affirmation and celebration. Following a turbulent summer of '*revolution*', and an early autumn of challenges in rebuilding the reformed

Community, October was a time to celebrate our achievements and recognise how far we had come in a short period of time. It became clear that we had done the right thing. Talk continued to die down about OSFEC Herndon and all that had gone wrong. As the past faded into obscurity, the Community developed and emerged reformed, inviting new activists, new food services, new ideas, and ultimately new experiences of food security and food sustainability.

Image 21: Deborah holds chicken dinners prepared by Priscilla and Russell at the new Hammersley South café, run in a retirement home but open to members of the public and visitors to residents. Deborah and Priscilla were valued activists and their involvement was enjoyed by everyone.

Image 22: A 'Thai dry' curry prepared by Russell on the 1st of November at the newly-launched food hub in Hammersley South. Russell called me before the café to ask if I was coming and prepared the dish knowing I like spicy food but prefer drier curries. A tasty dish, popular with customers.

From incorporation, OSFEC Sterling had what OSFEC Herndon never did: clear leadership acting under governance determined by its volunteers. This naturally lent to a much more formalised structure in the Community, guaranteeing greater stability to a range of organisations. As it became clear we had achieved financial sustainability as an organisation, we anticipated that others would soon be in touch to attempt to access the funds we had accumulated. This happened in November in what Caroline termed "*the constitutional crisis*".

Many years prior, when George Jones returned from Australia to establish OSFEC, he was soon flooded by requests from food activists in other cities to help them establish similar concepts in their local communities. To achieve this, he established OSFEC UK, a charity registered to guide and support the creation of new OSFEC concepts around the world, establish new national-level supplier relationships, and be a figurehead organisation for the movement. The relationship between OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC UK had never been made clear, so during the incorporation of OSFEC Sterling, Justin and I made clear our position that the relationship between our social enterprise and OSFEC UK would be purely ceremonial. No money, governance, instruction, or resources was to be passed between the two organisations. We had a Partnership Agreement with OSFEC UK which obligated us to use the Pay What You Want model and report to them our social impact, in exchange for use of the OSFEC name and logo. This, we believed, would be the extent of our relationship.

In late November, George contacted the 'Global Group', a social media message group of directors of OSFEC concepts from around the world. He stated that funding for his personal salary, which had previously been provided by grant funding given to OSFEC UK, would run out in the next few weeks. He suggested that local concepts, including OSFEC Sterling, should contribute funding to support this. Justin and I were hesitant. As an organisation run on a bottom-up philosophy, we had no desire to start passing money into OSFEC UK, as we firmly believed that local donations from local people should be reinvested into local food services. My initial concern was that OSFEC UK would either suggest more sternly or simply attempt to force local projects into providing funds to keep them afloat.

"At a time when we have volunteers giving us fifty or more hours a week of their time, when Shirley's house has been dominated by the company, when Justin's van is effectively owned by OSFEC and my life has been taken over by it, it really quite takes the piss for George to be asking for money to keep himself in work – and on more money than I earn from PhDing!"
A field note, social-assemblage 143

We discussed this with the activists of OSFEC Sterling, who shared our view: a resounding 'no'. We admired what George had achieved, though I was less enthused by the cult of personality surrounding him. The bizarre celebrity-like status afforded to him by Russell

and other people following the national OSFEC movement lead me to be concerned about his role in the movement, which he did not want to define, seemingly for fear of being held responsible for the movement's actions. Justin and I together drafted and sent George a message stating in no uncertain terms that the spending of OSFEC Sterling's money would always be determined by the volunteers of OSFEC Sterling, and that to suggest otherwise would be to undermine our bottom-up community development philosophy.

It emerged that we were not alone. Similar messages began appearing from OSFEC concepts all over the UK stating they had been established as independent bottom-up community organisations in loose affiliation with OSFEC UK. It was expressed by many that the lack of transparency in George's role, and the function of OSFEC UK, meant that financial contributions could not be made. No vote was required to determine the outcome of this discussion: OSFEC UK would have to find its own money, or sink. I communicated this back to the OSFEC Sterling volunteers, who were pleased that other organisations were supporting us in retaining our financial autonomy. They recognised that Justin and I being involved in the discussion put OSFEC Sterling on the food activist map nationally and positioned us as one of the leading organisations in the food security movement.

Controversy continued regarding the relationship between OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC Sterling, as customers continued to come to us with horror stories of humiliation and degradation. Where we hoped Celia and Farmiga would learn from the experiences which had resulted in the '*revolution*', they appeared only to continue with the same destructive management of OSFEC Herndon. New measures included abandonment of the PWYW model at the FoodStore, which was now open only three hours a week. I attributed their failure to run a successful social enterprise to their authoritarian and far-left philosophies.

"That which should work if everyone just does their bit, tends not to work in reality… if only because not everyone does their bit. A great deal of the liberal approach to the issue of food security appears to revolve around predictions of behaviour. It's a shame for them, and great for everyone else, they don't appear to be able to do this with any degree of accuracy."

A field note, social-assemblage 143

With only one month remaining of field work, the time had come to properly consider how I should exit the Community. Food activism had become a significant part of my life. I had long abandoned food shopping in supermarkets and now almost exclusively ate food I could access through the Community. My personal social life was largely dominated by my friendships with food activists. My home had become overtaken by activist resources and was full of green crates used to transport food. I also had great responsibilities in the Community, being a director of a company I had personally designed to be the central hub of the

Community. Now in November, I was at the centre of a process to determine the relationship between local and national activist movements, which saw me become well known to food activists across the country and overseas. To cut out food activism would be to cut out most of my life. I was forced to face the reality that I wasn't just part of the Birmingham Foodie Community: I was leading it.
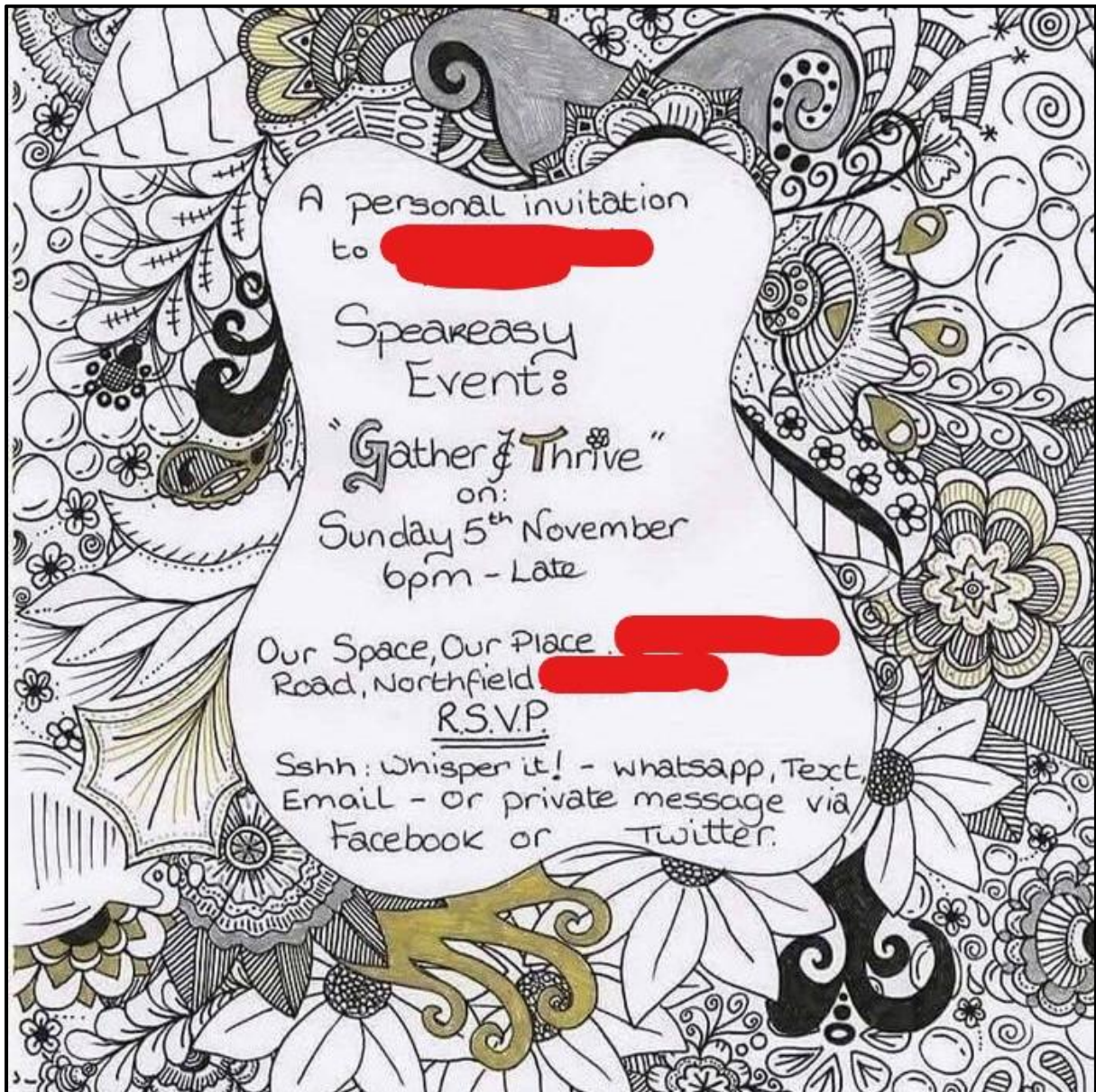
Image 23: An invitation to a community event on the 5th of November, formed from a partnership between OSFEC Sterling and an arts advocacy organisation. New partnerships bought new ideas about food security and sustainability into the Community, opening opportunity for further innovation.

Image 24: The vegetarian version of the Christmas dinner served at the Hearing Hands Christmas Lunch organised by Petunia in memory of her daughter Fran who was previously a member of Hearing Hands and passed away earlier in the year. Served on the 8th of December as the ethnography drew to an end.

As the Christmas season came around, OSFEC Sterling continued to flourish. Now having eight community cafes, four food markets, a thriving events branch and new ideas for community activities emerging every day, OSFEC Sterling was firmly established as the new hub of the Community. It was visible how much had been achieved through working to support local people and organisations rather than dominate them as had too often been the case under OSFEC Herndon before the '*revolution*'. The network had grown exponentially, with new activists, partners, suppliers, and customers getting involved all the time. There was good social impact in what we were doing, and activists enjoyed being part of what they called '*Team Sterling*'. They had worked hard to cultivate food services which made people feel welcome and included, further developing Russell's long-held concept of "*dining in dignity*".

"In a café dining room smaller than my bedroom, there is never an empty seat. The format of the café lends itself to a home cooked meal in a friend's living room. Customers appear to recognise that, in settings akin to eating at a friend's home, it would be inappropriate to behave in a manner similar to that of a restaurant customer. Customers accept the limited menu choices, order them willingly and with good grace, and enjoy their meal."

A field note, social-assemblage 156

The activists took ownership of these new food services, respecting the overarching governance structure under the Company Policy of OSFEC Sterling, but otherwise making their local café or market a reflection of the needs and heritage of people in the local area. No longer limited to Littleborough and the surrounding neighbourhoods, OSFEC Sterling spread beyond the Birmingham city limits and into other parts of the West Midlands. The network was now truly regional and could be considered a West Midlands Foodie Community.

Most talk of OSFEC Herndon had died down, and to many people it was little more than a memory. So many new activists had joined the new Community that only the relics of the past remembered what activism life was like under the old regime. Festivities commenced, and I observed as the Community celebrated Christmas. On the menu at many of the cafes was a 'Christmas dinner': not turkey, as this was hard to come by, but chicken. This was accompanied by typical seasonal vegetables, roast potatoes, and pigs in blankets.

"Russell had made a concerted effort to minimise the impact of the lack of turkey and it was fair to say that his efforts paid off. The look of the meat alone was rather indistinguishable from a traditional Christmas dinner."

A field note, social-assemblage 161

At the incorporation of OSFEC Sterling, Russell had experienced something of an existential crisis and was unable to determine his allegiance, despite me telling him repeatedly there was no need to do so. In the end he found friendship and meaningful involvement in OSFEC Sterling and left OSFEC Herndon. Well-known as being the "*last-man-standing*" (i.e., the longest-serving activist), I reminded him that OSFEC Sterling was closer to the food activism he had originally joined the Community to undertake, so a continuity existed which still made him the '*last man standing*' in the eyes of activists. In the new venture, he became a kitchen lead and was later promoted to Events Manager, leading large-scale events which sometimes saw him coordinate catering for community events of up to five hundred people. I found Russell to be a fascinating character with whom to work as an activist colleague. His boundless energy and enthusiasm was astonishing but sometimes burdensome, as his ceaseless generation of ideas required a great deal of work on my part (this continued to be the case long after the ethnography ended). Despite this, we developed a good friendship and enjoyed frequent social outings together. Customers loved the alternative Christmas dinners he made and complemented the kitchen volunteers. Russell had prepared a gravy using traditional recipes rather than a packet mix gravy. It was always obvious that he, more so than any other activist, was as committed to the food as he was the people preparing it.

Whilst the community was going from strength to strength, old friendships became strained under the stress of activist work during the busy Christmas period. On the 14th of December, Caroline asked me and Justin whether the company could provide oranges for the Christmas service at St Gerald's on Christmas Eve. I stated that we could of course provide the oranges if they were intercepted at the time. She stated that the company should spend money on them, if necessary, given the dependence of the company on the church to provide a café venue. Though I felt it was an isolated hostility that I could easily overlook, it soon erupted into something bigger. Tension emerged between Caroline and Justin over this minor matter and, again, it began to feel like a divide was about to take place. Justin referred to the argument as "*Orangegate*", whilst she felt that she was being pushed out of OSFEC Sterling.

My final day of fieldwork was the Christmas café at St Gerald's, and although Caroline had calmed down from the previous week, she was still clearly upset. This was noticeable and volunteers commented on her behaviour and tone. After the café, Caroline suggested that we go to the pub. After '*Orangegate*', she wanted to make amends. Justin and Caroline spoke openly about their tensions and resolved them, just in time for a Christmas celebration.

The following morning, I was going to visit my family for Christmas and stopped off on the way to visit the Moores. Justin and I exchanged Christmas presents whilst Shirley told me her plans to provide families with Christmas dinner shopping bags on Christmas Eve. These people, not just Justin and Shirley, but the whole of the Birmingham Foodie Community, had become my close friends and an inextricable part of my social experience. I realised that

exiting the field was not possible: the field had become my life. As I left Birmingham for the Christmas holidays, I felt a sense of closure on my ethnography in the Community. I knew, however, that my involvement had not come to an end, and that I would return in January to be greeted by the new challenge of being part of a community as a leader and activist, but no longer a researcher. It was now time to analyse data and make sense of the Community.

Image 25: Running a Christmas luncheon for an older peoples' charity on the 16th of December, Priscilla shows the mince tart she made, including the homemade sweet mine. Priscilla's skills development and her boost in confidence exemplified the social value of being a food activist.

Here ends the story of my year of ethnographic fieldwork in the Birmingham Foodie Community. What follows reorients to traditional conventions of scholarly writing.

2.3.5 Ethnographic learnings

This sub-section remarks on the illustrations presented throughout the month-by-month account of the fieldwork exercise, commenting on how they justify this study as a traditional ethnography, and how they informed analytical practices.

Illustrations of lived experience

In response to the "Guidance for the reader" statement in the introductory paragraphs for 2.3 Fieldwork, I here reflect on examples in the month-by-month story which relate to these:

Characteristics of ethnography *(Lambert at al. 2011)*	
Ethnography is about discovery	The reformation of the Community in October opening the network to new previously-unknown activist groups: Reflecting in September about my changing role as activist-scholar.
Ethnography happens in natural environments	Image 10 of Russell making nettle soup outdoors for an arts and heritage event: Image 14 of Petunia's agenda for the volunteer meeting which took place in a community centre.
Ethnography does not de-contextualise	The description of "the dregs" in July which is then used across the fieldwork in colloquial language: Image 9 of Lola's pasta dish which elicited conversation about her confidence.
Ethnography values multiple perspectives	Caroline's eulogy for Fran in April reflecting on the role food played in her life: Image 12 of a shepherdess pie made by a vegetarian, a vegan, and a meat-eating professional chef.
Ethnography visualises first-hand experiences	The photo of the Fruitful boxes in February to show the scale and colour of activism: The basic tuna sandwich made in July presented on a sparse plate when the oven was broken.
Ethnography collects diverse forms of data	The artefact in Image 23 in November for the Gather & Thrive event; A photo of queuing outside Shirley's house shop in September: An audio recorded reflection on Fran's death.
Ethnography sees no variables are manipulated	The volunteer meeting in July led by Caroline and Petunia which naturally elicited data about activist micropolitics: Image 25 of the pie Priscilla made after which we talked about skills.
Ethnography forms intimate relationships	My close, often brotherly-like relationship with Justin and the emotional experiences when this was tested in December; the intense upset caused by activists falling out in July/August.
Ethnography embraces physical/social context	Image 15 of the meal we ate when celebrating the initial approval of OSFEC Sterling: The mass of special vegan foods Shirley kept back for me in January to recognise my support.
Ethnography recognises broader contexts	The caption for Image 3 of the bunny chow and its relation to Samantha's pre-activist life: The description of George Jones and OSFEC UK in July to give context to national activism.
Ethnography is guided by and generates theory	The conversation around ethical research with Michael in February: The field note from social-assemblage 12 reflecting on the ethnographic value of attending Celia's birthday party.
Ethnography is holistic, natural and flexible	The car boot sale in August where the community food market went "on the road" temporarily: Shirley's random decision in July that we would go out for lunch at a fancy restaurant.

I recognised earlier in the thesis that ethnography, by tradition and definition, is messy and unpredictable. In providing Lambert's characteristics, I reflect on how my developing ethnographic practice has evolved to navigate and make sense of that unpredictable mess and align my work with broader scholarly tradition in ethnography. I envisage that the month-by-month story illustrates the holism of my ethnographic immersion in the Community, which will be useful for reflecting on ethnographic practice developments in Chapter 4: Discussion.

Informing analytical practice

The primary theoretical unit of this study is affective flow, as found in social-assemblages (Fox & Alldred, 2015). This month-by-month account of the fieldwork exercise illustrates the diversity of those spaces and how power is transferred, exchanged, used, or accessed by people and material. To make sense of this in the analysis using New Materialist Social Inquiry, a bespoke analytical process was developed to "see" the Community through a structured theoretical lens, whilst also incorporating learnings from the ethnographic exercise. I share initial reflections below which guided the production of a theoretically and ethnographically-informed analytical practice:

- The unique social interactions at each site must be viewed in the context of that space and situation: each distinct location per day must be seen as a social-assemblage.
- The collection of a vast series of photographs to illustrate life in the Community also capture the physical material of activism: they must be centralised in the analysis.
- The field notes taken were partially descriptive and partially reflective, capturing either the social-assemblage or my thoughts on it: they must be used on-par with audio data.
- There are consistent patterns of behaviour seen month-to-month illustrating broad themes in the story: links between social-assemblages must be found and explored.

The use of these initial thoughts, combining theoretical and ethnographic insights, to design the analytical process is further explored in *3.1.1 Analytical praxis*.

Evolving positionalities

The month-by-month description of my ethnographic immersion in the Birmingham Foodie Community shows, amongst other things, that my position changed considerably across that year. My relationships with participants, and my own thinking about the Community and its role in supporting wellbeing, shifted, as did my role in supporting the Community which ultimately determined my ongoing relationship with it. These evolving positions are explored in *4.3.5 Positional development*.

Chapter 3: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the ethnography, following a year of immersive fieldwork in the Birmingham Foodie Community. A bespoke analytical process was developed using New Materialist Social Inquiry (Fox & Alldred, 2015), based upon posthuman visions of de-privileging human agency for planetary health. A illustrations of that analysis are presented in this chapter to retain the ethnographic character of the fieldwork exercise in the previous chapter, speaking to the ethnographic tradition of creating clarity in natural and analytical knowledge. The results are organised into thirty-two themes, summarised into four meta-themes. Based on the theoretical positioning of the thesis around new materialist ontologies, and associated assumptions about the relational interdependence and conflict between the social and physical worlds, the themes present such connections with increasing 'distancing'. In turn, they describe the relationship between meat as a material of consumption, and the social context of the diet, the food system, the community, and the wider culture: each meta-theme creating greater space between the physical material of meat and cultural meanings, dependent upon the level of social context. In many themes, meat is merely an integral part of the meaning of sustainable consumption, rather than having meaning in material isolation.

Each meta-theme is supported by a diagram to show situation of the themes. The lines in the background are used to represent analytical outputs from affect economies situated amongst messy social-assemblages. The arrows in the foreground are used to represent new materialisms of meat amongst wider social and cultural contexts of food and the food system.

3.1 Analysis

This section concerns implementation of the theoretical framework of New Materialist Social Inquiry, into an analytical process, aiming to produce outputs which will align with the conceptual framework of planetary health through post-anthropocentrism. From the large multi-media dataset, codes were derived from a novel materialist method of "seeing" affective flows that connected the social and physical material in the social-assemblage. Finding meaningful relationships between these affective flows, the study found thirty-two defined themes that illustrate the cultural meanings of meat consumption, further summarised into four meta-themes in response to the research questions.

The fieldwork phase ended on Friday 22nd of December, following a calendar year of ethnographic fieldwork with the Birmingham Foodie Community. A total of 163 fieldwork sessions saw me undertake 1382 hours of data collection and collect a large and varied dataset, consisting of 279 audio recordings, 155 field notes, 14 community resources and 1519 photographs and 36 data files otherwise categorised as miscellaneous data forms. The final data set consisted of 2003 pieces of data.

3.1.1 Analytical praxis

This sub-section identifies how theoretical constructs and ideas from New Materialist Social Inquiry were used to develop a bespoke posthuman analytical process, further informed by ethnographic insights from the fieldwork exercise, and how these have supported the de-privileging of human agency for planetary health.

This study uses theoretical insights from New Materialist Social Inquiry (Fox & Alldred, 2015), and ethnographic insights from the fieldwork exercise, to identify the cultural meanings of meat in the Birmingham Foodie Community. These two influences are combined here to design a theoretically and ethnographically informed analytical process.

Insights from *2.3.5 Ethnographic learnings*	Theoretical interpretation for developing the analytical process
The unique social interactions at each site must be viewed in the context of that space and situation: each distinct location per day must be seen as a social-assemblage.	The secondary-level analytical unit must be what Fox and Alldred (2015) referred to as the "research-assemblage", renamed "social-assemblage" to reflect the natural character of ethnographic inquiry. This is a space or field in which affect can flow between animate and inanimate material of social life. For this reason, each separate event of the ethnography is a distinct social-assemblage. Where a whole day was spent in one space during fieldwork, that whole day is a single S-A. Where multiple sites were visited in one day, each one may be a distinct S-A for analytical purposes.
The collection of a vast series of photographs to illustrate life in the Community also capture the physical material of activism: they must be centralised in the analysis.	Fox and Allred's original vision of a social practice based on interactions between animate and inanimate material must be upheld, using the material in the many thousands of photographs to serve as a loose "centre" of each S-A. All social interaction will be assumed to happen through or around the contents of the photographs as per New Materialist thinking that discourse cannot truly be void of materiality: all spoken social interaction is about "something".
The field notes taken were partially descriptive and partially reflective, capturing either the social-assemblage or my thoughts on it: they must be used on-par with audio data.	Aligning with Lambert's view (2011) that ethnography is about the researcher and the researched, and Fox and Allred's conception of the researcher being part of the S-A. and exerting affect, my own words will be considered as valuable for analytical processing as those of participants, including my voice in field notes and audio recordings.
There are consistent patterns of behaviour seen month-to-month illustrating broad themes in the story: links between social-assemblages must be found and explored.	A multi-stage process is needed to make sense of affective flows in S-As, and then to identify common and different flows between S-As. This lends to analytical practices more common in traditional qualitative inquiry like interviews or focus groups, for which thematic analysis is often used.

Based on this synthesis of theoretical constructs from New Materialist Social Inquiry, and ethnographic insights from the fieldwork exercise, it was determined the analytical process would embody characteristics to transfer theoretical ideas to practical implementation:

- The primary unit of analysis would be affective flow, to be seen in the interactions between animate and inanimate material in the social-assemblage.
- Animate material would be conceptually reified through transcripts from audio recordings, videos, and words from reflective and descriptive field notes.
- Inanimate material would be conceptually reified through photographs, not limited to those of food, and material artefacts. These were to be "centred" in the analysis.
- The secondary unit of analysis would be social-assemblages, to be viewed through each working day and site of the fieldwork exercise.

This praxis provided for the processing of diverse ethnographic data in theoretically-informed and analytically insightful ways, thereby making greatest use of the large data set to deprivilege human agency in the analysis, for producing post-human analytical outputs.

Recognising established analytical process

One approach which might be more conventional for the analysis of this diverse data could be a form of conversation analysis, reflecting the natural and holistic properties of this rich ethnographic data, capturing naturally-occurring discussion (Toerien, 2013). The SAGE Handbook on Qualitative Data Analysis characterises conversational approaches as those which privilege the unique humanness of "interacting with each other" (Flick, 2013). This is where conversation analysis falls short of relevance for this study. In this posthuman, new materialist inquiry making sense of social life through the interdependencies between the physical and social worlds, privileging interactions which occur simply between people is insufficient: instead, the unique humanness of interacting through inanimate material is of interest. Equally, discourse analysis, which privileges human choice over words and their subsequent construction of the social world (Willig, 2013) does not sufficiently address the planetary health conceptual condition of deprivileging human agency, instead demanding recognition of a false human exceptional capacity for social construction.

The analytical process developed for this study and described later in this chapter, is perhaps closer in analytical meaning to a form of content analysis, separating description and interpretation of data through reduction of data through systematic processing (Schreier, 2013). Willig (2013) characterises content analysis through the use of a central theoretical frame, which relates well to this study which is founded upon a complex social theorisation of

the materiality of meat and meat consumption. Schreier (2012) further supports use of content analysis to embrace subjectivities in the search for meaning in qualitative data, which aligns with an ethnographic study. Whilst content analysis has more recently been used more for analysis of print data rather than oral forms of communication (Moretti, et al., 2011), it is also flexible for the investigation of both explicit and inferred communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This relates to the mixture of formal and informal discussions captured in this data set. The remaining shortcoming of content analysis, however, is that is has been used only to explore written, or transcribed oral, communications, without the complexities of integrating visual elements into the data. Content analysis is unsuitable for post-qualitative research. The SAGE Handbook provides some insight into the challenges of using images and other forms of unique data in qualitative analysis, which is recognised as a developing but slow-moving area of methodology (Banks, 2013). Ethnomethodologists have contributed thought around the extensions of discourse and conversation analysis to meanings held in non-verbal communication (Eberle, 2013), but these still privilege human exceptionalism and assume that material is "used" to communicate, having little or no other social function. The SAGE Handbook also observes some early uses of visual media in anthropological works, notably those of Bateson and Mead, but these again served as illustrations of analytical outputs from written/spoken data, and not part of the analysis itself. Perhaps the theoretically-informed use of images and other media as an interpretative device in the analysis-proper, is an emerging area of qualitative methodology to which this study can contribute novel insights. In recognition of this, boxes describing unique methodological practice are provided in 3.1.2 Familiarisation and 3.1.3 Coding to provide clarity in the processing and analysis of non-verbal data.

Developing bespoke analytical process

To implement these conceptual positionings and theoretical interpretations in the analysis, the basic staged framework of Braun and Clarkes' thematic analysis is used to structure analytical process. Concerning the familiarising, coding, summarising, and theming of the data to produce analytical outputs, sub-sections *3.1.2.* to *3.1.5* outline how the data was handled using analytical structuring from Braun and Clarkes' work, without the same conceptual meaning of their envisioned process.

3.1.2 Familiarisation

This sub-section describes the first stage of the analytical process, concerning storage of the dataset using OneDrive, and a transcription process which took place during the fieldwork phase. The listening to and reflections upon audio recordings, and transcription of those files, would aid familiarisation with the data, as would looking at photos and reading field notes.

1) Data was reviewed immediately following collection. Audio recordings were played, typically during the evenings following a day of fieldwork, or the following weekend. Photos were reviewed and duplicates, or overtly irrelevant images, were deleted.

2) Each data source was stored as a file named for its corresponding social-assemblage. A six-digit coding system was used to describe the date and general activity of the data collection, for example social-assemblage '0211RC' to refer to a **c**ommunity café using **r**eclaimed waste food, on the 2nd of November 2017. This enabled all data from single social-assemblages to be identified for analytical purposes later. Files were then described with a corresponding number, such as '0211RC-01'.

3) After naming and storing each file, the data forms were inputted in a bespoke BOS data recording system to capture the number of data sources, the diversity of data formats, and the times and locations of data collection to aid the contextual analysis of the social-assemblage, thereby protecting the holism of that affect economy.

4) Audio recordings and videos were then transcribed. Verbatim transcription format was used, capturing hesitancies, swear words, slang, and malapropisms. Where used, colloquial language common to the West Midlands was identified and described as spoken. This stage of the familiarisation was considerably challenging as almost all audio recordings were made in-situ whilst activist tasks were going on, and significant background noise (mostly that of cooking) could be heard, challenging transcription.

5) All audio recordings were then played once more, whilst reading the transcript, and looking at images to commence conceptualisation of the wider social-assemblage.

Reflections on analytical practice for non-textual data

In the familiarisation stage, the photos were a useful way of remembering and mentally situating myself in that vast fieldwork, reifying the social-assemblage. I downloaded the OneDrive app to my phone (as per appropriate use policy under University regulations) so I could view photographs whilst going about my daily life outside my studies, and reflect upon how affect might flow between the material in the photograph, and the conversation going on around it. Some photos, such as those of organisational resources, did not necessarily get discussed in the social-assemblage of which they were part, and had to be moved to a miscellaneous file for use in ethnographic illustration elsewhere in the thesis.

3.1.3 Coding

This sub-section concerns the initial search for cultural meaning in the data, facilitated by QSR NVivo. A data-driven coding process was undertaken according to the materialist conceptualisation of the data, seeing affective flows in the physical-social nexus of the social-assemblage which collectively created an affect economy which had cultural meaning.

1) All data for a social-assemblage, excluding the original audio recording files, was transferred into QSR NVivo. This enabled all formats of data (photographs, PDF documents) to be viewed in a common format.

2) Initial data-driven coding was then undertaken, loosely oriented around the original research question of "*what are the cultural meanings of meat consumption?*". Where initial interests were seen in the data, a primary node was created in NVivo. This process was common to both written and visual data.

3) After all data in a social-assemblage was subject to initial coding, the primary nodes were then examined to seek affective flows between the nodes, primarily to find connections between the written and visual data, combined to form secondary nodes.

4) The preliminary secondary nodes were examined individually. If the elements of the node (a mixture of written and physical data) were naturally related to one another, the node was considered an affective flow. If the elements of the node showed no obvious relation, the elements were reassigned to other relevant nodes where appropriate or dismissed. The irrelevant nodes were removed. This process was repeated until all relevant elements are allocated to an affective flow or are dismissed.

5) The coding process thus results in each social-assemblage consisting of a list of affective flows, which are named and (if necessary) given a short description to remind the researcher of the direct relevance to the social-assemblage. This is the final part of the analytical process which takes place during the fieldwork phase.

Reflections on analytical practice for non-textual data

Detailing point 2) of this description, the nodes could be attached to specific areas of a photo in QSR NVivo, allowing for codes to be created which connected spoken/written data to very specific items in the image. The small number of videos collected had nodes attached to them at time points: where a video has oral speech, it was transcribed, but where it had no speech at all, it was still-framed and treated as a photograph. For the purpose of using a consistent process, no broader context was used to inform coding of visual images beyond the social-assemblage to which they belonged. Where an image had relevance to the broad research question but not the textual data in its corresponding social-assemblage, it was moved to the miscellaneous file for use as contextual illustration somewhere in the thesis.

3.1.4 Summarising

This sub-section describes the process by which the affective flows from single social-assemblages were collated with related codes to form meaningful summaries. The collections of codes were subject to a process of summing and splitting which resulted in a physical process of 'sitting amongst the data' to form summaries, akin to the affect economy concept.

1) The summarising stage of the analysis commenced after fieldwork has ended and all data was collected, coded, and affective flows have been identified systematically throughout the whole data set. The affective flows from single social-assemblages were then transferred out of QSR NVivo to a MS Word Document where they were easier to navigate with oversight.

2) The next element of the process deviated from the intended plan. The original intention was for the entire analytical process to be undertaken on-screen; however, this stage was challenging to complete in a single digital file, and I was open to moving the affective flows into a physical format to navigate them with ease. The affective flows were printed onto single labels and spread across the floor in my office, allowing me to sit amongst the affective flows and derive meaningful connections between them.

3) This made conceptualising summaries much more navigable. The original research question "*what are the cultural meanings of meat consumption?*" was printed in bold type face and displayed on a sheet of A3 paper at the head of this floor exercise, to remind me of the unifying concept and purpose of the analysis.

4) Affective flows which were of obvious meaningful relevance to one another were then summarised into primary 'super-flows', referring to material interactions which occurred across social-assemblages and suggested consistent social experience. These were further subject to through three more rounds of summarisation.

5) The summarising stage resulted in the production of little over 100 summaries of super-flows, which were then further refined into themes by merging and consolidation.

3.1.5 Theming

This sub-section concludes the analytical phase of the study, with a description of how the summaries formed the final thematic outputs of the study. The final themes are the result of a concept-drive theming exercise, relating the materialism of meat in culture, to the initial positioning of the study.

1) The remaining ~100 summaries were respected as the primary analytical outputs, to be further refined into themes via their description and illustration. Each summary was described in up to 100 words, and a data-dive was performed for each one to collect written data illustrating that summary from corresponding social-assemblages.

2) To bring about a finite end of the analytical process the summaries, and their descriptions, were read two more times aloud, and further summarised one final time to form themes. Three or four summaries, with their descriptions, were combined to form each theme, resulting in the presentation of themes in this thesis following a description-illustration format as per the original summaries they represent. This resulted in the final analytical outputs of the study, as thirty-two themes.

3) Each theme was subject to another data-dive, whereby I backtracked the theme to summaries, to super-flows, to social-assemblages, to affective flows, to raw data, to identify photographs that contributed to the production of the theme. The photos are here presented as visual illustrations to accompany the written data, and further convey a sense of ethnographic thick description.

4) Whilst compiling and writing up each theme, I noticed the themes broadly correspond to 'levels' of influence and power in the food system. Following the same print-and-spread format as the affective flows in the summarising stage, the themes were assigned to 'levels' of power at the individual, systematic, community and cultural levels of power in the food system.

5) These final 'meta-themes' are here recognised as deriving the materialism of meat in the individual diet, infrastructure systems, the wider Community, and broader culture.

Reflections on analytical practice for non-textual data

It was important that the thematic outputs of the analysis retained the unique post-humanness of the study, and did not present photos as merely supplementary to the text. For this reason, the non-textual visual data was carefully selected to illustrate each theme, requiring a back-tracking exercise of reversing the analytical process to find a photograph which sufficiently captured the meaning of the theme. For inclusion in this public-facing thesis, all identifying characteristics of photos were censored using red virtual pen.

3.2 Meat: a material of sustainable diets
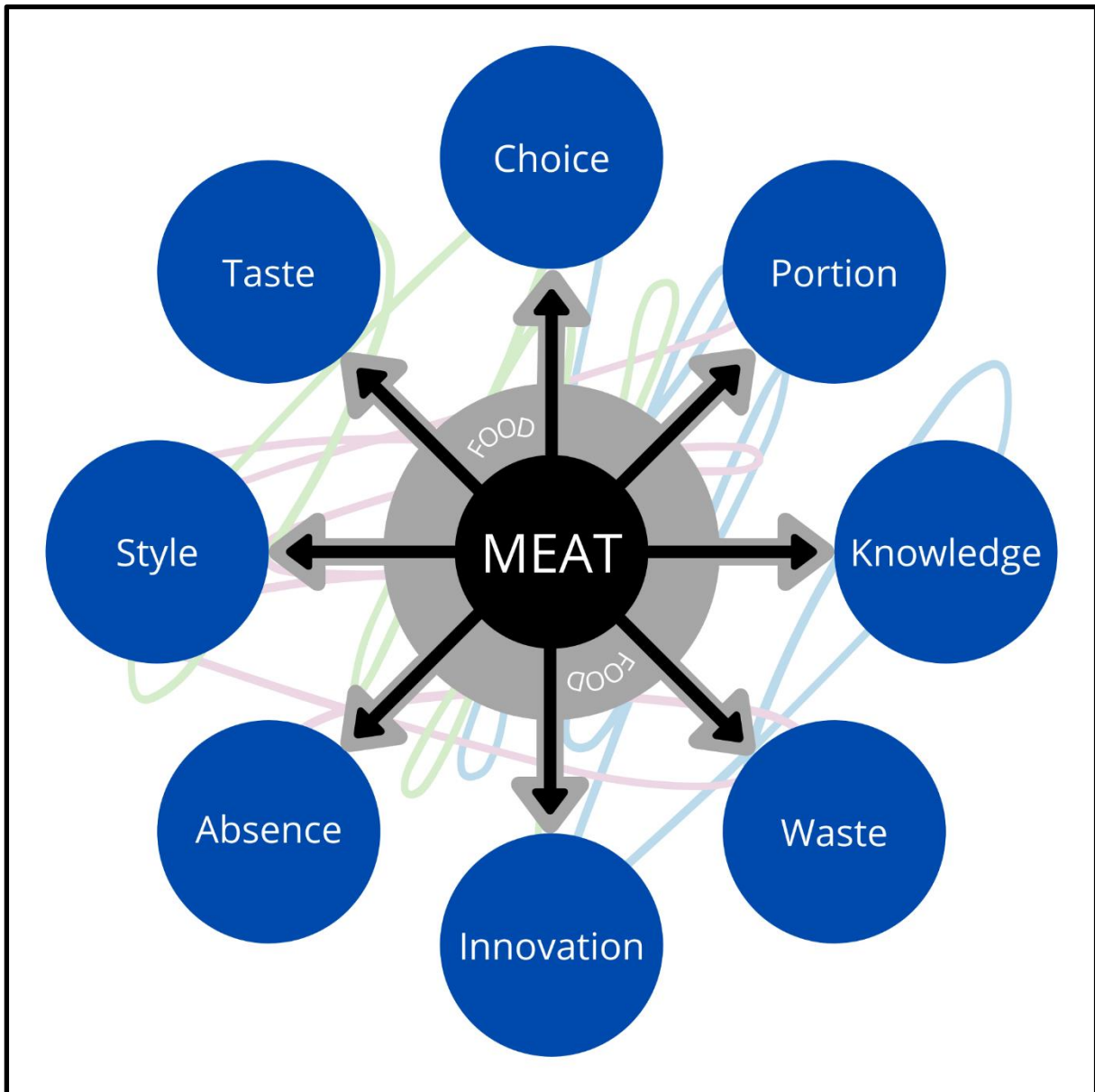
Figure 4: A diagram to show the themes forming the meta-theme "Meat: a material of sustainable diets". The themes here are coded with the colour blue to aid interpretation in the following chapter.

This meta-theme illustrates the use of meat as a material of the individual diet in the Birmingham Foodie Community: what meat meant in the context of the total sum of foods, relational to other food stuffs. The affective flows in this material interaction concerned direct interface between the social context of individual consumption, and the collectivised physical material which facilitated it. It describes not what activists ate, but rather how they valued and made sense of food. These themes relate to the broader cultural meaning of the physical diet and concern the sociocultural role meat played as an important constituent element of the diet.

3.2.1 Choice

This theme describes how the activities of the Community were subject to practical constraints that limited menu choice and variability. This encouraged the trying of new foods. Meat dishes were deemed a necessary option, offered alongside a meat-free alternative.
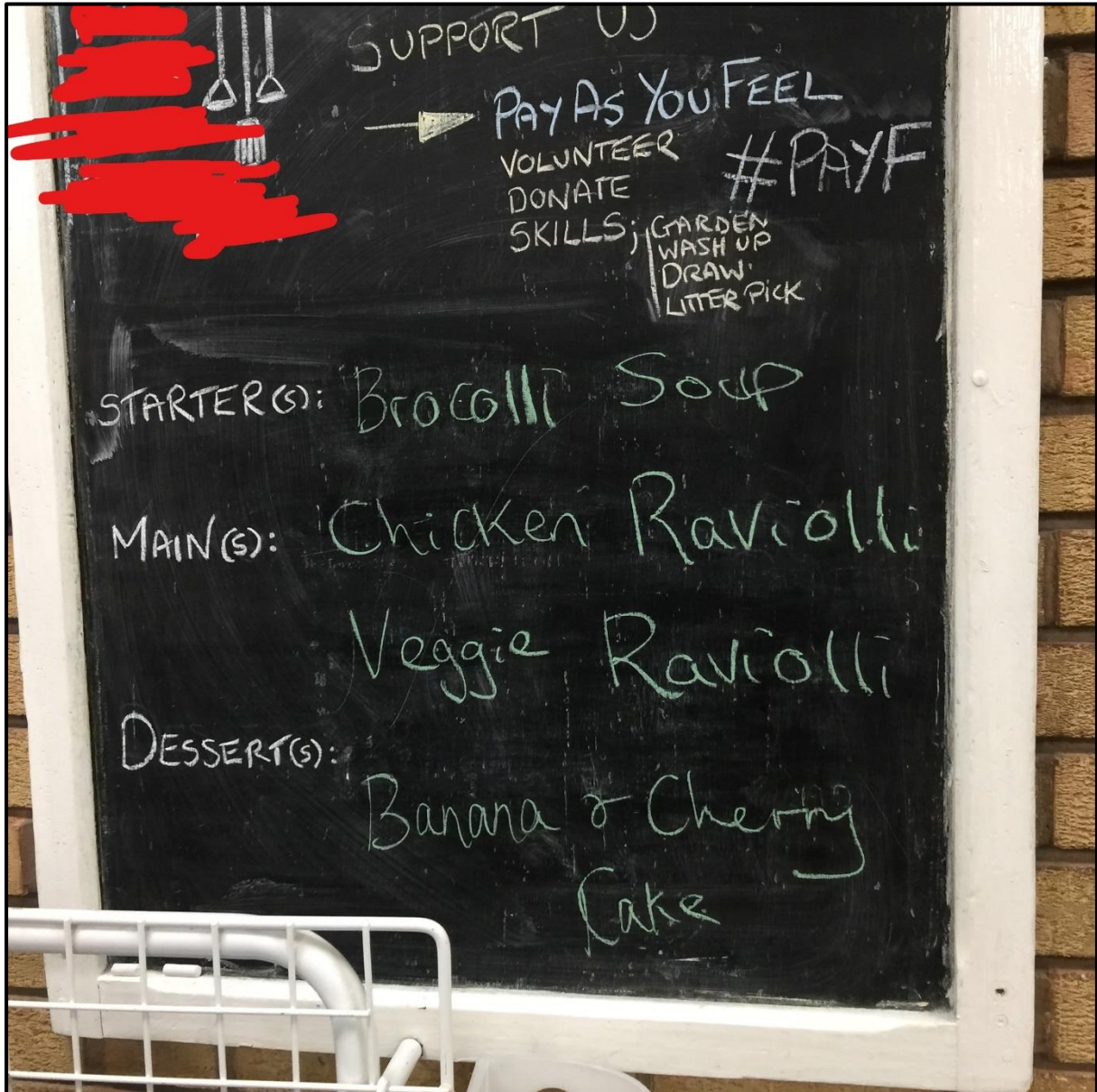
Image 26: The menu board at Littleborough Community Centre outlines the meals OSFEC Herndon offered that day in June, presenting two main courses which are near-identical, only with one form of ravioli also containing chicken. At most meal services, there was a simple choice between a meat dish and a meat-free dish, with the difference between the two typically being minimal.

Most of the food preparation and distribution activities observed offered meal choices, though range was typically limited to only a few options. Limited menus required less resources, fewer culinary skills and less preparation and serving time. Customers did not always appreciate these restrictions.

"Because there's enough. There's plenty, plenty of cauliflower just to cook. Rather than have, like, ninety thousand different things. If we just did a massive vegetable curry for tonight, for all and everybody. Some people will still moan we don't have multiple dishes."
Social-assemblage 1: Caroline discusses benefits of limiting menu choice

Although some customers were frustrated by the limited options, others understood that restrictions were imposed not as means of control, but for operational practicality which had value to activism. There were unintended consequences, sometimes resulting in customers with specific dietary requirements, such as allergies or religious diets, being unable to use Community services offered, as there was no suitable meal available to them.

"It's a shame that the majority of [the chicken] isn't halal – only that which comes from one particular store is suitable for our Muslim customers… Which means they're often forced to eat the vegetarian option instead. I don't feel bad for them having to eat the meat-free option, but I do resent forcing them to do so out of necessity, as the meat option isn't suitable for their religious beliefs."
Social-assemblage 15: a field note taken during a community café

The majority of customers, however, were neither displeased nor disengaged by limited meal choices. Many appeared to rather enjoy a smaller range of options, comparing the experience of eating at a Community food service to enjoying a home cooked meal in a private residence, where meal choices are either limited or are typically not offered at all. This explanation was frequently given to new customers, unfamiliar with the café concept.

"So, this is the café, so people can come in. This is the menu. We have a limited menu, but it's kind of based on the idea of cooking at home, where, like, your Mum's cooking and there's only one option, and you're not in a restaurant so you can't choose. So, we just have one veggie option, one meat option."
Social-assemblage 5: Jack gives a standard welcome talk to a new customer

Other customers enjoyed the experience of eating from a limited menu as it encouraged them to try new foods. The restricted choice when ordering a meal also meant that customers were usually required to order a "full" meal, being unable to select specific elements of a dish.

"What is unique about the southern fried chicken is that volunteers serve it with seasonal vegetables, fresh salad, or other wholesome foods, unlike the fare received at [a fast-food restaurant]. The [Community] chefs make the chicken an equal part of the meal, alongside healthy foods. Customers who are accustomed to going to [fast food outlets] purely to buy fried chicken, do not question this. They're pleased with the balance of meat and non-meat."

Social-assemblage 156: a field note taken following a community café

Activists of Community organisations appreciated the understanding afforded to them by customers in this regard. They could, however, become irritated by customers who did not understand the time and resource constraints imposed upon activists which limited meal choices. This was infrequent, but on rare occasion would escalate into a heated argument.

Food choice was subject to practical constraints that limited options, which was well-received by customers, encouraging them to try new foods and meat-free dishes.

3.2.2 Portions

This theme describes how chefs used portion control to ensure resources were allocated equitably and efficiently. Customers perceived this to be unfair, seemingly denying them access to food. This was achieved by 'stretching' meat, creating bulk from plant-based foods.

Image 27: Although there was usually an abundance of food in the Community, accessing and cooking "more" on short notice was challenging given the largely uncoordinated logistics of the food supply chain. This meant that meal portioning, such as the careful planning and execution of this chicken curry in October, had to be tightly controlled to ensure there was enough food for everyone.

Activists prepared finite quantities of food for cafes and other food services. This was primarily to avoid wasting resources, and limit secondary food waste, which was difficult to dispose of and contradicted the zero-waste principle. Many chefs used portion control to ensure that scarce foods could serve the envisaged number of customers. This frequently created conflict, with customers often accusing activists of withholding food for arbitrary reasons.

"He annoyed me by asking not for the vegetarian option, but for three portions of chips. When I said no, Celia came out with the usual "we're all just trying out hardest" line. Gerald had been denied his request as we are not a chip shop and giving him two portions too many meant that someone else would have to go without. Celia accepted this premise and we agreed that a slightly larger single portion of chips would be okay."

Social-assemblage 15: a field note taken after an argument about portion control

These frequent arguments were so commonplace that activists pre-empted them, resulting in them predicting which customers would make unreasonable requests, and engaging in preparatory behaviours to prevent tensions over the matter.

"The Hearing Hands people sat down at the table and were told that lunch was ready. They queued at the hatch and were asked whether they wanted the meat or vegetarian main. Surprisingly, the group members expected to ask for more and take too much food did not do so; they appeared to recognise and respect the limited and finite nature of the food"

Social-assemblage 149: a field note written at Christmas

There was a general understanding across organisations that some customers had nutritional needs beyond that of other customers, due to medical reasons or socioeconomic circumstances which saw them experience food insecurity. Activists were generally sympathetic to customers who requested second helpings following their first meal.

"The expertly made curries Fatima makes taste beautiful, and it is clear she puts a great deal of care into making them. The women serve them in perhaps slightly too small portions, but we are always welcome to go up to get more"

Social-assemblage 14: a field note written about a Curry for Charity event

The concept of portion control was not unique to the operation of the cafes. Activists and customers sometimes spoke of self-imposed portion control for the purpose of weight loss.

"[I'll] just eat more fruit and veg. Just go with the guidelines. I'm not going to go on a faddy diet, I'm just going to do what the guidelines say"

Social-assemblage 18: Christina explains her pragmatic approach to dieting

Portion control was a contentious topic, with some activists being subject to internal disciplinary processes by their organisations due to perceived unfairness of allocating resources in this way. It was, however, considered an unavoidable practice to ensure all customers were able to eat, and to uphold central ideological visions of the Community.

Portion control was used to ensure scarce food resources were distributed equally. Customers perceived this to be unfair and accused activists of denying food security.

3.2.3 Knowledge

This theme describes the value of knowledge surrounding cookery and food systems in the Community. Activists shared knowledge and capitalised upon intellectual diversity for capacity building. A critical awareness of the safe handling and cooking of wasted meat was valuable.

Image 28: Russell demonstrates breadmaking to a group of new activists, to serve with the starter dish at a community café in November. Russell was an accomplished chef and was passionate about training a new generation of food activists, recognising that the activist base was an ageing group and time was running out for him to pass on his decades of knowledge to newcomers.

Knowledge of food, cookery, food safety, dietary health and community development was valued as an important commodity. Knowledge of efficient resource use was particularly valuable. Though general culinary knowledge was important, the ability to use it innovatively was central to the objectives of many of the organisations, which recognised that unsustainable food systems were characterised by inefficient use of scarce resources.

"And I suppose, actually, rather than the vegetarian stuff [at which] I'm okay. I can usually come up with something, it's more the meat dishes that I panic about. Because I do not want to be pulling off that cooked chicken. That horrifies me. I mean, it's so greasy."

Social-assemblage 1: Caroline admits she lacks knowledge about meat

This high-valuation of knowledge extended to plant-based meals. Caroline and I were well-known for being skilled vegetarian cooks. The practical skills required to prepare the food were dismissed, but the knowledge required to make enjoyable meat-free meals was prized.

"We've championed the concept of the shepherdess pie, and lots of customers will go for the vegetarian option if they know that Caroline and I made it together. They seem to think that we've got some sort of innate knowledge of making vegetarian food tasty"

Social-assemblage 12: a field note reflecting on vegetarian dishes

The value of meat-free cookery knowledge was the result of customers comparing dishes made by different Community chefs. Some, despite being professionally trained, had little knowledge of meat-free cookery and lacked confidence to learn and try new ideas.

"Many of the meat-free dishes in this community are simply freshly prepared vegetables, and there does seem to be a lack of understanding even amongst the most professional and experienced of community chefs of how to prepare a tasty vegetarian dish that is something more than simply vegetables."

Social-assemblage 13: a field note on some chefs' approaches to meat-free meals

It appeared that there had long been a vegetarian custom-base, despite the historical absence of skilled meat-free chefs. The growing involvement of vegetarian activists meant more established chefs had the opportunity to learn from those who had developed skills in their personal lives and improve their own knowledge.

"Fran and Petunia wanted my recipe for the beetroot patties from the week before. The fact they thought it was a recipe I had followed was pleasing, although in reality, I had just made it up as I was making it, and knew how to create vegetable patties from experience"

Social-assemblage 5: a field note about asked for a recipe

Later in the fieldwork phase, community chefs began to broaden their learning further, often to conceal a lack of available resources, or avoid food waste. Justin would refer to this as proof that OSFEC Sterling had achieved an unexpected goal of "*teaching an old dog new tricks*".

"Another of his great deconstructionist culinary delights, Russell was teaching Priscilla how to prepare chicken pie in such a way that it would effectively be cooked as a stew; the pie crust would be cooked separately and added later. I trust Russell's professional knowledge and am sure there was a good reason for it"

Social-assemblage 153: a field note on Russell's attempts to avoid food waste

Knowledge was important in the Community. Some activists, including me, used knowledge as their contribution to the asset-based approach which characterised food activism. It was expected that everyone would contribute something: knowledge was as valuable as any material asset.

> **Knowledge of cookery and the food system was valuable. It supported efficient and innovative use of scarce resources, reduced waste and enabled capacity building.**

3.2.4 Waste

This theme describes the efforts of volunteers to develop cookery practices which minimised secondary food waste. This was in pursuit of making food activism genuinely wasteless. Meat was a difficult material to compost or reuse and was deemed a challenged to sustainability.

Image 29: A visit from the 'Cardboard Man' in September enabled one organisation to dispose of its cardboard waste. The Community organisations operated on a zero-waste principle that ensured all material from activism was used for something positive: nothing could go to landfill. The Cardboard Man was a friend of some activists who used cardboard to make wall insulation for housing.

The two central organisations in the Community, OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC Sterling, were primarily concerned with the acquisition and distribution of food destined for waste. Others, notably the Waste-Not Warriors, also sourced most of their food from suppliers who were disposing of it. Their primary activity, sometimes referred to as food rescue or food salvage, required them to engage with traditional retailers to create a supply chain where no money was exchanged. This task required great skill, which was known to be held by only a small number of activists. All foods were highly valued, and it was believed they should be used efficiently. Activists were expected to design meals according to what was available, not plan in advance and purchase ingredients which were not intercepted (which some activists called the 'Khalid approach' after a chef who was known to misunderstand this part of activism).

"Russell was making a mustard chicken dish, and there was some discussion over whether he was using food supplies appropriately: cooking to ingredients in supply, rather than seeking ingredients to match recipes – the 'Khalid approach'"

Social-assemblage 76: a field note considering resourcefulness

Food was still subject to strict controls to ensure it did not become secondary food waste: food waste created from the leftovers of meals which had, in turn, been made from waste food. Organisations had established strong relationships with other third-sector groups which would serve as outlets for the unavoidable food waste, such as inedible food and vegetable peelings. This unavoidable secondary food waste would be discarded through a network of composting sites at local community gardens, and small urban farms as animal feed.

"[The pig man] is a friend of Primrose. I think he's over at Saffron Village Farm. I believe. But as I say, everything gets used somewhere, in some shape or form"

Social-assemblage 7: Shirley describes feeding food waste to animals

Due to contracted agreements with suppliers that the food waste would be subject to only unavoidable secondary food waste, and the difficulty and cost of discarding avoidable secondary food waste, activists were expected to make conscious efforts to minimise waste.

"The vegetarian "stew" from lunch was converted into a curry by adding spices; yet another reason I dislike the concept. It's lazy and thoughtless, and customers often complain about the poor conversion… I suppose it does make adequate use of resources, however"

Social-assemblage 27: a field note considering measures to minimise waste

Activists would discuss eradication of wasteful practices. This became more pertinent with increasing supply chains building between OSFEC Sterling and the Waste-Not Warriors, which advocated a zero-waste approach. Chefs thought of new ways of improving efficiency to achieve this goal.

"It's a shame, because the easiest thing that we could do here would be to make basic bases of everything, and just add meat to half of it. And it would save a lot of stuff."

Social-assemblage 42: Keira considers how to make meals more efficient

As a community connected by a common desire to create a sustainable system, avoidance of food waste was central to delivering food services. Developing networks and cookery practices which could best make use of limited resources was an important innovation in food activism.

Secondary food waste was considered irresponsible and incongruent with food activism. Community logisticians had to innovate to find uses for unavoidable waste.

3.2.5 Innovation

This theme describes the need for activists to innovate novel solutions to practical and conceptual challenges in the local food system. Activists enjoyed the serendipitous nature of this, imagining meat-free alternatives and methods to maximise use of meat products.
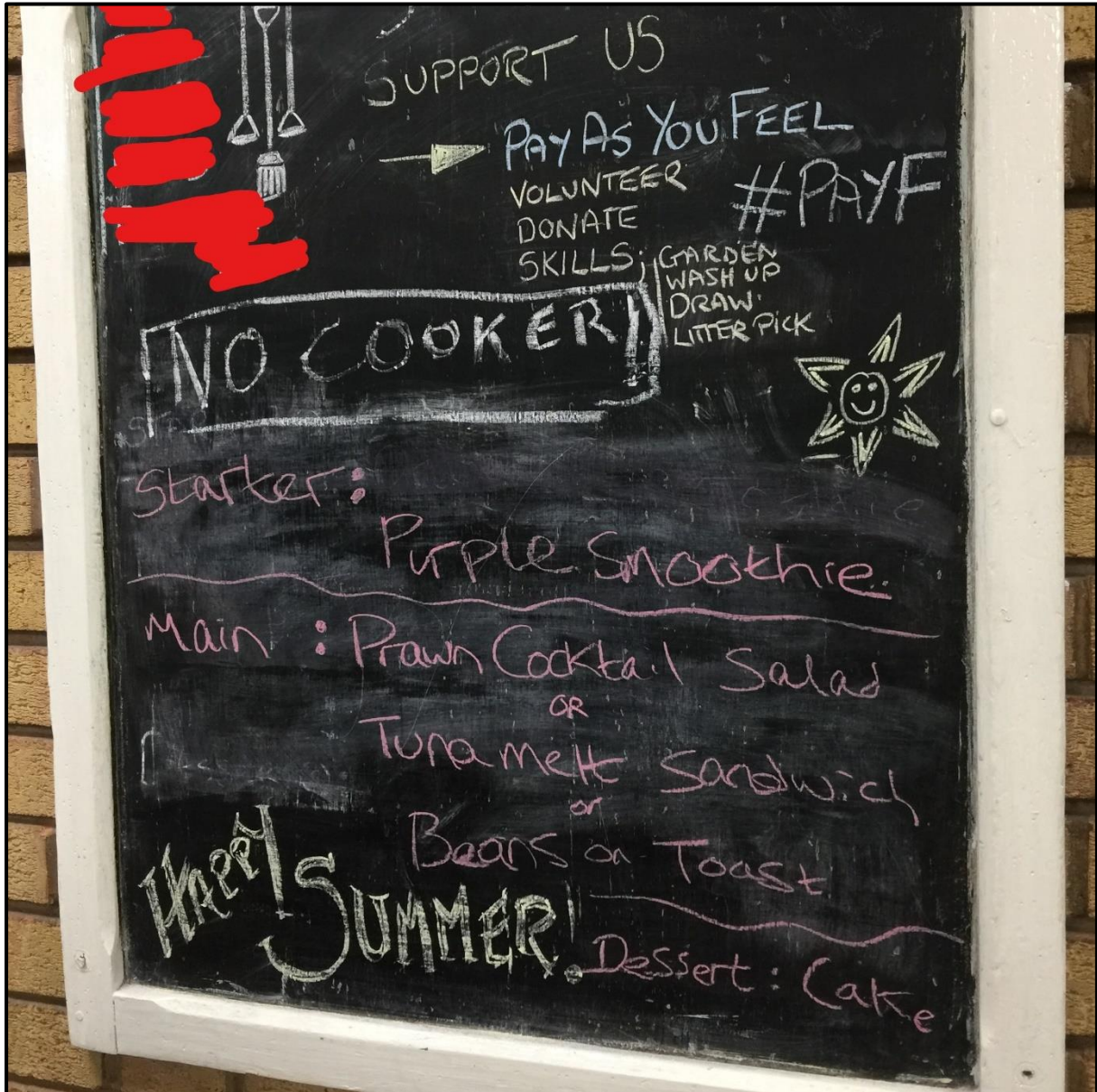
Image 30: The menu board at a community café in July announces that the old, barely functioning cooker in the kitchen of the dilapidated community centre had finally ceased working, to no one's surprise. This required me and Christina to innovate quickly and think of simple meals we could prepare with a microwave and toaster, which meant serving smoothies, sandwiches, toast, and cake.

Though diverse in objectives and operations, all Community organisations valued innovation, seeking to change systems and cultures. New ideas were essential for this. Innovation could mean repurposing old ideas to solve contemporary challenges, or the generation of novel solutions to address longstanding problems. Many activists were characterised as innovators.

"I'm still, still, eating the pineapple weed, well, drinking the pineapple weed, now. It's hardened and it's gone like a lovely sort of black colour, which looks awful, but you smell it, and it just smells of very fresh pineapple. Add it to water and it makes a nice pineapple tea, despite there being no pineapples around. Think how much, how few pineapples we would have to transport to this country if we used that instead"

Social-assemblage 2: Jack uses a British garden weed to replace foreign fruit

Activists enjoyed this part of their work, often citing that their positions facilitated creativity and enabled them to try out ideas they might otherwise lack resources to realise.

"That's the whole idea. I mean, I do love coming in, and the serendipity of [cooking with random ingredients]… usually, because I live nearby, I'm fortunate because I get an idea of what's available the day before… I just send a message to Justin to see what's coming in."

Social-assemblage 1: Caroline talks of the creativity of activism

Though my involvement in the Community did not attempt to encourage activists to conceive innovative measures to reduce meat consumption, such actions were often taken due to the relative scarcity of meat products, which were more difficult to obtain than other foods because of the safety risks presented by preparing and distributing wasted meat. This restriction required Community chefs to attempt to 'conceal' insufficient quantities of meat in a dish.

"Russell [voiced] his appreciation for 'what a pie allows a chef to do'; cover up a lack of meat through 'padding'… when presented with an inferior or insufficient quantity of meat, a pie enabled him to make the majority of the filling from fresh, seasonal vegetables, and by cooking the vegetables alongside the limited quantity of meat, he was able to conceal the insufficient meat stock with the taste of chicken from gravies produced by the stew"

Social-assemblage 153: a field note describing Russell's innovative piemaking

Prior to the 'revolution', limited food resources available at OSFEC Herndon, combined with scheduling of double meal services during one café, often required Caroline and I to use innovative methods of 'reconstituting' dishes, using the leftovers from one meal service as a

base of the next meal service. This usually meant using leftovers of the vegetarian option from lunchtime to make a sauce for the meat option for the evening meal.

"Caroline had decided to prepare a chicken curry pie – realistically, just reconstituting various elements of an unused vegetable curry made by the Thursday café team and combining it with chicken. I like Caroline's sense of avoiding waste, and why she does this, but I feel sometimes the quality of the food suffers, this reflects the custom base of the café"

Social-assemblage 12: a field note discussing 'reconstitution'

These innovations were essential to the practical operation of community services and finding longer term solutions to wider problems. Leaders of the various organisations were often looked to for these innovative ideas, but most came from the regular activist workforce.

Activists were required to innovate novel solutions to practical and conceptual food challenges. They enjoyed the creativity this serendipitous task allowed them to have.

3.2.6 Absence

This theme describes normalisation of abstention practices. In the Community, food-specific abstention was common, acceptable, and encouraged. Meat-free diets and the associated identities and philosophies fascinated activists, serving as a point of critical discussion.

Image 31: A food that, from a distance, looked like beef burgers was, in fact, beetroot burgers served at a Community charitable event in May. Celia asked me to prepare a vegan dish and handed over a bag of beetroots. Caroline and I liked a cooking challenge and made these beetroot patties which were popular with the customers that lunchtime.

Meat-free diets were discussed frequently by activists. This was not solely due to my presence. I had committed to applying the same approach to my research work as that which I use in my personal life, and only discussed my being vegan if a participant instigated the conversation and asked direct questions. Activists took great interest in vegetarian diets, and reduced meat consumption. They often asked about my own experience and motivations.

"Well, I'm vegetarian, leaning towards vegan. But I can't stop having milk on my cornflakes. I have tried. Because I sell cheese, I run this little business. I buy cheese and then sell it for green cuisine. And they're alright, vegetarian cheese[s], apart from the one with Worcester sauce in, which everyone loves. Because Worcester sauce has fish paste in it"

Social-assemblage 5: a customer talking about dairy consumption

Although most customers were not vegetarian, they were generally willing to try meat-free dishes. This was almost always done on the understanding that their experimenting with vegetarian food was not indicative of a commitment to being vegetarian or eating meat-free dishes regularly. Many customers would eat a vegetarian dish with a meat dish.

"I don't mind taking the vegetarian. I mean, or, if you've got enough to do a three-course thing, I don't mind taking it in one of the sandwich bags. What happens is, I just take it out the tubs, put it in one of the bags, squash it down and pop it somewhere where I can, you know, get it later. If you've got… a bit of the chicken curry and a bit of the vegetarian."

Social-assemblage 5: Michaela chooses which food to take home

Customers in the community cafes were noticeably more willing to try vegetarian foods when they knew that Caroline or I had prepared them, and even more so if we ate it with them.

"It was nice to see Michaela enjoying her shepherdess pie, particularly when she commented that she could barely tell there was no meat in it, wouldn't have guessed had no one told her it was a vegetarian dish. This was unusual, there was no meat substitute used"

Social-assemblage 12: a field note describing a customer trying a vegetable dish

Activists took interest in the concept of vegetarian identity, asking about my experiences of being vegan, how I interacted with non-vegan relatives and friends during my childhood, and making inquiries about social repercussions of making that decision.

"Do your grandparents think you're going through some sort of [vegan] fad? Well, my mum and sister, my mum's been vegan for forty years, and [my grandparents] still think she's

going through a fad. My nanna reminds me of the nanna in The Royle Family. My nan is
exactly like that with my mum. Thirty years, we've been going through this"

Social-assemblage 9: Christina talks about her family and veganism

I gave honest answers. This was sometimes difficult as I was hesitant to have such conversations whilst we were eating or cooking, for fear of making participants feel judged or influenced into eating vegan food.

"[A distant relative] is vegan, but with the odd discretion. So, they're quite happy to do it. But the other branch of the family are meat eaters, but the matriarch of that side is best friends with the vegetarian side. I think because other members of their family have been vegetarian for their entire lives, they've probably got the teasing out of the way some time ago."

Social-assemblage 1: I tell Shauna about my own vegan experience

Food activists were interested in, but largely ambivalent to, vegetarianism. They relished the opportunity to question a non-judgemental vegan and receive honest answers.

Vegetarianism was a normalised novelty in food activism. Meat-free diets and the associated identities and experiences were of fascination to interested customers.

3.2.7 Style

This theme describes how activists styled food to convey the social value of activism. Food activists wanted eating to be a dignified and enjoyable social experience, and they would combine different elements of dietary cultures to support this.

Image 32: Russell held strong Christian convictions which, he believed, instructed him to use food as a means of connecting with others and supporting local communities. He frequently voiced the importance of the image of food in this regard and would put great effort into preparing food to look professional, like with this basic but stylish vegetarian dish at Hammersley South Community Café.

The Community was a microcosm of the West Midlands population. There was vibrant socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, religious, and intellectual diversity in the volunteer workforce and customer base. This diversity could be seen in the foods distributed, and the meals produced, but did not always see dishes associated with specific cultures prepared by individuals who identified with those cultures.

"Whilst Vernon's food is often more traditional, usually British and typically filling but stodgy, Miranda's is light, vegetable-heavy and reasonably Mediterranean in influence. Vernon had prepared a typical dish with the southern fried chicken, simply accompanying it with wedges and limited salad. Miranda had prepared a stuffed pepper with or without cheese for the vegetarian and vegan main courses"

Social-assemblage 145: a field note comparing different approaches to cookery

Customers appreciated culinary diversity. The well-remembered meals, which were spoken of long after they were served, were typically meals of mixed cultural influence.

"I've had some excellent meals courtesy of OSFEC Sterling in the past but lunch at St Gerald's today was absolutely superb! We both had pumpkin soup with crusty bread, I had a beautifully light puff pastry topped with roasted vegetables accompanied by creamy mashed sweet potato and a lovely salad, while Charlie had a delicious risotto"

Social-assemblage 100: Violet gives a rave review of her lunch

The style of a dish was often aligned with the cultural background of the chef preparing it. Community chefs were broadly expected, however, to balance a display of their own culinary cultural practices with the diversity of the custom-base and the wider local community. This resulted in eclectic menus which transcended traditional cultural boundaries, combining elements of Western and non-Western culinary practices.

"Dekka was responsible for the BBQ… Hotdogs and burgers were cooked, which were enjoyed by all. Shirley also used the acti-fryer to cook wedges and chips. The buffet was held in the garden and people were heaping up plates of food. Dekka cooked me some vegan bean patties and also some sweet potato falafels."

Social-assemblage 77: a field note describing the food at Shirley's birthday party

The style of a meal, or its presentation, was not limited to ethnic and national influences. Russell, a chef with decades of experience in fine-dining restaurants, was known throughout

the Community for his attention to detail in presenting food according to his professional background. The style was here characterised by Russel as foods of 'high-culture'.

"Russell was responsible for the carvery; in professional fashion, he put on his chefs' whites and hosted a full carvery, with a selection of white and red meats, potatoes, roast onions and other seasonal vegetables. Everybody was very impressed with the food"

Social-assemblage 11: a field note detailing Russell's approach to catering

The styling of meals in their presentation and representation, was important to the Community. The creative control granted to chefs enabled them to display their identities, whilst providing them with a challenge to eclectically apply the culinary styles associated with those identities to the needs of other cultural groups. This culinary diversity was seen as a celebration of multiculturalism in the West Midlands.

Stylising of food mattered. It gave activists an opportunity to express heritage and identity through cookery and combine elements of different culinary cultures.

3.2.8 Taste

This theme describes the loyal custom-base and brand recognition that built around the Community from the high-quality meals activists produced. Chefs were mindful of the social context of taste and put effort into planning meals, particularly the meat-free dishes.

Image 33: Everyone at the café was excited when Mahreen arrived unexpectedly one morning in May to cook her famous Goan curry. They would take an entire day to make (seen here in an early stage) but were worth the wait as Mahreen would use her extensive knowledge of, and sensory skills around, spices to produce vegetarian curries for which everyone would ask for second helpings.

Whilst stylising of food was subject to the will of the chefs, tasting of food was subject to the interpretation of the customers. Perceived standards in meal quality varied greatly between organisations, and across time periods. There was a recognised shift in standards following the 'revolution'. The food quality standards across the community were generally considered good; community chefs produced good food which customers praised.

"The chicken that came in… was the standard wing and breast meat we usually get. I personally think it is very poor quality; it falls apart easily and is indicative of cheap production methods. The customers, however, loved it. Customers commented on the simplicity and versatility of the dish, which was little more than a pesto mixed with cheese and a topping, served with pasta"

Social-assemblage 73: a field note reflecting on meat quality

Customers were noticeably more vocal about their enjoyment of the food than might be expected of a traditional food vendor. Mindful that a good customer experience would increase café visits by middle class customers, chefs would enhance the quality of a meal to ensure to impress that demographic. Whilst equal treatment of customers was a basic value of most of the organisations, the affluent customers' generous cash donations subsidised costs for other customers. Meal quality was linked to financial sustainability.

"We finished with one of the best apple crumbles I have ever had, not over sweet and bland but just tart enough to allow the flavour of the spices to come through with a lovely crunchy crumble and custard. Finished with a nice cup of tea."

Social-assemblage 100: Violet reviews her lunchtime dessert

The most popular meals were usually the simplest. Customers appreciated meals prepared by chefs who had made it with taste and quality in mind, rather than being overly ambitious.

"On the menu this lunch time was a chicken dinner – roast chicken… chips, gravy, and seasonal vegetables. These simple but filling lunches are always popular… it's amazing what can be done with pre-cooked chicken and how versatile an ingredient it can be. Over time, we've used it in soups, curries, roasts… all sorts of interesting meals"

Social-assemblage 15: a field note from a café with a basic lunch menu.

Despite misconceptions by outsiders that the Community was focused solely on food security, the quality and preparation of food was of equal importance to the activists preparing it, and the customers eating it. The high quality of the food was vital to financial sustainability of an organisation, which was necessary for the continuity of activism. This concept would become widely known as "dining in dignity", coined by Russell to describe wider social values of food activism to newcomers.

Good-tasting meals ensured a loyal custom-base and brand recognition for activist organisations. Activists were conscious of the broader sociocultural value of taste.

3.3 Meat: a material of sustainable systems
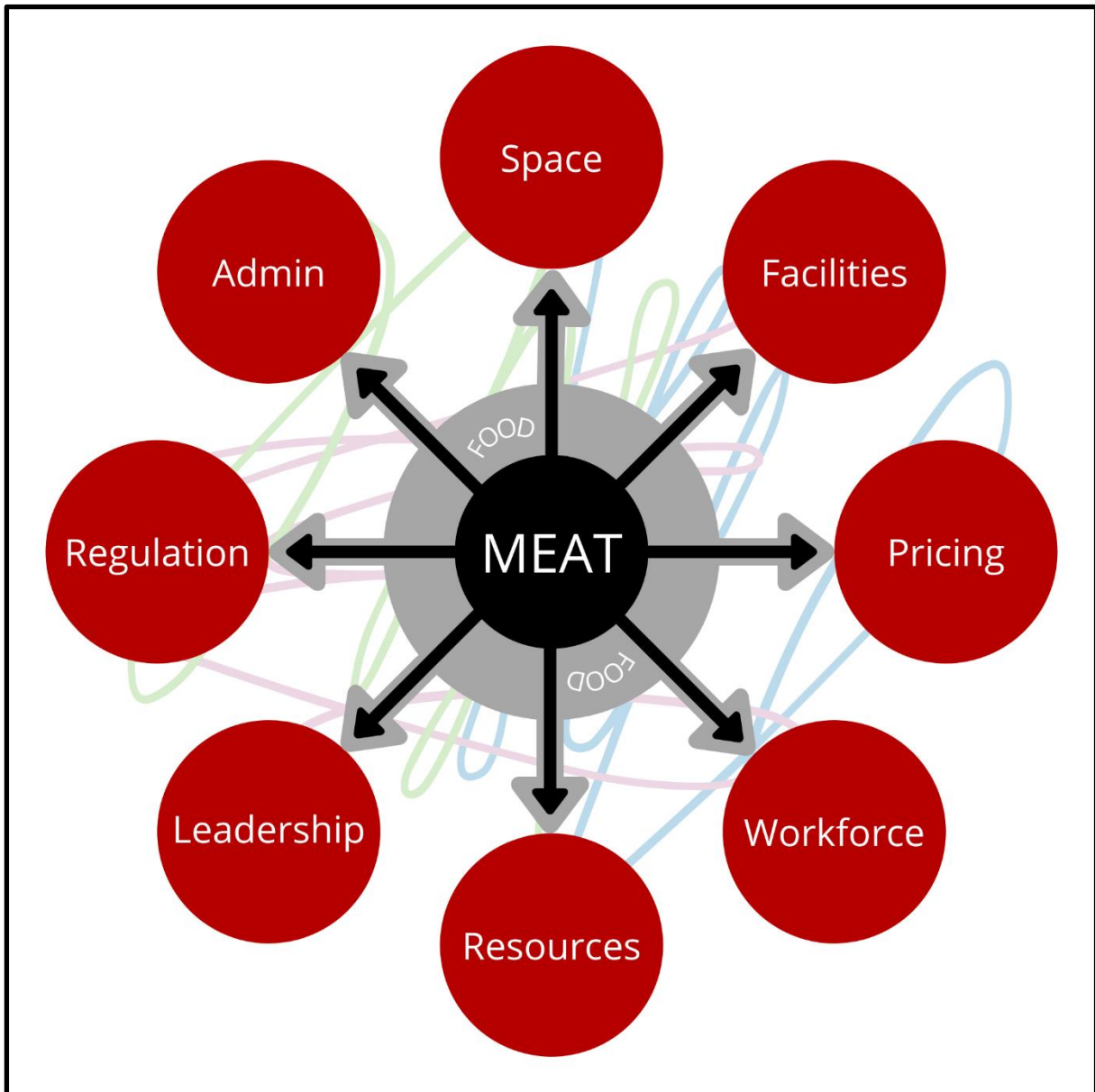
Figure 5: A diagram to show the themes forming the meta-theme "Meat: a material of sustainable systems". The themes here are coded with the colour red to aid interpretation in the following chapter.

This meta-theme illustrates the use of food as a material at the centre of the complex local food system in the Community; how it required a social microsystem to interdependently connect it with other material assets, such as cooking equipment, places to use them and the money to buy them. The affective flows in this material interaction highlighted the importance of non-food materials in maintaining a functioning and sustainable food system, introducing into this thesis some consideration for the broader material context of health: that of inorganic material. These themes connect meat to the material world through inorganic resources.

3.3.1 Space

This theme describes physical space as an essential asset in delivery of food services. It was one of the most difficult, but essential, assets to acquire. Meat could only be stored, prepared, and served safely if there was a space in which to do these tasks according to regulations.

Image 34: A day spent cleaning "The Hexagon" with Celia in July, a building acquired by OSFEC Herndon on peppercorn rent to store food; no customers were allowed inside. This was a valuable space and asset, as storage was hard to access, let alone for free. The building was also occasionally used to hold activist meetings for various organisations as it was out of the customers' eyesight.

None of the Community organisations had exclusive access to a permanent storage facility. Each organisation was either a mobile operation or made temporary use of small spaces at numerous locations, often distant from other storage spaces and venues at which food was prepared and distributed. This presented logistical challenges, limiting organisational growth.

"[Space] is the biggest problem, it is. Because, if we had decent warehousing, we could store more stuff that's going to waste… there's all the hotels on Hallesdon Road, we could potentially be going to. But we can't store it at the moment, so we'd need premises for that"

Social-assemblage 4: Caroline describes challenges of limited space

Limitations on organisational growth created by a lack of space resulted in activists frequently discussing the topic, and considering limited options for acquiring sufficient storage space. Whilst some activists appreciated financial costs made this challenge difficult or impossible to resolve, others showed optimism. Both opinions recognised that, realistic or not, Community impact was limited by a lack of storage space.

"We've got a way to go. I mean, I suppose one of the things for us is, there are a couple of things we need. So, one of the things we really need is some low-cost warehousing. But that is actually having an impact on how much waste we can collect"

Social-assemblage 4: Caroline recognising her organisation's limitations

Activists would conceive of innovative solutions, usually initially thought to be temporary, but often ended up being used for significant durations. Creative solutions to lack of space would often be using activist's homes, workplaces, and other unusual locations for doing activism.

"In a café dining room smaller than my bedroom, there is never an empty seat. The format of The Heavens (next door to Kerry's house) lends itself to a home cooked meal in a friend's living room. The family-feel this café generates seems to result in family-feel behaviour. Customers are neither greedy nor selfish, but are glad of the effort that went into the meal"

Social-assemblage 156: a field note, describing innovative use of space

Activists sought to bring this positive impact to one central facility, in a location accessible by public transport. This became a highly idealised concept, which activists recognised was unlikely to be realised, but for which they would continue to strive in pursuit of resolving logistical challenges and upholding values of the Community.

"Because we knew we needed to get a [building to serve as permanent headquarters], and we needed to get a warehouse to store stuff, because we were getting kicked out of there eventually. We had stuff [everywhere], it was all over the place. And we wanted one central place. We wanted to open a [building to serve as permanent headquarters]. It's like a small supermarket where people can come in, get stuff off the shelves, and Pay What You Want"

Social-assemblage 75: Justin describes the need for a central storage facility

Access to space for storing and serving food was recognised as necessary for the continued delivery of food services. Some activists recognised that the Community could not continue to grow without secure space in which to continue operations; others saw the limited space as a limitation on the Community's ability to continue offering existing services.

Space was recognised as an essential asset in the delivery of reliable and sustainable food services. It was also one of the most difficult resources to securely acquire.

3.3.2 Facilities

This theme describes efforts to improve food production facilities, limited by finance. This required activists to employ frugalness in acquisition of equipment, as they did with food. Food services were often cancelled on short notice due to unpredictable equipment failure.

Image 35: The dishwasher at one of the artist activist hubs, photographed whilst catering for a music event in November. The kitchen facilities in the activist spaces were highly variable, with most being dilapidated and in urgent need of regeneration. This kitchen in Narwood was considered one of the best, and activists in OSFEC Sterling took turns to run services in that venue because of it.

Adequate facilities to support community operations were also limited. Whilst activists seldom struggled to access sustainable supplies of food, facilities for sorting, preparing, and serving it were limited.

"You work quite hard to run things, and so on. I mean, we've got other potential venues… they tend to be church halls, because a lot of people will let you have a church hall for free, to start with, anyway, which is really handy. And they want to do good things, so it's useful"
Social-assemblage 66: Caroline considers connections with local churches

Activists forged relationships with the few non-food related organisations which could provide access to facilities. Most venues used to prepare and deliver food were local community centres or churches: facilities which had previously been recipients of sufficient funding from external sources but had more recently struggled to maintain financial viability.

"It was a dirty and smelly building that was very similar to a primary school – from the layout, I suspect that it previously was. Despite there being a large and useable hall in the building, the [community café] was crammed into a tiny room at the back of the building. They were hosting both a [community café] and [a food bank] for OSFEC Herndon"
Social-assemblage 75: a field note describing dilapidated facilities

Activists sought to improve the facilities available to the Community. There was ongoing need to moderate unrealistic demands with realistic outcomes: some volunteers were unable to appreciate that the routine development of facilities was expensive.

"Whilst he recognised the idealism in the concept, Russell suggested that 24/7 access to a catering kitchen would be beneficial to the events team"
Social-assemblage 55: minutes from a volunteer meeting about facilities

Throughout the fieldwork phase, some organisations acquired better facilities or improved existing ones through expanding the asset-based approach to cooking equipment.

"The kitchen facilities here are good. More industrial in nature, the equipment is designed for larger-scale food production and is certainly more suitable for our purposes than other venues we use… there is also an industrial dishwasher which takes seconds to clean large amounts of crockery and cooking equipment."
Social-assemblage 135: a field note describing facilities at Narwood

Most organisations applied the same principles to the acquisition of facilities as they did to food; salvaged from waste as a primary method of acquisition and purchase only when absolutely necessary. This necessity was operationalised in different ways. OSFEC Herndon would use "rescued" equipment when it was easily accessible and use its substantial income to purchase other equipment when required. OSFEC Sterling applied stricter methods through codified policy, and only purchased new equipment as a form of infrequent investment when all other routes had failed.

Activists sought to improve food production facilities in the spaces the Community used, requiring them to approach acquisition of inorganic matter with frugalness.

3.3.3 Pricing

This theme describes the importance of income generation in food activism, vital for delivery of food services, but challenging to achieve sustainably. Activists debated merits of alternative economic models, conscious of a need to balance social inclusion with financial sustainability.
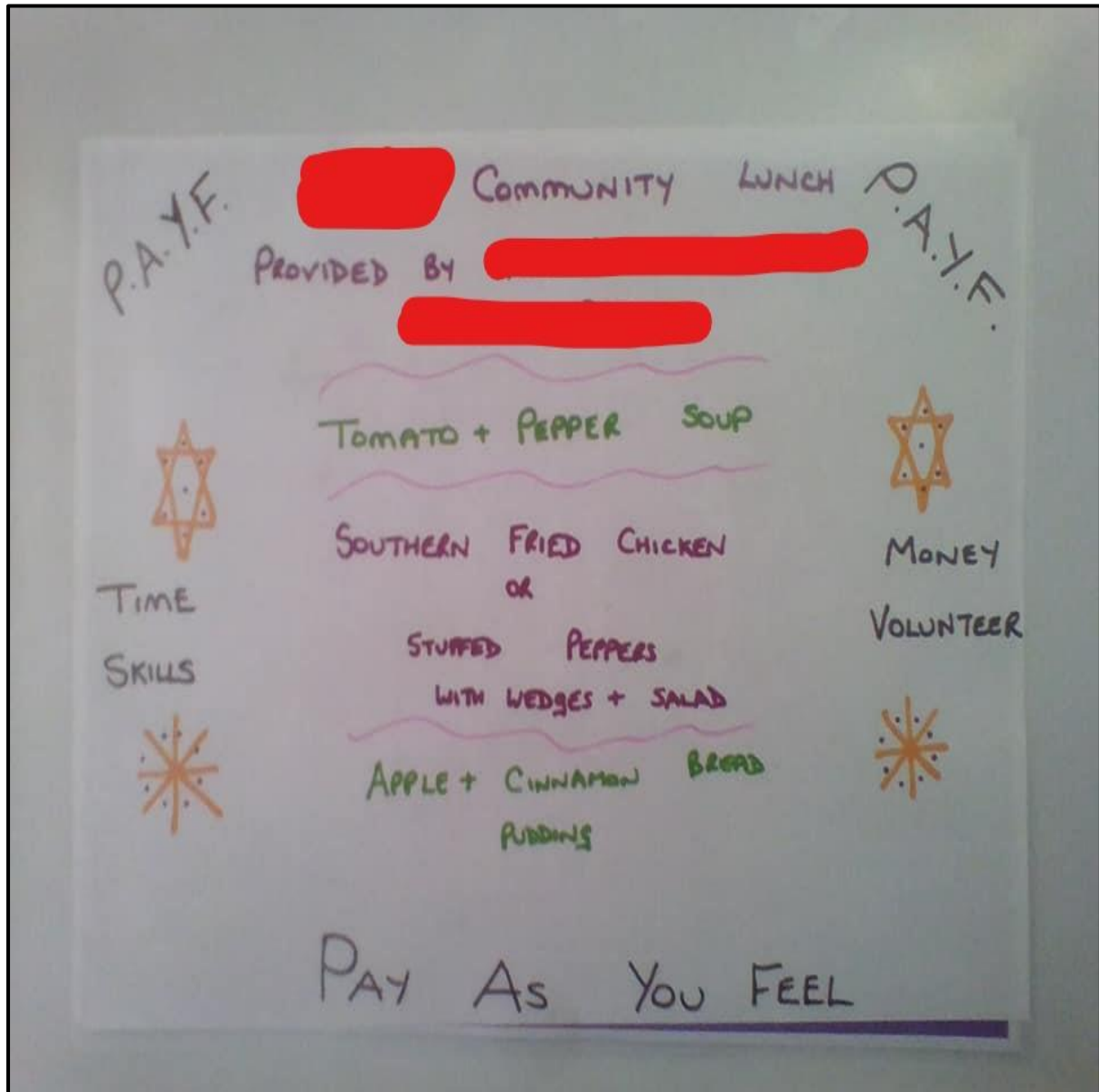
Image 36: A lunch at The Heavens in December presented the menu for the day, centring food in the middle of the methods of payment according to "Pay What You Want", the alternative economic model employed by the OSFEC organisations. Seeing food security as a human right and nominal cash donations as simply meeting running costs, customers were invited to Pay What You Want.

All organisations initially used alternative economic models in their food services; three were contractually bound to the Pay What You Want model through Partnership Agreements with national organisations, by which customers could pay for food with both monetary and non-monetary forms of payment, including immaterial transactions such as providing ideas. Other organisations emulated this concept through similar models, with caveats depending on the nature of their services. Such models were intended to provide total financial inclusion.

"Because sometimes what we do is people, like regulars, if [the organisational system] says [they should receive food] weekly on there, or fortnightly, okay, and they're not in, leave it [on the doorstep], no problem. If it's a one-off and they're not in, don't leave it, [the volunteer delivering] can keep it. Because weekly, they'll be like, I'll give you double bubble next week"

Social-assemblage 4: Justin describes the flexibility of PWYW

These inclusive economic models resulted in increased diversity in the custom-base and provided food to people who would otherwise be food insecure. The sustainable operation of an organisation on this basis was precarious. Many organisations faced chronic financial challenges, with some activists accruing personal debts to ensure continued survival of their organisation. This resulted in frequent, contentious discussion about potential modification, or total abandonment, of alternative economic models.

"It's a tough one. What is a fair charge, and how do you avoid victimising or excluding those who need extra help? All the solutions to [addressing the failures of] Pay What You Want come with their own problems and drawbacks… for all its challenges, Pay What You Want has some really powerful benefits… it would be a shame to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater"

Social-assemblage 143: Robin cites concern for the Pay What You Want model

Activists were acutely aware that, whilst they would like to think their efforts alone would sustain their organisations, there was an economic reality to the viability of any activity. Most of the organisations were incorporated as social enterprises, having a legitimate interest in producing profit to sustain activism. In some organisations, activists saw value in stable cash flow, and judged the success of an activity upon the income it produced.

"We didn't make a great deal of money… this was quite disappointing but was indicative of the normal course of events; cafes take less and less money every time they run. Time and time again, we witnessed how customers at the café would donate generously on their first

visit, and then a little less each week after until they felt they had done their job, and stopped providing any form of payment"

Social-assemblage 70: a field note expressing disappointing café income

Activists voiced upset that money and funding was a primary focus of their activities, but also recognised it was simply a practical reality. Some organisations ceased offering alternative economic models, citing financial sustainability as a requisite of undertaking activism in pursuit of environmental sustainability.

"I have randomly spoken to quite a few people in the last couple of weeks in different charities and companies, and everyone has said they started as Pay What You Want *but have had to start charging just so they can become sustainable. They've gone down the road of a small charge. [It] lets people less fortunate still eat and it's not affected the ability to provide food for people who don't pay"*

Social-assemblage 143: Aimee voices interest in trying new pricing models

The use of alternative economic models to provide inclusive services resulted in precarious financial situations for the organisations, with many becoming reliant on other sources of income such as grant funding or loans to continue their operations.

> **Cash income was vital to the sustainable delivery of Community services, generating debate among activists about the merits of inclusive but precarious pricing models.**

3.3.4 Workforce

This theme describes activists themselves as a Community asset. Activists got a sense of purpose and agency out of their work, improved through recognition of their skills and impact. When not respected, dedication of activists was precarious, threatening sustainable staffing.

Image 37: A "house shop" in October, in which Shirley filled the entire downstairs of her house with stacks of crates of food around once a fortnight and invited all the activists to do their shopping. This was open only to those who were actively involved in volunteering, reasoning that they did not usually get a fair chance to use the food services they ran and deserved a chance to shop.

Though a small number of activists were employed part-time by their organisation, the Community had a primarily volunteer workforce. Activists were recruited through existing social networks of established volunteers, or through customers changing their role. Many volunteers had joined the Community through their custom at the cafes and had transitioned to a volunteer role to pay for their food. This was a popular route to becoming a volunteer as, in most organisations, activists were welcome to take as much food as they wished.

"In fact, this week, because I took so much stuff last week, I've barely done any shopping at all. I didn't take fresh fruit and vegetables last week, so I had to buy that in. But I haven't had to buy any bread, any starch or anything. It's good being here."

Social-assemblage 3: Jack describes his shopping to Petunia

Whilst activism was typically egalitarian and valued stakeholders as equals, there were some privileges associated with being an activist. Small incentives were used to encourage a committed volunteer workforce, including providing additional meals during non-service hours, and prioritising volunteers for the few paid employment opportunities.

"I think we have fundamental issues, about people being employed. But they're employed from outside. So, that people inside [the organisation] can't apply for things. [The leadership] make assumptions about what skills people have got, and how they can contribute"

Social-assemblage 66: Caroline talks about employing activists

"The volunteer get a breakfast, we always make sure they're fed. So, we do a lunch service usually from half twelve till about two. Then dinner from about half three till five"

Social-assemblage 5: I describe meal arrangements to a new activist

The workforce was understood to be more efficient when activists were placed in roles suited to their interests and skillsets. Activists appreciated that much of the front-line work required performance of manual tasks, akin to tasks typical of the commercial food industry.

"We need volunteers, especially at Littleborough. We particularly need you for the essential tasks. Cleaning and clearing up, emptying rubbish and compost bins, sweeping and mopping. Please let us know your availability, turn up to help. All contributions are valuable."

Social-assemblage 69: Celia speaks of activist opportunities

Activists were aggrieved when they were not considered for more skilled tasks when the opportunity arose for them to display their broader skillset. Many recognised cultivating a

sustainable workforce depended on activists gaining fulfilment from their work. This was threatened when activists were placed in unsuitable roles which did not value their potential.

"So, it's okay if you're willing to pick up boxes, but if you're offering to help write policy and procedure, you're not needed. And some others do have experience, considerable experience, so, you know, it seems quite patronising at times."

Social-assemblage 66: Jennifer comments on being undervalued

"It's like, you knew that my skillset was doing the [food bank]. Even though I'm a qualified chef. The amount of times I've said, 'why don't we do this?' and they've said 'oh, no, we don't use jars, we don't use packets'. That's the whole fucking point! You use what comes in. Whether it's a packet or what. Them, [leadership], they don't see it properly"

Social-assemblage 75: Kirsten expresses frustration in her role

This need for fulfilment in activism, by placement in a role appropriately suited to individual interests, created a dichotomy between common and specialist knowledge and skills. In some organisations, leadership was recognised by the volunteer workforce as being particularly bad at recognising the difference between the two. This would result in a feeling of resentment by activists towards the authority figures responsible for organising the workforce.

"My understanding is that a [social enterprise] should be engaging with stakeholders. Mainly valuing stakeholders as volunteers. But we've been consistently ignored. We've offered to do various things, and then been told that people who haven't worked for the [organisation], and haven't done anything, have those skills, and that we needn't bother ourselves. And we're fine, you know, mopping the kitchen floor. I just don't feel this can find a way forward."

Social-assemblage 62: Petunia was upset by being asked to do menial tasks

Recognising this, OSFEC Sterling codified its approach to growing a skilled workforce where activists would find fulfilment in their roles. This was intended to provide internal mobility, so activists could work across different services in the organisation.

"Volunteers bring credibility and a different perspective to the [organisation] and its work. Their knowledge and skills may help develop the organisation and services offered and they may have links with the wider community which could benefit future business plans."

Social-assemblage 163: a policy document describes volunteerism

This new approach had the unintended effect of increasing confidence of activists continuing to work in their areas of specialist interest, who gradually took greater ownership of their work and gained greater autonomy over the provision of Community services.

"Russell knows he is able to work without our permission and has our full support at all times. I believe that, when empowered… Russell has been able to expand his culinary practice, and in doing so, we have effectively shown [you] can 'teach an old dog new tricks'."

Social-assemblage 161: a field note describing Russell's activism

The community was reliant upon a dedicated volunteer workforce who were prepared to commit significant amounts of time and effort to delivering activities in pursuit of food security. The dedication of the workforce, and continued sustainable delivery of services, depended upon a sense of satisfaction in activism. This was difficult to achieve, and leadership of various organisations often failed to recognised discontent or disinterest with unstimulating roles.

Activist workforces were incentivised by fulfilling, challenging and meaningful roles which valued skills and interests. When this was disrespected, activists rebelled.

3.3.5 Resources

This theme describes how activists were required to maximise use of scarce material, both as a pragmatic consideration, but also to adhere to the zero-waste principle. This was achieved through controlled movement of food and non-food stuffs in the Community.

Image 38: While the kitchen in Littleborough was undergoing repairs, Caroline and I relocated efforts to a local hall to continue running this café in April. We planned the temporary relocation carefully, to coordinate accessing the various resources we would need to cook and serve the food without a kitchen for a week, The soup cauldron was vital for supporting the move and sustaining services.

Akin to the community's drive to make efficient use of limited facilities and scarce spaces, the use of consumables was a frequent topic of discussion amongst activists. The Community-wide concept of adhering to zero-waste principles meant that many organisations had some guidance establishing what goods could be purchased from new, and which ones could only be rescued or salvaged.

"The bottom line is, you need [cash income] in order to fulfil basic things like, you know, like cleaning products. Make sure people have got that."

Social-assemblage 69: Caroline talks about basic resources

Some of the suppliers who provided food to the Community also donated other resources, such as washing-up liquid, kitchen sprays for the sanitation of cooking facilities, toilet roll, tea bags, and other sundry items that were needed for the sustainable delivery of community food operations. The supply of these resources was less consistent than that of the food, so purchasing these products was occasionally necessary. These purchases were made only when absolutely required. This incentivised activists to use available resources sparingly.

"Vernon had decided in advance to make southern fried chicken with chips; not having all the required foods for this pre-planned meal, Justin and Cheryl went to [a supermarket] to purchase what was needed… I was angry that Justin spent money on food when doing so was unnecessary. He and all the [other] volunteers know food should never be purchased."

Social-assemblage 136: a field note describes purchasing of food

This concept was a codified policy of OSFEC Herndon and OSFEC Sterling as part of their partnership agreement with OSFEC UK, termed '*the Food Waste Condition*'. Although this was rarely enforced in OSFEC Herndon, and not always respected in OSFEC Sterling, activists were aware of the rule and voiced their appreciation of its importance.

"A majority, being not less than 90%, of the food used by the Member must be intercepted, … from sources where the food would otherwise, to the best of the Member's knowledge, have ended up being sent to landfill, sent to anaerobic digestion or fed to livestock."

Social-assemblage 161: an official document describes resourcefulness

This condition was also applied to non-food resources. Activists accepted that resources should be used efficiently and creatively in order to avoid having to purchase them from new.

"Whilst meal planning can often assist in making adequate use of resources, when one commits to making a specific meal with no room for flexibility, purchasing food is sometimes required, hence why the [community] operate[s] on a 'ready, steady, cook' basis."

Social-assemblage 136: a field note describing how the zero-waste principle

Adherence to the zero-waste principle also required activists to consider how unwanted resources left the community when they were no longer valuable. With limited financial capital, most organisations struggled to deal with waste disposal, which had cost implications for the venues used by Community services if it was left behind. Activists sought more sustainable outlets for the disposal of waste, using local connections.

"The pig man is a friend of Primrose's. I think he's over at Saffron Wood Farm. I believe. But as I say, everything gets used somewhere, in some shape or form".

Social-assemblage 3: Shirley talks about the 'Pig Man'

The cultivation of a community which was truly sustainable, both in environmental and operational terms, depended on efficient use of resources, which could be monitored through activists controlling resources coming in and out of the community, in the loose form of a circular economy. Whilst most appreciated this, some struggled with the concept and made decisions which challenged the efficiency of resource use and disposal.

Limited consumable resources meant that activists had to use everything efficiently to deliver sustainable Community services, by controlling movement of material.

3.3.6 Leadership

This theme describes the requirement of the organisations to be driven by strong leaders, who sought to realise diverse visions to ensure sustainable operations and growth. This was often hindered by leaders lacking appropriate skills or sufficient leadership qualities.

Image 39: Russell was the lead on all external catering requests at OSFEC Sterling, such as this Christmas carol service for and by homeless people in December. Although unpaid volunteers, leaders were expected to be responsible for their areas of leadership, and Russell took his catering role very seriously, unlike some leaders who exerted influence but contributed little effort in activism.

The Community organisations had similar, but not uniform, leadership and managerial structures. No organisation had a single identifiable figurehead; each had a group of leaders, serving officially or unofficially. The way in which leaders interpreted their role and used their influence had a profound impact on their organisation's management and sustainability.

"Gertrude commented how fantastic her experience was of being part of the [organisation]. She expressed her difficulties in getting information from [leadership] and felt that better integration was needed to ensure that communication worked in both directions."

Social-assemblage 55: minutes from a volunteer meeting about leadership

Activism was plagued by chronic challenges. From financial shortfalls and adherence to food safety legislation, and insufficient food supply to lack of basic facilities, organisations faced ongoing problems. It was necessary to employ hierarchical management models which placed some activists in a position of authority, to provide oversight of challenges and their solutions at an organisation-wide, or even an unofficial Community-wide level. Most activists who attained these roles found themselves in a position of power due simply to longevity. Most leaders were the founders, or friends of founders, of their organisation. This meant few leaders had been appointed to their role based on merit alone.

"Thirdly… transparency. Before we are to contribute to running costs of OSFEC UK, I would really like OSFEC UK to be more transparent. At the moment I really don't feel I understand the difference between [a similar for-profit organisation in the same geographic area] and OSFEC UK. [I don't understand] their roles, priorities, and their budgets"

Social-assemblage 143: Robin was concerned about opaque leadership

This resulted in the Community having a culture of 'Founder's Syndrome', which many activists recognised as restricting development of their organisation. As organisations grew, evolved, entered new geographic territories, merged, split, and formed new partnerships, some activists questioned the value of having organisations being led by the people who had founded them, particularly when no formal mechanisms existed to remove leaders.

"I have consistently emailed and spoken to both [the] volunteer coordinator, and also the directors about my concerns, around things like lack of policies and procedures, and failure to control coffers."

Social-assemblage 66: Caroline cites concern for poor governance

Many activists had little confidence in the leadership of their organisation, simply dismissing authority of their leaders. This cultivated an '*us and them*' situation, in which activists saw themselves as being fundamentally different to organisational leaders.

"We tried for a very, very, very long time to change things. It was only when I sent off the forbidden email to George, and he called within five seconds, having read the whole seven-page document twice, somehow. And he said 'Jake, why are you doing this? Why don't you just take the good people, and form a new [organisation], which would effectively run the same, but without all the wankers in it, who bring everyone down, and don't want to you progress'. And I thought, yeah, let's do that."

Social-assemblage 78: I explain to Jack how I became a leader.

Activists who were discontent with the leadership arrangements considered how to form new organisations which undertook the same work as the original ones, but with leadership structures which worked to resolve conflicts through placing ownership of the organisation, as far as was possible, in the hands of activists.

"In order to avoid some of the 'them vs us' issues between [leaders] and volunteers, we intend to operate a bottom-up policy with everyone having a vested say in the future of the [organisation]. The directors [would then be] tasked to take that vision forward into reality."

Social-assemblage 56: Justin envisages bottom-up approaches

Food activism required strong leadership, informally at a Community-wide level, but formally at an organisational level, to ensure that challenges facing organisations were resolved, and that the organisations continued to meet their core principles. In reality, the leaders of most of the organisations were ill-equipped for their role, as their organisations had grown beyond their managerial capacities. This resulted in growing activist discontent, eventually implementing new managerial structures to prevent leaders from having too much power.

The challenges of food activism demanded strong leadership, but this was limited by under skilled or inexperienced activists being given inappropriate leadership roles.

3.3.7 Regulation

This theme describes the legal grey area in which activism operated, requiring activists to self-regulate their operations. This was challenging as the Community did not formally "exist", making cohesive governance near-impossible. The food supply relied on adherence to rules.

Image 40: Caroline completes the food temperature checks at a café in November. Justin designed this resource and laminated it so it could be written with a dry erase pen, photographed for food safety records, and then reused without creating waste or printing forms. "Doing the temps" was important for food services as the City Council Environment Health officers could do an inspection.

The Community's acquisition, preparation, serving and distribution of foods meant organisations were responsible for food safety, from moral and legal perspectives. Activists were responsible for acting in ways which were conducive to safe food handling practices, even when they conflicted with the zero-waste principle or the wider aims of their organisation.

"Naturally, we have to act with caution as the food safety of these products is highly questionable, and I have on many occasions witnessed Shirley issuing verbal disclaimers and 'act fast' warnings when allowing fish on the [table at the food bank]."

Social-assemblage 141: a field note describing food safety

Under various pieces of British and EU legislation, organisations had a legal obligation to ensure food safety in the same manner as traditional food businesses. This concept proved challenging to communicate to activists, many of whom believed their activities, which were largely informal, existed outside of the remit of the law. Some activists understood that their organisation had legal responsibilities, compelling them to engage in specific food safety practices. Organisations' recognition and acting upon these needs was often unstructured.

"Caroline agreed that the lack of governance had left the [organisation] weak and vulnerable throughout its expansion and felt that the time had come for the [leadership] to agree to basic policy and procedure."

Social-assemblage 55: meeting minutes speak of a need for governance

One organisation used the sentence "*Using common sense and decades of experience, we make a judgement on whether the food is fit for human consumption*". Whilst admirable, this informal approach to food safety was not compliant with legal requirements, particularly under the Food Safety Act 1990, which required a systematic approach to food safety and the monitoring of individual food handlers by the organisations for which they were working with food. This legislation was frequently mentioned by suppliers when arranging new contracts.

"We ensure that high standards of food safety and hygiene practices and procedures are maintained across all of our restaurants and we therefore require that you ensure that all food collected by you is handled, stored and prepared in accordance with all applicable UK laws, in particular the Food Safety Act 1990, and all other secondary legislation thereunder."

Social-assemblage 80: a guidance document from a supplier

Suppliers recognised third-sector organisations using the food they were donating did not have funds, equipment, or knowledge to match the same stringent standards they applied in their

own businesses. As such, food was supplied only upon agreement that legal liability for the food was transferred to the organisation following its donation. This arrangement required organisations to improve their food safety practices, whilst also providing suppliers with a legal mechanism by which to dispose of the food without fear of repercussion.

"We know you have the best interests of your clients at heart, and will be following the proper procedures to ensure this. Nevertheless, we are sure you will understand why we have to say that any food given to you is donated on the understanding that it will subsequently be treated in accordance will all applicable UK law."

Social-assemblage 81: a guidance document from a different supplier

I was not aware of any allegations by customers that the food served was spoiled or dangerous, nor that it had been prepared or distributed in violation of the law. Individual activists were, however, from time to time asked to address minor acts of negligence in order to comply with food safety legislation, after being seen by another activist to commit a minor violation of the law, such as smoking a cigarette outside the kitchen door and allowing smoke to permeate into the kitchen. These allegations, which were few and far between, caused concern as it was understood that trust between suppliers and the Community was necessary for the continued sustainability of the supply chain.

"We have chosen to partner with you as we believe that together we can have a positive impact by providing food to those in need. Therefore, we are entering into this agreement with you in the spirit of good faith, trust, and cooperation, and on the basis that any food we provide to you must only be used within the charity for your clients."

Social-assemblage 81: a supply contract

Towards the end of the fieldwork phase, activists began to take food safety more seriously, with OSFEC Sterling requiring and funding all activists to complete a Level 2 Food Safety qualification, and compelling chefs to take greater precautions with kitchen hygiene records.

It was essential that activists adhered to stringent food safety practices and complied with legislation, as the trust of the supply chain was dependent upon those liabilities.

3.3.8 Administration

This theme describes how activism was subject to the same legal accountabilities as other incorporated bodies, and organisations were required to do paperwork and regulatory planning. Competent administrators were required to perform these thankless but vital tasks.
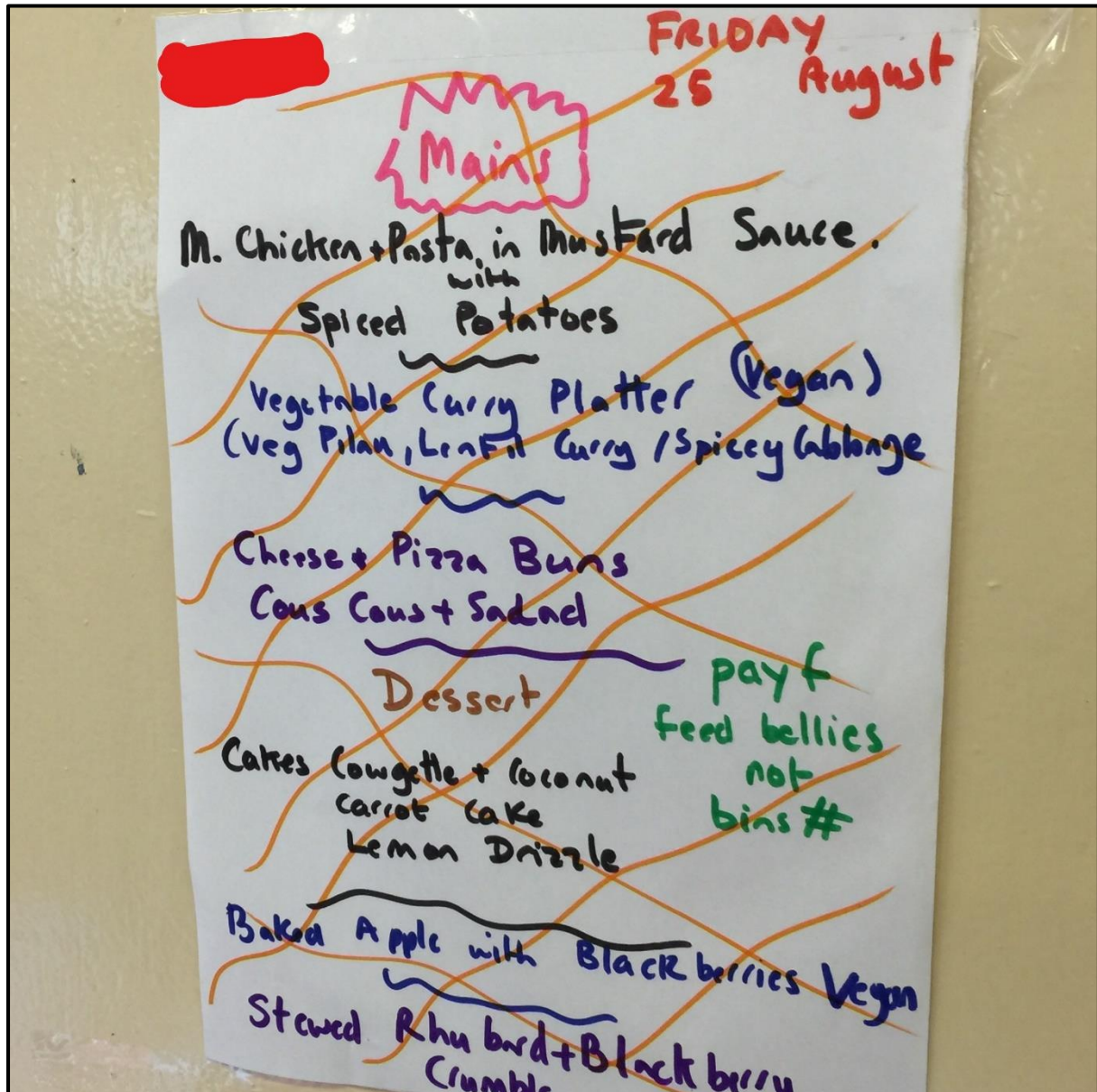
Image 41: In addition to the intercepting, preparing and serving of food, a team of activists worked exclusively on providing the technical non-food-handling support behind services, like writing up the menus for this café in August. Karl was one such activist: a highly regarded figure in the Community whose role concerned unglamorous tasks to make activism possible, like writing this menu.

To customers and the public, activities of the organisations often appeared unstructured, though many were subject to significant planning, scrutiny processes, administration, and were reliant on surprisingly mature virtual systems. Food activism was built upon ever-developing organisational infrastructure.

"So, day to day, we had one [food serving] day a week, so days outside of that, it would be organising the rota, emailing the volunteers, setting up suppliers, making sure volunteers were there to collect that stuff. That sort of background stuff. Dealing with social media."

Social-assemblage 73: Jack lists tasks associated with his activism

Half of the Community organisations were incorporated organisations, legally recognised, established as charities, trusts, Community Interest Companies, or private enterprises. This legal recognition guaranteed those organisations all had at least some administrative requirements, as incorporated bodies were required to provide annual reports for Companies House or the Charity Commission. This meant they were expected to maintain accurate financial records as minimum administration. Most organisations, however, had mature systems supporting them to organise their efforts and capture social or environmental impact.

"Russell… expressed his dismay at the poor planning of events, which was outside of his control. He had concerns that there are no risk assessments or site visits conducted for any event, and felt angry that many events make a financial loss due to poor planning and lack of formal booking infrastructure."

Social-assemblage 55: meeting minutes reveal Russell's upset

These legal obligations, combined with administration of food safety systems to evidence compliance with food safety legislation, resulted in organisations needing to engage in a considerable amount of paperwork. Each organisation had at least one activist who was responsible for administration. Though their role was often hidden from public view, and their identities sometimes not known amongst the wider volunteer workforce, administrators played an important role in documenting life in the Community.

"At the café, it would be, come in, paperwork in the morning, ticking all the things. Getting the paperwork done… when service came along, I sort of would just keep an eye on things. Take over some waters. Set up some food. Wash up… then pack down, paperwork again."

Social-assemblage 73: Jack talks about his documenting of activism

The effectiveness of these administrators to continue processes to meet ever-changing needs of their organisation, differed greatly between organisations. The administrator's role was a thankless one, and one which was not subject to a great deal of scrutiny for fear of an administrator refusing to continue to do their role. This sometimes resulted in infrastructures failing because of a lack of communication between an administrator and other activists.

"Ruby was concerned about the sustainability and logistics of the [new community service] and understood the [organisation] was experiencing difficulties finding [delivery] drivers and running the new routes that had been planned. She would be interested in finding out how this will be developed and resolved."

Social-assemblage 55: Ruby expresses an interest in administration

Virtual infrastructures also played an important role in the public image of an organisation. Maintaining presence on social media and having a website supported both the marketing of Community services and the generation of public-facing legitimacy for the organisation. Virtual volunteering was typically done by younger activists, which provided young people who often could not get involved in food handling activities the chance to contribute to food activism.

Food activism was subject to legal accountabilities, and organisations documented their activity through the important but thankless role of Community administrators.

3.4 Meat: a material of sustainable communities
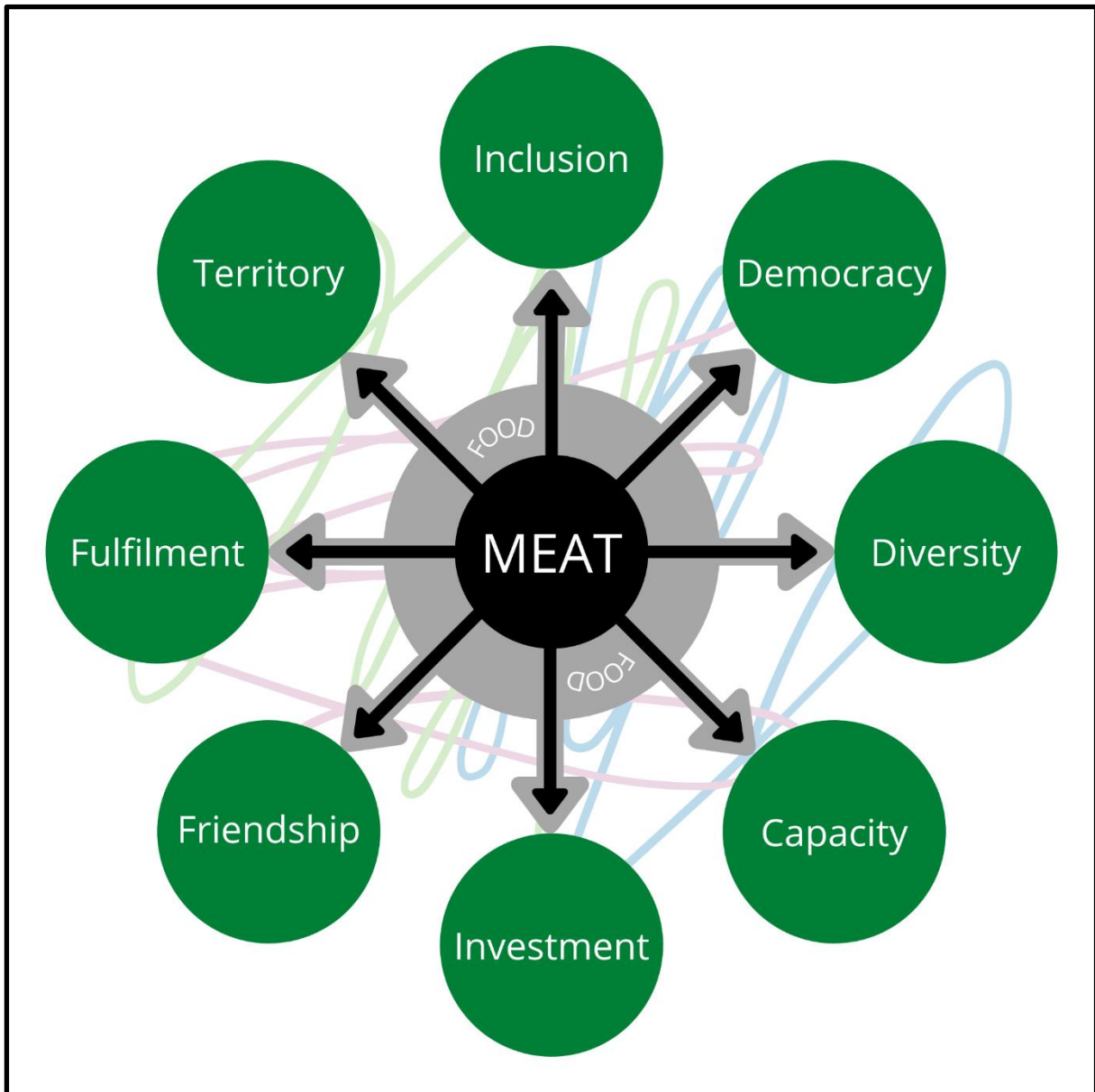
Figure 6: A diagram to show the themes forming the meta-theme "Meat: a material of sustainable communities". The themes here are coded with the colour green to aid interpretation in the following chapter.

This meta-theme illustrates the material importance of local food systems in the development, maintenance, and breakdown of social food movements, foodscapes, and community life. Although this third meta-theme seemingly transitions further from the physical materialism of food, it also highlights the conflicts which existed between the physical and social worlds in the development of sustainable communities. These themes describe conflict between social and physical aspects of sustainable consumption, in the context of community development.

3.4.1 Inclusion

This theme describes the value activists placed on social inclusion, upholding it as a goal of food activism via development of an equitable and sustainable local food system. Realising this idea was complicated by a need for financial sustainability and a satisfied workforce.

Image 42: The lunchtime menu at Littleborough Community Café in February displayed an exciting range of meals on offer, seeking to appeal to a range of tastes, culinary heritages, and diets. This was a common material method of communicating the value of inclusion in the Community, conceptualised through the widely used phrase "*Everyone is Welcome*".

The Community took great pride in its inclusion of people from all walks of life, as customers and activists. The variety of stakeholder roles, flexibility of activism, and use of alternative economic models ensured inclusion in a broad sense. This was complemented by the commitment of Community leaders to accessible routes to volunteering and employment.

"To come and have to ask [for food], my understanding is it's very, you know, demeaning. It's not nice to come and do that. So, the beauty of these types of [activism] is, you're not someone we're handing out to. You're just part of everyone else."

Social-assemblage 72: Jack voices admiration for food activism

The Community's cultivation of inclusive spaces and activities was recognised as a defining characteristic of food activism. The central focus on food meant that all people had some reason to get involved. Activists' understandings of inclusivity differed, with some focusing on inclusion through diversity, and others seeking to use the scalability of the organisations to take food activism to new geographic areas, generating local and regional inclusivity.

"Because one of the things is around inclusion. What we're not getting, is we're not getting people, who do live in the area. So, there are quite a lot of professionals who live and work in the area by themselves. Neighbours down my road, and a few that were coming to the café and have stopped coming [now]."

Social-assemblage 67: Caroline describes geographies of activism

The concept of inclusivity posed as many issues as it solved. Activists frequently complained they were expected to navigate difficult situations with customers who exhibited challenging behaviours, which activists were not sufficiently trained to manage. This was not limited to everyday social challenges typical in Birmingham, such as language barriers, but also required activists to support vulnerable people facing complex social problems, such as absolute poverty and public-sphere violence. Whilst leadership was eager to promote a culture of inclusivity, they were less willing to address challenges activists faced in supporting it.

"There were many challenges of having an "open door" policy and making people from all walks of life feel welcome, but in doing so the [organisation] is accessible to people with mental health issues, learning disabilities, the homeless and non-English speakers."

Social-assemblage 55: Celia's holistic vision of inclusivity in meeting minutes

One inclusivity-related challenge leaders were keen to address was funding through the alternative economic models. Though the models ensured inclusivity regardless of means, the

unpredictability of cash flow made financial sustainability of the organisations precarious. Leaders actively discussed this matter between organisations. No action was taken, as leaders found it difficult to achieve the aims of activism without inclusive monetary systems.

"I would agree about charging for several reasons, one being the sustainability of the individual [organisations]. They offer not only a good meal, but a place for social interaction, that should never be underestimated to its value. Alternative ways of helping those who will struggle to pay and need support can be found, social community groups are good at that."

Social-assemblage 143: Beryl considers the benefits of fixed pricing

Inclusivity became something of a burden to the Community: an ideal for which volunteers were prepared to work, but which presented significant challenges to the ongoing financial sustainability of organisations and the satisfaction of the volunteer workforce.

Inclusivity in the food system was a core value of the Community, but this was hard to achieve without compromising financial sustainability or activist fulfilment.

3.4.2 Democracy

This theme describes how activism developed through reception of feedback, even when ideas were dismissed by leaders. This democratic imbalance reoriented the organisations towards bottom-up approaches in which activists could hold their leaders accountable.
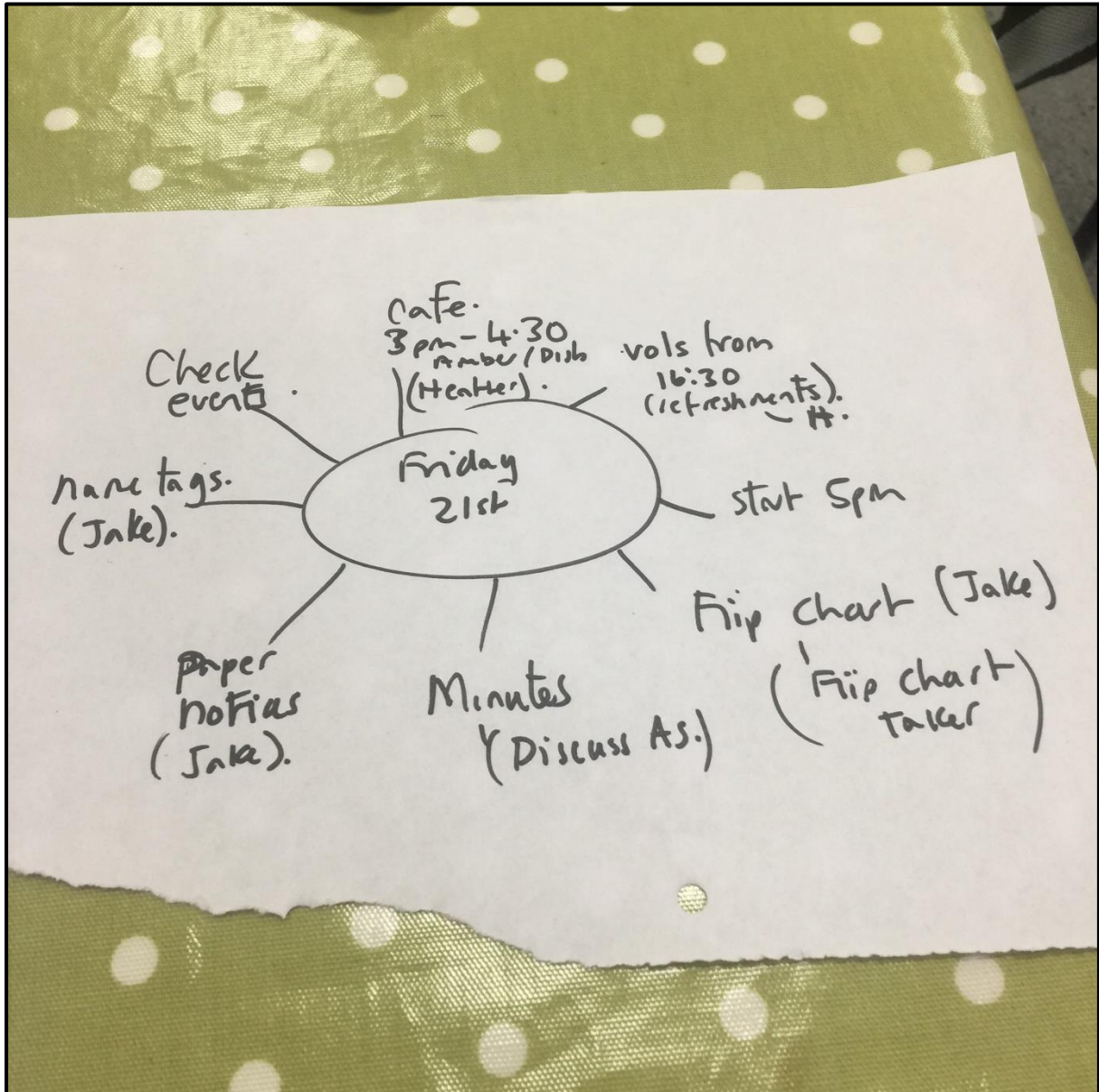
Image 43: Petunia, Caroline and I sat down after lunch in July to plan a volunteer meeting to be held the following week. Although the Community organisations prided themselves on bottom-up participation, in reality many did not value the ideas of newcomers. We arranged a meeting and planned it carefully to ensure maximum participation from stakeholders in that organisation.

Activists understood that their work contributed to broad social and environmental impact. Their volunteering work was not limited to physical activity: ideas were equally as important in the cultivation of food security and sustainable food systems. Despite a desire to see a causal relationship between their physical activity and their wider ideals, activists often struggled to influence the strategic direction of their organisation through the implementation of their ideas.

"We tried really, really hard, me from a [leadership] position, [Jake] with the volunteers, to fix every that was wrong with [OSFEC Herndon], and the more we tried to fix it, the more people were just going the opposite direction. And it was just decided that, look, if it can't be fixed, start again."

Social-assemblage 75: Justin vents frustrations about undemocratic decisions

Most of the Community organisations featured some mechanism by which stakeholders could contribute to the development of the organisation and communicate feedback and concerns. For many, this meant infrequent meetings. These were deemed by some activists to be futile, as they were often attended by irregular stakeholders who were not involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation, such as the friends of leaders. This resulted in a lack of clarity concerning where influence and power lay in food activism.

"Dennis was amazed by how much had been achieved by the [organisation] in the past year but noted growing weaknesses. He expressed his frustration at the lack of clear organisation or structure, particularly in relation to the unknown role of [leadership] and managerial staff."

Social-assemblage 55: minutes from a volunteer meeting describe discontent

Activist meetings, of which I attended many during the course of the fieldwork phase, were often unproductive. An absence of structure, and the presence of external people who had nothing to do with the organisation, resulted in activists thinking of meetings as being little more than lip-service to the democratic ideals on which their organisations were founded. When presented with rare opportunities to test their thoughts, however, activists' novel ideas produced impressive outcomes, questioning restrictions on development input.

"The [food bank] at one stage, when we started, was generating about five pound per day. I had an idea, that I wanted to make a change to. We made the change. It went to turn around about a hundred and thirty quid a day. Because, my perception was that people were taking money, and not doing PWYW."

Social-assemblage 68: Justin describes how his idea paid off

The establishment of OSFEC Sterling meant formal mechanisms could be introduced from incorporation to democratise activism. Methods of engaging volunteers in democratic processes were known to have failed due to no person being held accountable for their continued operation. By making leaders responsible for consulting with activists, and giving activists the ability to remove leaders, the role of leadership changed from being that of executives, to facilitators of activism. This approach was introduced as the "bottom-up rule".

"The overarching philosophy is that this will be a bottom-up concept. So, at [OSFEC Herndon], the people at the top make all the decisions, and we just have to put up with them. Here, bottom-up, volunteers will make all the decisions, and as co-directors, Justin and I will make it happen. So, our role would be more, enabling, rather than executive."

Assemblage 85: I describe to Jack how the bottom-up rule will work

Though many organisations upheld volunteer voice as a resource for developing community services and acting upon community needs, in practice democratic engagement was rarely realised. Mechanisms existed for activists to contribute feedback and ideas: poor leadership created barriers to participation in such processes by prioritising thoughts of individuals with tenuous links to the community. Some organisations sought to reform these practices and implemented workable platforms to guarantee activists a voice in determining strategic direction of their organisation. In this sense, the sustainability of an organisation could be determined by how or whether it valued and acted upon the voice of its primary stakeholders.

Democratisation of activism gave activists greater ownership and potential to innovate, but this was hindered by poor leadership which held itself unaccountable.

3.4.3 Diversity

This theme describes strongly voiced appreciation for diversity in the custom-base and activist workforce, central to the cultivation of inclusive eating spaces. Achieving diversity was fraught with challenges, and local micropolitics often jarred with national political discourses.

Image 44: A curry served at the "shifty ifty" a late-night community iftar event in April, celebrating Ramadan at St Gerald's Church to break daily fast. Justin referred to this event as "shifty" in relation to a small number of parishioners voicing that hosting an Islamic event made them uncomfortable. However, the event was a success and displayed the ethno-religious diversity of the Community.

Though demographic characteristics of individual participants were not recorded as part of the ethnography, the diversity of the Community was visible in food services. The Community served as a microcosm of the West Midlands population, with representation from all major ethnic, religious, cultural, and socioeconomic groups. There was also representation of sexual and gender minorities, and activists had diverse educational backgrounds. This diversity was near-universally recognised as a strength of the community, but there were varying conceptions of what diversity was and how it should be promoted.

"Caroline said she was fully committed to the aims of the [organisation] and expressed her support for the diversity seen in the cafes"
> **Social-assemblage 55: Caroline voices her support for diversity in activism**

Activists appreciated diversity, often citing the term in meetings and conversations about the social impact of their work. The leadership of organisations also placed heavy emphasis on diversity in the custom-base and activist workforce. It was recognised that a diverse custom-base was vital for the sustainability of an organisation, with a particular focus on socioeconomic diversity. Through the Pay What You Want model, this would ensure that those with little financial means could be subsidised by those who could contribute.

"When the food is good one week… high-quality ingredients – there's a more diverse range of customers attending the café the next week. When the food is just reusing the leftovers of another meal, the custom-base suffers, and the homeless crowds turn up in the masses."
> **Social-assemblage 12: a field note reflects on socioeconomic diversity**

The atmosphere of a Community service was also dependent upon some form of diversity. This was particularly true in the cafes, which promoted the concept of 'dining in dignity' by providing restaurant-standard food and services on a soup kitchen pricing structure. To cultivate a professional restaurant-style atmosphere, a custom-base comprised of people from all walks of life was necessary to create a socioeconomic balance.

"To some people, the vibe of the [community] café changes. We had a very similar thing. We started off with a real mix, and then we kind of saw more people really in need, and less of the ones, kind of, coming for the social and environmental aspects of it."
> **Social-assemblage 68: Jack reflects on the 'vibe' in his cafe**

This approach Community services to act upon the needs of the 'haves' in order to provide for the 'have-nots'. Services deemed to have the greatest social impact were those that catered

for the cultural dominant majority. When an organisation failed to recognise this, the diversity of the custom base suffered, generating further hardships.

"The customers we used to have – and their diversity – disappeared a long time ago. Now we get 'the dregs'; the drug users, alcoholics, and homeless [people] who see us as a given; people who will always be there to feed them and [leaders] think can be treated like dirt."

Social-assemblage 73: a field note describing a lack of diversity

Activism itself was also conducive to the concept of valuing cultural diversity. Activists voiced their appreciation for their work giving them opportunities to display their own cultural heritage throughout their traditional culinary practices and learn about those from other cultures. The food cooked was typically a reflection of the cultural diversity of the activists, or the customers for whom they were cooking.

"[Working in the community café] is really good for me, to do Gujarati food. Because it lends itself really well to vegetarian and vegan food. I grew up eating it. That was our main diet. My favourite is vegetarian food. If I couldn't have vegetarian, it would be Indian food every time."

Social-assemblage 4: Champa describes her culinary heritage

Diversity was not just important to, but essential for the sustainability of, activism. A diverse Community enabled cultivation of welcoming and inclusive spaces which facilitated sustainable flow of assets. The strive to maintain a diverse custom based also resulted in volunteers catering for the more affluent customers, improving food quality and services standards for all customers, which was conducive to the 'dining in dignity' concept.

Activists recognised the value of diversity in the local food system in cultivating inclusive eating spaces, but this was fraught with challenges with no simple answers.

3.4.4 Capacity

This theme describes the crucial role of capacity building in food activism. Food was recognised as an intergenerational, long-term challenge, but most activists were older people. Upskilling younger activists to "continue the fight" was an important but challenging task.

Image 45: Priscilla showed off a starter course she prepared with Russell's help at a community café in the new Hammersley South venue. The older activists were keen to upskill and empower younger activists, knowing that their innovations added new ideas to food activism and would enable them to take over and expand the community food services in the future.

Activists recognised their work pursued long-term goals. One of these was capacity building, through the transition of stakeholders from passive to active roles, and the upskilling of younger activists to take on greater responsibility. Though membership of the community was intergenerational, many of the more skilled activists were older people. There was an urgency to upskill younger activists, and those without formal education, to take over the organisations and the running of the Community to cultivate a sustainable skilled workforce.

"Tracey expressed her appreciation of being involved in [an organisation] where there is always something to learn."

Social-assemblage 55: Tracey voices her views in a meeting

The alternative economic models enabled customers to pay for their food in 'time, cash, or skills', and OSFEC Sterling later added 'imagination'. This meant the organisations employing the models were required to offer opportunities for customers to undertake ad hoc volunteering tasks or transition to longer-term volunteering posts. Activists were keen to promote this concept by encouraging customers to learn new skills and get involved in the running of the Community whenever possible.

"They're clearing rubbish, and they're going to clean tables. Because otherwise they just sit there. I'll find them something to do… doesn't matter if there's thirty people in here, and I'll always be rushed off my feet… last week I had a six-year-old helping me count pennies."

Social-assemblage 1: Caroline got the customers involved

Informal capacity building was important for the long-term development and sustainability of the workforce. Activists recognised their efforts must be intergenerational to have ongoing impact. To grow, the community needed to better engage individuals beyond the traditional scope of the activist identity. The involvement of volunteers from working-class backgrounds was particularly relevant when considering how paid job opportunities were allocated.

"She felt it was essential that paid posts were advertised in the manner prescribed by law, and that opportunities for paid work should be offered to volunteers before recruiting externally. She pointed out that many people in the voluntary sector do voluntary work in order to build up to paid employment, thus simply handing out jobs to the acquaintances of the [leaders of that organisation] was not beneficial to this ethos."

Social-assemblage 55: an activist voices her concern

The leadership of organisations often did not appreciate the value of capacity building, typically assuming activists would happily continue to perform the same roles indefinitely. Activists, however, understood the value of continuous opportunities to learn new skills. One organisation sought to act upon this valuation, by giving activists greater autonomy over their own activities and promoting the concept of continuing professional development.

"… [Russell] was treated badly at [OSFEC Herndon]; an old man who cares deeply about his community and the people that make it so… it is pleasing on a personal level that through [OSFEC Sterling], he is able to explore his ideas and incorporate his professional experience into making our company, and struggling communities in Birmingham, a better place."

Social-assemblage 150: a field note observes Russell's role in training

The routine upskilling of existing activists, and promotion of the transition from customer to volunteer role, was necessary for the cultivation of a sustainable workforce which could adapt to meet the evolving needs of the Community. Activists recognised an obligation to upskill younger generations and non-traditional volunteers to ensure inclusivity, and so that the efforts of food activists would not be lost following the departure of the older generation of activists.

Capacity building was necessary for the development of a sustainable workforce which could meet the changing needs of the local food system, upskilling activists.

3.4.5 Investment

This theme describes the personal assets of activists. Although this should have been limited to time and effort, some activists made financial investments, knowing they were unlikely to ever see a tangible fiscal return. Some organisations became reliant on this form of revenue.

Image 46: The launch of a support service at The Heavens, by an external community partner, is celebrated with a lunch buffet provided by OSFEC Sterling for free in November. Activists appreciated that their efforts were an investment in local people and communities. There was a keen sense of trust between organisations that small investments of food and material would return impact.

Activists conceptualised their time and effort as being about more than simply acute fixes to social and environmental issues; their work was part of a wider cultural transition to sustainable diets. They appreciated this may not be realised in their lifetime. Activists understood their effort was a personal investment for collective societal and community gain; activism was thereby an investment in the Community food system.

"Yes, our staff have always been paid, our bills have always been paid, but we tread a very fine line every month and directors regularly go without. Personally, I've had to step back as I've given more than is humanly possible. I've become mentally and physically ill. I don't want to step back. I really believe in what [food activists] are doing."

Social-assemblage 143: Jane describes the personal sacrifices of activism

The Community organisations used alternative economic models which guaranteed universal inclusion at the expense of financial security. The cash flow of many organisations was unpredictable, but operating costs were typically fixed. This resulted in the leaders of many organisations having to address financial deficits using their own personal income, or where they were paid employees of their organisation, taking no wages until cash flow improved.

"I will be brutally honest as requested. I am currently not in favour of donating to [OSFEC UK] for three reasons. Firstly, practically, we have no money. We've invested about one hundred thousand pounds this year in scaling up, sixty-thousand of which was from loans, fifteen-thousand of which was out of my personal savings."

Social-assemblage 140: Robin rejects organised Community investment

These financial deficits, and the personal sacrifices made to mitigate their effects on the running of an organisation, made leaders hesitant to undertake further commitments. This provoked local, regional, and national debate over the need to establish a central fund into which activist organisations could make regular contributions and withdraw them when facing acute cash flow problems. This proposal, for a hybrid of a credit union and an activist insurance scheme, gained support only from those who would not be contributing to it.

"If all the [food activist organisations] gave 1% of their taking as was suggested about two years ago, would that make a difference? [Organisations] would decide what it was 1% of, but those who believe in [OSFEC UK] and George might find that quite acceptable."

Social-assemblage 143: Peter suggests an activist credit union

This debate, which persisted for some time but eventually dissolved with no action being taken, made many activists question exactly what it was into which they were investing their time, effort, health, and in some cases their money. Discussion led to questioning over the legitimacy of activists making personal investments. Some activists wondered whether it was even possible to achieve organisational sustainability without individual volunteers making personal investments on which they were unlikely to ever see any returns.

"I've been told on several occasions over the past two and a half years, that [the Community] wants to invest in [our organisation], and in 2016 we were given a model business plan to roll out. The issue has been for us that the business plan was not workable, and the materials needed to roll it out didn't exist. From an outsider's point of view, it doesn't look like it worked all that well for [another organisation], it almost hasn't worked for us, and we have continuously sacrificed salaries, health and basically our lives to keep it going."

Social-assemblage 143: Jane expresses upset over her own investments

Despite the hostilities building in the Community around this matter, some volunteers remained optimistic. The activists who engaged in this reorientation of organisational development appreciated that the time, efforts, and money they personally invested into their work were realising returns, but not necessarily in kind as monetary outputs.

"Because one of the things about this is, yes, it's Pay What You Want. With money, time, and skills. But at the end of the day, we don't turn people away. And so, by doing something for someone today, you don't know what's going to come back in good later."

Social-assemblage 75: Justin sees a return on his social food investments

The Community required investment from activists, initially in order to become established, and later to develop and grow. The nature of this investment could be limited to time and effort, but many organisations found themselves becoming increasingly reliant on volunteers making significant financial sacrifices to guarantee the financial sustainability of the organisation. This resulted in some food activists accruing either large personal debts, or large organisational debts for which they may bare some personal liability.

> **Personal investment was required to launch and maintain activist organisations, and this sometimes meant activists risking their own health, money, or mental wellbeing.**

3.4.6 Friendship

This theme describes social connections which formed between food activists and the communities they supported. Activists developed close friendships outside of foodscapes, which served as both a means to celebrate impact and reflect upon challenges.

Image 47: A bag of homemade vegan mince pies, a Christmas present in December from Deborah and Priscilla to me. Deborah described how her involvement in OSFEC Sterling had given her "*a new lease on life*" and showed her appreciation and friendship with me and Justin through meaningful gestures. I considered Deborah and Priscilla friends and enjoyed working with them.

The Community facilitated close relationships through volunteering work and custom of the food services. The experience of being a food activist was characterised by broader social interaction with people of similar interests through "common ties", often outside the scheduled food-related activities. This facilitated a sense of belonging and a common identity.

"One of the biggest things I used to love about this [organisation], was the fact that, at one stage, when the [organisation] was a bit smaller, it was like a big family, wasn't it? Everyone used to work together, used to get the job done, everyone used to muck in."

Social-assemblage 66: Justin speaks of the friendships in food activism

Activists were motivated by a variety of social, philosophical, ethical, religious, and philanthropic causes, using food as a common material to uphold the values and principles of a wide range of positions. This intellectual diversity meant most activists would never have met without food activism to give them "common ties". Food activism cultivated a common sense of identity through the micro-political navigation of local foodways.

"The charity curry nights always get a good turnout, and many familiar faces show up. In addition to the usual St Gerald's congregation, Rainie, Celia, Caleb and the other Americans all came to support Fakia. We sat together, and there was an obvious marked area for Foodie people, this was unintentional but showed identification with being part of a network."

Social-assemblage 14: a field note from a charity curry event

In the scoping exercise, I resisted social interactions with activists outside the scheduled Community services. They increasingly pressured me to engage in Community social life, inviting me to join them for a drink at the pub following cafés, or go to events with them at the weekend. Though I was initially hesitant to do so for fear of 'going native', in March 2017 I realised this wider social life was an integral part of being a food activist, and I started engaging in broader social activities with participants to capture this element of the social experience.

"There's some really nice pubs. We went last night, Jadine and I. We wanted a non-food drink. We didn't want to talk about freegan boxes, or nothing like that."

Social-assemblage 5: Caroline talks about activist social life

Once I started interacting with activists outside of formal scheduled Community services, it became more apparent that camaraderie was an important for this experience. The out-of-hours social interactions served as a means for activists to celebrate the successes of their

impact and vent their frustrations with barriers to further growing and developing their organisations.

"After finally caving in and agreeing to socialise with my participants outside of 'work', they had opened up to me a lot more. The camaraderie of the weekend seems to have changed their perception of me quite a lot – I'm no longer Jake the researcher, but Jake the friend. I played into the role a little bit to see where it might go."

Social-assemblage 12: a reflective field note on activist social life

This approach certainly supported the building of rapport with participants, and further confirmed my Community membership. I developed close friendships with activists and having the opportunity to observe and interact with them in a less-pressured environment allowed me to recognise the friendships they held with each other.

"[The food was from] Shirley's house. If you give me a list, I can pick up some things for you in the week. Anything you like."

Social-assemblage 9: Primrose offers to do my shopping

Activists relied on friendship as an important functional social feature of the volunteering experience; camaraderie was a central characteristic of the Community. Forming friendships which transcended formal volunteering arrangements enabled food activists to reflect upon both the rewarding and frustrating elements of their volunteering posts in an informal and typically non-judgmental manner. Friendships were necessary for sustainability of the community, which relied on a cohesive workforce of volunteers who used similar activities to achieve goals from a diverse variety of ideological positions.

Many activists developed close friendships outside their scheduled activism, which served as a means to celebrate social impact and reflect upon potential challenges.

3.4.7 Fulfilment

This theme describes the sense of purpose activists got from being part of the Community. The most effective incentive was simple organisational recognition of an activist's efforts, commitment, skills, and knowledge. Consumption was also deemed a form of food activism.

Image 48: The Green Growers in June, working on their vegetable garden in Walpole, one of the most deprived parts of the City. These plant-focused activists took great pride in their work, which was laborious, as it beautified the otherwise run-down local area and gave residents something to enjoy. Numerous vandalism incidents upset the Green Growers after putting in all their hard work.

Being an activist was a flexible but demanding role. Though they were not explicitly required to give any particular amount their time, there was an expectation activists would volunteer on a regular basis. The alternative economic model supported this concept, providing food in return for regular and reliable volunteerism. Community leaders recognised the organisations had to offer something to activists to encourage commitment and loyalty to their work. There was an unspoken Community-wide agreement that food activism should be fulfilling.

"But we also want it to be fun, as well… I was in the [food bank]. The people who worked there, or volunteered there, used to have a laugh. A laugh with customers, customers used to have a laugh with them."

Social-assemblage 67: Justin remembers good times at the FoodStore

A broad sense of fulfilment could be found in the formation of friendships and camaraderie. Community leaders recognised that volunteering, to guarantee a sustainable workforce, needed to be enjoyable. This created an incentive for organisations to engage in the promotion of volunteer welfare, facilitating fun in the activist experience.

"Sammie wanted to echo what other volunteers had said about how exciting and fun the work used to be. Despite initially feeling great to be part of a wonderful [organisation], he expressed his disappointment that the [organisation] had begun to fall apart."

Social-assemblage 55: Sammie expresses how he used to feel fulfilled

This sense of enjoyment did not necessarily require material investment in an organisation, although OSFEC Sterling created a "Volunteer Winter Fuel Fund" to provide financial support if needed to pay activists' utility bills. Simple incentives served to motivate activists and encourage continued commitment. A 'thank you' went a long way towards making activists feel their time was valued and appreciated, and their efforts had the social impact they sought.

"Thank you to Bill, Faith, Jake, Christina and Fran for providing the refreshments at St Gerald's yesterday. We learnt, if you want buns with your butter, Bill's your man! Thank you also to Russell for making the super cake, not much of that left. Justin and Reggie for ensuring we got a generous supply of hot cross buns, and to Shirley for knowing what other supplies we would need."

Social-assemblage 16: Caroline conveys her thanks to the catering team

Though Community leaders typically recognised a need to incentivise the workforce, they did not always ensure the incentivisation happened consistently, nor did they react quickly to changes in Community services which had a deleterious impact on activists' experience.

"When I think back to the 'good old days'… and compare it to now, it seems a different world. A place that used to be full of happiness and laughter is now a miserable space where people come to be sad and upset together."

Social-assemblage 73: a field note expressing my diminishing fulfilment

Activists who experienced a lack of fulfilment in their activism were prone to becoming withdrawn. The lacking mechanisms for feeding back discontent meant unhappy activists often did not have any means of formally communicating desire for change. Often, the solution to an absence of fulfilment in the volunteer experience could be found in giving volunteers greater autonomy over their work and allowing them to determine how to reimagine their role.

"Russell felt that a business approach was desperately needed to resolve many of the issues the [organisation] faced. He also felt that many volunteers with catering qualifications, skills and professional experience were not having their knowledge respected, which led to many volunteers being simply ignored."

Social-assemblage 55: Russell felt his skills were underused

Activists who were given opportunities to determine their own role using their skills and experience were typically those who continued to give more time to their organisation. Those who experienced a lack of fulfilment through unstimulating or unchallenging roles were often the first to leave the Community, or transition back to a customer stakeholder role. A sustainable workforce could only be achieved by activists finding fulfilment in their work, which could be achieved by leaders granting volunteers greater autonomy over their positions.

Activists needed a sense of fulfilment from their role to be incentivised to commit to it. This was supported by giving greater autonomy over their role in the food system.

3.4.8 Territoriality

This theme describes hostilities which arose between organisations and external partners, over adequate access to storage spaces and cooking facilities. Activists routinely allowed their own homes to be colonised by the Community, with organisations dominating those spaces.

Image 49: A stack of crates sit at the bottom of the stairs in Shirley's house in October. The Community inhabited and overwhelmed the spaces it temporarily visited, and most activists, myself included, found their personal homes being filled with Community assets for lack of storage space. This formed territorialities which sometimes created tensions between Community organisations.

The chronic lack of storage space and cooking facilities meant that volunteers were increasingly expected to use their own houses to facilitate activism, with the Community colonising their personal homes. Food activism had a reputation for 'taking over' the personal spaces owned by activists, and it was common for them to store cooking equipment, food, and other supplies in their own homes.

"We are short of aprons… they're in my house. They're in my house, on the clothes horse. And possibly Shirley's house. But… there's a few here."

Social-assemblage 3: Celia washed kitchen aprons at home

Limited access to space had a wider impact on activists lives that I had initially imagined. Even simple routine tasks associated with food handling, such as washing tea towels, storing table clothes, storing lesser-used foods like rare spices, and maintaining a base for events equipment like gazebos, were hindered by a lack of permanent space. Community services, however, could not be operated sufficiently without these basic elements necessary for the maintenance of systems. My own home featured a tall stack of empty green food crates throughout most of the fieldwork phase, having accumulated following their use at events in the Black Country but the organisations having nowhere to store them. Shirley's situation was well-known, running her 'house shop': a food market in her living room.

"[OSFEC Herndon] had effectively taken ownership of the facility; as was the case at Littleborough, which dominated operations (locking cupboards, taking items, creating their own rules) without respect or consideration for the owners and other tenants."

Social-assemblage 79: a field note describing this colonisation

Community spaces were also colonised, with the various organisations taking often unwanted ownership of cupboards, basements and closets in local community centres and churches. The organisations subsequently became reliant on activists and community partners to store their resources. The sustainability of community services depended upon the Community colonising space which did not belong to it. This territorial expansion was met with tensions over the 'ownership' of rights to use those colonised spaces, creating territorial claims.

"Anyway, when Henry said, 'you can't [use my space] anymore', we were like, what are we going to do? And mum said, 'well, I don't really want to do it, but you can do it out of the kitchen'… as it happened, there was stuff in the kitchen, there was stuff in the lounge, in the conservatory. There was stuff in the garden!"

Social-assemblage 75: Justin tells Kathy and Seth about 'house shop'

Some activists allowed the continued colonisation of their homes by permitting their organisation to run Community services there. This further confirmed an existing sense of localism in the services and cultivated a personalisation of domestic foodways. With Community services being held in activists' homes, the experience of 'shopping' transitioned from that of lining up at a food bank, to the personalised experience of going to someone's house to get food. Customers appreciated activists had allowed this colonisation of their personal space, but activists became increasingly uncertain about leaders having control over their personal spaces. Territorial expansion was critical for continued sustainability of services.

> **The Community tended to colonise spaces it visited, dominating activists' homes. This made food services more personal, but also took over activists lives and spaces.**

3.5 Meat: a material of sustainable cultures
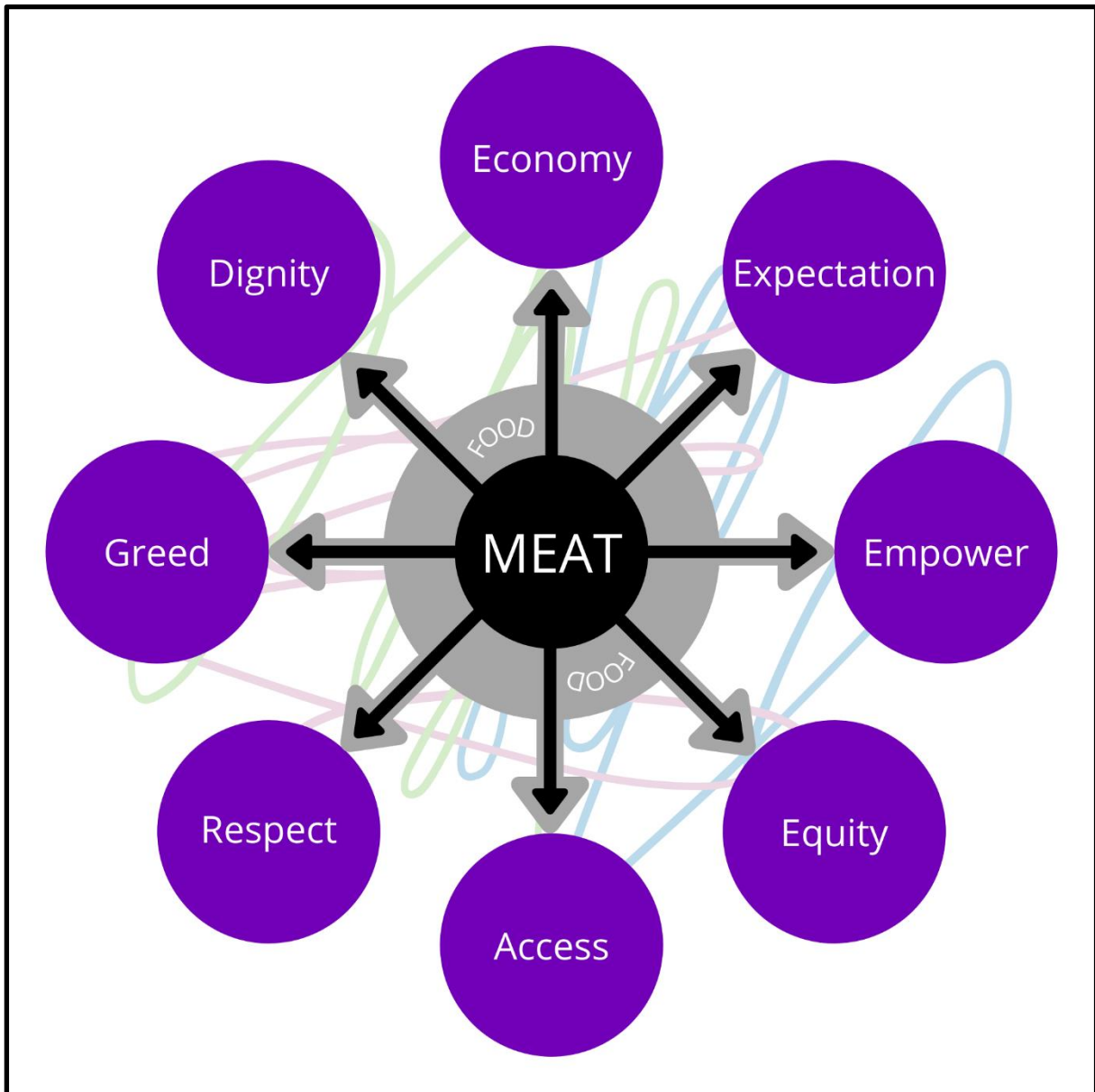
Figure 7: A diagram to show the themes forming the meta-theme "Meat: a material of sustainable cultures". The themes here are coded with the colour purple to aid interpretation in the following chapter.

This meta-theme concludes the materialisms of the cultural meanings of meat consumption, by recognising the relationships between food, diets, food systems, communities and wider culture. These themes concern the connection between national and international discourses, and materialisms of food at a local level, forming a material bridge between the microphysical and macrosocial worlds which ultimately characterise meat as culture. Activists used food to interpret cultures beyond those of the Community to navigate 'big' questions.

3.5.1 Economy

This theme describes the role of capital in wider economic contexts, and relationships between the national economy and the local food system. Activists were conscious of, but frequently sought to deny, the disconnect between local-level need and national-level support systems.
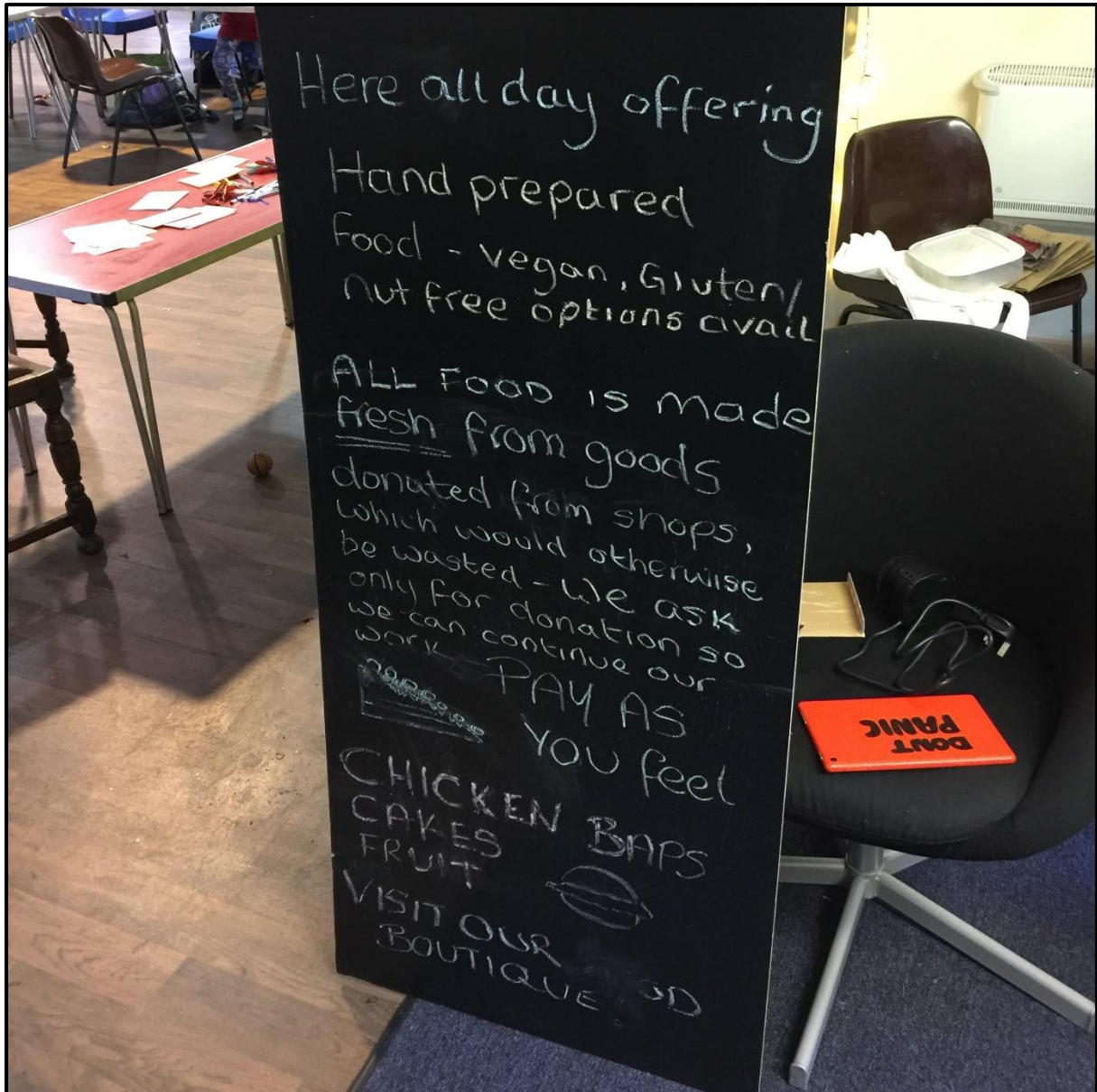
Image 50: OSFEC Sterling puts up a sign at a Fun Day in October hosted by a group of artists, telling customers about circular economy concepts employed in food activism. It clarifies that the nominal donations, which might include cash money, are used only to support further activism that enables the interception of more food to produce more meals.

The Community had no external sources of income in the form of statutory support. All organisations were self-funded and had to generate income to remain sustainable. Organisations were either grant-focused (financing activities through funding from regional or national philanthropic bodies) or donation-focused (financing activities through small nominal monetary PWYW donations). Every organisation experienced financial worry: this challenged the ongoing sustainability of the organisation, and its ability to deliver food services.

"*Well, I used to be, amongst other things, also the Treasurer, financial director, what have you. And a lot of the money that used to come in was from things I'd set up, such as FoodStore, Fruitful Boxes, markets. We had six Trustees. The other five were not interested in making any money at all. I was the only one that talked about it and did anything.*"

Social-assemblage 74: Justin describes to Jack the need to generate income

Many activists worked or previously worked in the public sector. Common occupations of activists included teaching, civil service, social work, health care professions and local government. These activists had experience of working with tight budgets, but few had experience of income generation. The few activists that came from private sector backgrounds vocalised concern that leaders did not take seriously the relationship between income generation and organisational sustainability.

"*While we will be financially sustainable in time, we aren't yet, and every month rent, payroll and taxes are a tremendous struggle that keep me up most nights. Until the point where we can pay our own bills, it is hard to consider paying someone else's.*"

Social-assemblage 146: Serena talks about losing sleep over money problems

This created an ideological battle between activists: those who thought money was essential in delivering of services, arguing against those who perceived money to be complementary to or unnecessary for the fulfilments of their aims. Organisations managed by leaders who did not perceive finance to be of great importance where typically those which experienced financial instability. Following significant financial concerns of some organisations in the summer months, financially-minded activists dominated organisational strategy in the Autumn, as more organisations employed business-like approaches to community development.

"*We are a business, albeit a community interest business… we want to do right by the community, because at the end of the day, they're our customers, our bread and butter. We need to make money in order to expand and do other stuff for the community.*"

Social-assemblage 63: Justin rationalises income generation

Financial planning meetings, annual budgeting exercises and transparent banking practices were all characteristic of this business-like approach to financial management. There was a concern amongst many activists, including those who advocated for this approach, that too great a focus on financial matters could diminish focus on Community needs and the fulfilment of activist goals. A need existed for activists to balance fiscal responsibility with social impact.

Organisations remained sustainable for as long as they balanced the social impact of activism with the realities of fiscal responsibility, a highly challenging demand.

3.5.2 Expectation

This theme describes how activists made sense of the people who used food services, and the "hand out" culture activists believed was inequitable. This raised questions regarding a notional "right to food" and interacted with national political discourses around social support.

Image 51: 'Pigs in blankets' were served at a community lunch in August, a rare but popular food to find on a Community food service menu. The dish was prepared with two sausages for each person, but numerous customers asked for extra helpings. Kitchen volunteers had to explain to them that this was not possible, as extra helpings for some customers meant no helpings for others.

Customers were generally appreciative of the food and were thankful for the activists preparing it. Some, however, were less enthusiastic, communicating varying perceived entitlements to food security. It was felt by some activists that those customers had either developed dependence on Community services or had simply never been grateful for them at all. Expectations developed in the custom-base, which saw specific culinary, organisational, and social standards become an anticipated and often codified part of the customer experience.

"He shouted at you or something? I don't get crabby in [discount fast food restaurant], know what I mean? Because I'm thinking, the prices they sell food at. And here, I think… really?"

Social-assemblage 4: Christina expresses her frustration

Despite their desire to deliver food services of the highest possible quality, activists expressed discontent with customers who held unreasonable expectations of their organisation, without matching that expectation with gratitude. This was mostly felt to be unfair on other customers who were appreciative for the support the Community provided to them.

"Customers were… selfish and greedy. At OSFEC Sterling [community services], customers are generally fair and do not take more than what they require. At events run by community partners, we find this is generally untrue. One man and his daughter, for example, felt the need to 'try a bit of everything' on offer. Subsequently others, would have to go without."

Social-assemblage 126: a field note describes unreasonable expectations

This was a difficult experience for food activists to make sense of and navigate. Putting time and effort into preparing meals to support people who were then rude or overly-critical about the food they received for free or for a nominal donation, could sometimes feel demoralising. Caroline, who worked outside the Community in a day job supporting people with learning difficulties to navigate the complexities of the welfare system, was able to explain this experience to other activists. She reasoned the dysfunctional welfare system in the UK created tensions which people resolve with encultured hostility: a form of learned helplessness.

"You've got to see it like, you need to know what they've been through. Because I tell you… I get this in my [work]place all the time. I know it's one to get your head around, but seriously, I mean honestly, they don't mean it."

Social-assemblage 35: Caroline explains how she interprets rude behaviour

When she conceptualised their perceived unreasonable expectations this way, thinking around the rude customers was altered for some volunteers. Activists recognised customer behaviour could be the result of systematic barriers to support beyond the Community.

"This is how they get treated, they know what's coming… if they don't make a fuss, so asking questions, chipping away at you, it's their way of getting hold of stuff. Sad, really… I know you lot don't want to talk about it, but that is what you get from this [UK] government."
Social-assemblage 35: Caroline considers the political nature of stressors

Over time, many activists became accustomed to unreasonable, but not dangerous, hostility from some customers, but came to see their behaviour was born from experiences of inequitable treatment beyond the Community. This appreciation for systematic injustices in the food system, welfare provision and other forms of material support, allowed food activists to reconcile tensions with customers and delivery Community food services in environments with people with diverse and complex health and social care needs.

Customers were sometimes overly-critical and had unreasonable expectations about what the Community could provide, but this came from a position of social insecurity.

3.5.3 Empowerment

This theme describes the agency afforded to activists in "taking back" their local food system, and the value that control over material assets had in empowering them to affect change. Many activists took a "glocal" approach, addressing global challenges at the local level.

Image 52: The buffet prepared one lunchtime in April when the leaders of OSFEC Herndon were away. Buffets were usually prohibited as Michael did not trust customers to self-regulate consumption. However, Caroline, Christina and I were keen to give the concept a try, and the absence of leadership empowered us to try something new, which was well-received by customers.

Food activism gave Community stakeholders a sense of control over the food system. Until engaging in activism, many stakeholders did not sense of lack of agency in decisions about food. Being part of the Community empowered activists to be part of something 'bigger than themselves', connecting their ambitions of local development through social activities to global challenges, using food as a material of "glocal" affect. Activists spoke of how this process of collective, macrosocial actualisation enabled people and communities to develop.

"I do sometimes find that people want to come, and sort of, tell people what to do, and think. And I think that's not it, I think we should be enabling and growing people. And facilitating them to be not depending on us. That's what this is all about, giving them a choice."

Social-assemblage 15: Caroline talks about giving agency

This was valuable in urban localities perceived to be excluded from participatory decision making in Birmingham, including many of the neighbourhoods where the Community food services were delivered. The empowerment in this sense was not limited merely to the food system, but broader inclusion in local development and urban regeneration. Although this valuation and perception of the power of the food system was felt across the Community, activists differed in their thinking about how best to support it. Most activists took a relaxed position in which food support and associated social activities themselves were, and further created, a form of empowerment, whilst some steered more towards paternalistic support.

"It's both fascinating and sad that food – the whole central function of OSFEC Herndon – has become nothing more than a device with which to control people."

Social-assemblage 72: a field note describing Celia's views on support

"Celia struggles with the concept of giving people what they need, not what they want. Celia likes to decide what people need, and then goes out of her way to convince them it's what they want. I don't know if that's really how you get people to those who need it, really."

Social-assemblage 58: Jack reflects on his first week working with Celia

Reconciling these differences concerning how best to achieve community empowerment in the food system and other social matters resulted in ever-growing and worsening tensions forming between food activists and their organisations.

"I actually would be quite worried, if Celia said anything now. I'd have a pretty miserable time of it. I kind of enjoy what I do. My vision is… enabling and involving people. That's about community building. And unfortunately, I don't think that we've been able to explore that."

Social-assemblage 58: Caroline responds to Jack's concerns

If tensions about methods of empowerment grew to the extent that Community food services became compromised by activists refusing to work together, a formal meeting might be called

to resolve them. This was typically a small-scale, selective-invitation meeting concerning only those involved in the immediate debate. However, other food activists saw value in opening up the conversation about empowerment, making it a Community-wide participatory exercise.

"We've tried to do things before, we've tried to do self-serve buffets and all sorts of things. And the concept of the FoodStore, where people could come and take their own shopping. [Leaders] don't like any of it. They like people asking them for stuff, and having to… it makes you feel very uncomfortable, because they want people to be reliant on them."
Social-assemblage 47: I explain my concerns about paternalism

There was a sense of misunderstanding and conflict about what empowerment was and how it might be achieved. Activists often held strong views about empowerment and how best to use the food system to achieve it. My observations of this process resulted in me coming to see that their fraught tensions over this concept may have, in a wider Community sense, generated a more multidimensional approach to empowering secure and sustainable diets.

Activists believed their work empowered communities to take control over the food system, but disagreements about methods of empowerment created social tensions.

3.5.4 Equity

This theme describes how activism made consumption fair and attempted to resolve inequities in the food system by giving local people control over otherwise uncontrollable systematic injustices. Food activists recognised that the food system does not feed everyone adequately.

Image 53: A large turkey at the carvery station for Celia's birthday party in March. Russell obtained premium cuts of meat from donators for this purpose, and although some customers complained that it felt unfair for the resources to be used for Celia's private event, activists agreed that Celia deserved high-quality catering for her party in recognition of her substantial contributions to food activism.

Distinctions were made between the 'real' food system, which was considered inequitable and characterised by unfairness, and the Community food system, which actively sought to identify barriers to health equity. This process was complicated by activists' diverse ideas about what equity was and how it could best be achieved. To some, equity meant distributing Community food services across new geographic localities rather than centring them in a small number of neighbourhoods on the periphery of the City centre, like Littleborough. This was seen to create fairness between different parts of the City.

"Our aims are to continue to work for the prevention of avoidable food waste and utilise that waste within mobile boutiques, allowing us to reach a wider audience who historically have not come to us."

Social-assemblage 66: Justin talks of the need to work in new areas

The equitable provision of food also meant considering people who would receive it. There was contention in March regarding the food used to cater for Celia's birthday party. Some activists praised Celia as a high-profile member of the Community and felt using high-quality food to celebrate was fair. Others cited concern for the vulnerable people who used services in Littleborough and noted they had not been invited to the party, which was for Celia's friends.

"*Because we're doing this [preparing food for Celia's party], and I know what, you know, it's about. But it feels a bit… yeah? Just thinking about them people down the centre, they'd be honestly like, what the fuck? If they saw this [high quality carvery meats]. I don't know."*

Social-assemblage 10: Faith felt uneasy about preparing the party food

Although this was contentious, it was also important to support equity in the administration of activism itself. If activists did not feel that there was an equitable balance of power, agency, or participation in decision-making, they could simply decide to withdraw their labour.

"Whilst I thought it was still useful and going somewhere, I was prepared to continue my involvement, however I do not believe that the key voices within the project are going to allow the project to go forward in anything other than their own vision."

Social-assemblage 73: Justin describes why he left OSFEC Herndon

Equity in the food system, in both material and social senses, was therefore necessary for sustaining a custom-base and a workforce. This was evident in the summer when Justin's sudden departure resulted in the whole Community food supply grinding to an immediate halt, due to a single activist citing disillusion. If customers felt they were receiving an inequitable

stake in the food supply, the primary goals of the Community had effectively been compromised. If the activist workforce felt an inequitable division of power in the Community and organisations, they could disrupt activism, compromising food security for customers.

Activists recognised inequities in the 'real' food system and worked to identify barriers to equitable food security, including that between activists and customers.

3.5.5 Accessibility

This theme describes unique characteristics of Community food services that provided access to food to people who had otherwise been denied reliable engagement in the food system. Activists ran conceptual and systematic access assessments, ensuring 'everyone is welcome'.

Image 54: A stall at the community Heritage Day hosted by St Gerald's in July, with a food boutique from OSFEC Sterling. Stalls like this were held outside year-round, and always in a publicly accessible location so that no customers had to enter unfamiliar spaces or navigate uncomfortable questions in order to access food. At OSFEC Sterling, it was noted that everyone was welcome.

Activists recognised the challenges of food insecurity had no simple solutions, as the causes were multidimensional and transcended the influence of the Community. This resulted in lay appreciation of the social determinants of health, with activists understanding that access to food was limited by influences beyond knowledge or financial means. Activists had good critical consciousness of structural barriers to accessing food and sought to disrupt them.

"[We] wonder why people are going hungry in this day and age, when there's absolutely no need for it. It's criminal, absolutely criminal. I couldn't afford to buy some of the stuff that I would see as luxury items."

Social-assemblage 3: Shirley describes food poverty as 'criminal'

Celia was particularly good at this, having a keen sense of the role of relationships in facilitating or preventing access to food. She often opined that vulnerable people needed supporting to access Community food services, and that the first action to take in that regard was activists cultivating welcoming spaces. Although most activists agreed with her, they voiced discontent based on Celia's focus of achieving welcoming access by activists changing their own behaviour, rather than creating environments and systems that supported access to food. This, they felt, suggested the preconceptions of activists were the structural barriers to access, which made them feel blamed for causing the very social injustices they sought to challenge.

"Celia [said she] thought it was every volunteer's responsibility to manage their own behaviour as all volunteers are working towards the same goal of reducing food waste. Celia stated her belief that every person should feel welcome, and volunteers should not come in if they are feeling stressed or ill. She suggested that all people have prejudices and often don't realise the impact they have on others."

Social-assemblage 66: In meeting minutes, Celia describes prejudice

Recognising Celia's position that activists themselves had implicit biases which prevented access to food, but struggling to reconcile this with their altruistic intentions of food activism, some imaginative activists considered ways to support access to food that mitigated personal biases by taking the food directly to the customer.

"We've sorted out some stuff to go… to do all the boxes. One hundred and forty. We did [get good cash donations] last week. They pay a fixed amount for mileage. Then it's up to them. It's entirely up to them."

Social-assemblage 6: Shirley describes the Fruitful Box scheme

This would support people to access food without requiring them to navigate structural barriers. The Fruitful Box scheme was one such method of addressing access barriers. By customers signing up, including a mechanism for anonymous sign-up, they did not have to negotiate or justify their need for food, thereby removing perceived social biases which prevented access to it. In this way, customers who could not attend regular food services in-person due to employment or care commitments could access food without being questioned about in-work poverty and being subjected to reductionist forms of means testing which did not recognise their hardships. This resulted in improved access to food that encouraged customers to engage with other Community services such as the cafes or 'house shop'.

Participation in Community services was supported by identifying access barriers that prevented customers from getting food, and activists would imagine solutions.

3.5.6 Respect

This theme describes how activists appraised and supported translational social values of food and eating, feeling that the way people ate reflected their civic engagement and perceived social positioning. This obligated activists to convey respect for customers and each other.
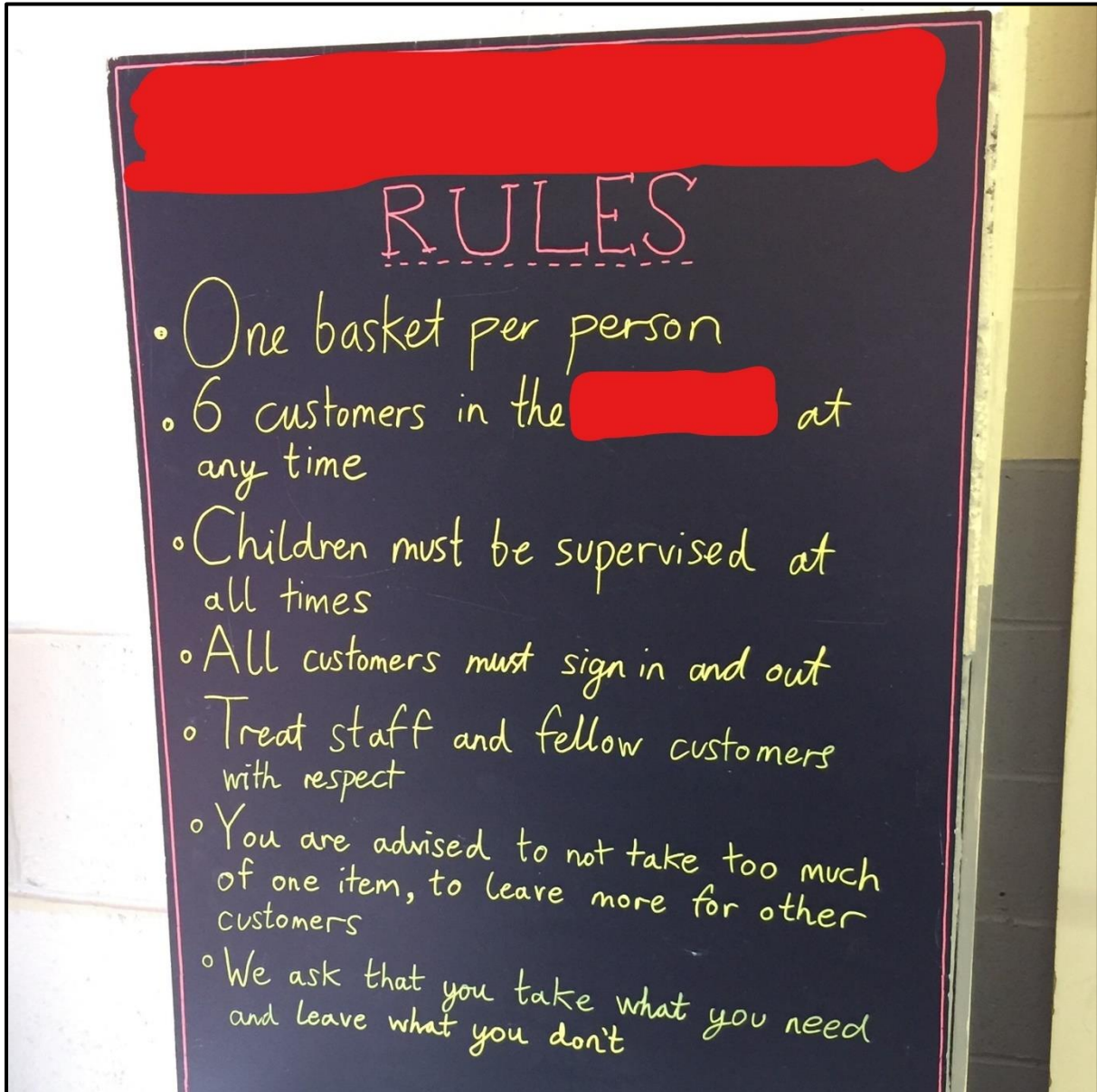
Image 55: A list of rules appeared in the FoodStore in August. When she ran it, Shirley felt customers were best respected by trusting the recognised mutuality in the Community to guide equitable consumption, and did not feel a need to write down rules to govern it. After she left, Celia wrote this list of rules which, whilst polite, communicated distrust in customers' ability to self-regulate behaviour.

The Community existed in a peculiar social space in which it was both highly visible to the people who were part of it, and seemingly invisible to the rest of the City, commanding significant involvement from local people whilst receiving little recognition from external authorities. Food activism was a form of unrecognised civic engagement, which obligated people to behave respectfully despite the unusual location of not existing in traditional spheres which would guide social etiquette and behaviour. Activists were expected to respect each other and the customers, and in a sense, behave as if they were professionals in a workplace.

"Well, he did shout at me. I let them all in early because it's cold. But then they start faffing around over tea and coffee. And he said that the tea tastes funny. And everyone was saying, well, some people were saying it doesn't. So, I said, okay, I take on board what you're saying. I'll switch it off, but you'll have to drink water till the urns boiled. Oh, I just can't make a cup of tea! [She imitates the hysterical customers]. I lost it."

Social-assemblage 17: Caroline describes disrespectful customers

As described in other themes, the Community was centred around a common valuation that food security was a human right, and people in the Community should have this right respected simply for the condition of being human: the numerous philosophical concepts activists devised such as 'dining in dignity' and 'everyone is welcome' were designed to meet this valuation of humanity. Realising it in practice, however, was less straight-forward. Some customers exhibited challenging behaviour which was felt to be disrespectful of activists' work. Celia was well-known for her phrase "*at the end of the day, we're all just volunteers*" and other activists agreed that their volunteerism commanded greater depth in respect from customers.

"Well, I pulled him out the other week, didn't I? They were giving a load of grief, so I said, if you don't like it, I said, we're all volunteers. I'll take me apron off and you can get in the kitchen. And they all go, oh no, we don't want to go in the kitchen. I said, you ain't coming in the kitchen. He's got no intention of coming in the kitchen."

Social-assemblage 13: Celia talks about commanding respect from customers

In a Community based on "common ties" and mutuality, (dis)respect could make or break an organisation and its work. Disrespect for Shirley's effective running of the FoodStore in April was the cause of her leaving OSFEC Herndon, and disrespect for Justin's work in June was the cause of his resignation, with both of these departures being resolved by those activists forming a new organisation which would be respectful of its stakeholders. When activists' contributions were recognised and respected, they felt appreciated, maintaining their labour.

"*Christian expressed the great sense of community that the project gives him. He gets a lot out of being part of the project and feels appreciated.*"

Social-assemblage 66: Christian felt respected for his activism

Respect for and in the Community was key to forming the mutuality which characterised food activism. If Community stakeholders did not feel respected, they could easily disrupt the social-assemblages of activism, threatening food security and the sustainability of food services.

Food activism was a form of civic engagement, obligating Community members to respect each other's involvement, needs, skills, interests, urgencies, and humanity.

3.5.7 Greed

This theme describes rare occurrences of perceived unreasonable consumption in the Community, which could usually be explained by people being failed by formal institutional structures, needing more health and social care support than food activists could offer.

Image 56: Chicken, available to customers at a food market in December. The supply of this meat was unpredictable. Shirley would put out the chicken, which was very popular with her shoppers, and ask people to only take what they genuinely needed. This was occasionally disrespected, and customers were sometimes greedy. Shirley was known for her fair approach to food distribution.

The unofficial Community-wide agreement that people should be able to take as much food as they needed was near-universally respected. Occurrences of consumption perceived to be greedy were very rare but occasionally seen, often by the same few customers and activists. This happened in and between organisations. Some customers had mature knowledge of the food services, and food-related support provided by organisations beyond the Community.

"Well, [Ethan and Mitch] are always up in the city. They are, if you go and take food to the homeless, they're there. If you go down to Alan Street [soup kitchen], they're there. It's not meant for that. It's like a hobby for them."

Social-assemblage 18: Celia describes Ethan and Mitch's 'tourism' of food services

Ethan and Mitch were two such customers, who Caroline claimed "*knew where to get free food in the City, 24/7*" because of their comprehensive insights on food in the third-sector. Activists disagreed over whether this was a form of greed, resourcefulness, or indicative of complex social support and welfare needs.

"[Ethan] came in, then he asked for like, takeaway lunch or something. And then Celia went crazy at him. She was like, he can't have any more, because he never puts anything in the pot. And he was like, but I've got to, because I'm working the night shift. I can't imagine him working anywhere really."

Social-assemblage 74: Jack and Celia were not sure how to support a customer

Differing interpretation of greed in Community services resulted in activists disagreeing about how best to support customers who engaged in it. Whilst some activists felt it was best to give customers what they wanted to support them; other activists recognised that greed from one customer meant food insecurity might be experienced by another.

"And it's like, nappies and that. Because this one woman, bought a jumper off me, four of her girls are pregnant. Four daughters, all pregnant. So, like, I put a few nappies in for them. They put some money in the tin, but out there, someone would just grab it."

Social-assemblage 123: Kelly describes greed beyond food needs

Sometimes, activists themselves were seen to be greedy, expecting the Community to provide services and support beyond that which was normal. This was a highly contentious matter given the considerable amount of time volunteers gave to the Community, with some committing to more than 60 hours of food activism, reasonably expecting something in return.

"Petunia had initially asked the company to provide the food free of charge on the basis that Hearing Hands has no funding. It was explained to her at the time by both Caroline and I that … everything has a cost to the company and the people involved; a minimal PWYW donation would be required… Petunia responded to this by resigning as a volunteer."

Social-assemblage 152: Petunia temporarily resigns over a dispute about money

As described in the theme 'expectation', however, activists generally recognised the rare perceived greedy behaviour usually came from fears of food poverty, experiences of the welfare system, and other social constructions of precarity. Greed was an indicator of deprivations which activists could try to support but might be beyond their agencies to change.

People occasionally exhibited greed in their consumption, and activists disagreed about how to support them, recognising this was the result of social deprivations.

3.5.8 Dignity

This theme describes how the Community used food to communicate and uphold human dignity. Activists undertook recognised connections between microsocial and macrosocial constructs and acted on the premise that food security and sustainability gave people dignity.

Image 57: The dining room at St Gerald's, ready for a lunch café to begin in May. The table clothes and plants were placed there by Petunia after careful flower arranging. The kitchen team running that service recognised eating was a social experience and upheld their belief in 'dining in dignity' by decorating spaces where consumption happened, communicating the social value of food.

The ethnographic thick description and numerous themes have explored the concept of 'dining in dignity' which was prominent across Community organisations. The term referred to perceived indignities communicated by well-meaning traditional third-sector food services, such as food banks and soup kitchens. Activists recognised the good intent of those forms of support, but felt they were undignified for disrespecting the agency and value of customers. The Community sought to be 'different' in this regard, putting great effort into the quality of their food, services, and support to uphold the social value of experiencing the food system.

"He's very sort of bossy [about] how his food is being prepared, and anything like that. So, you're having to do, and you're having to think. I'm not a chef. I just slop it on the plate. And I give it out. And I'm sorry for that, but you just have to remember where you are."
   Social-assemblage 6: Christina discusses the low-importance of food presentation

Based on the assumption that the way people experience food reflects how they experience the rest of the social world, activists were keen to mask Community activities which sought to address social deprivations. The motivations for many activities were hidden from public view, such as in this example where Kelly describes how she would lie to customers in order to support them in ways which did not make them feel embarrassed or ashamed to receive help.

"I was putting stuff away for people who were out on their arse. I've been round here long enough to know there are people who are too proud to come in and get stuff. And like, this one woman, she had nothing. And I mean literally fuck all, she has absolutely fuck all. On the bones of her arse. And I made out, I'd make up bags for my regulars, and I put all the staple things in there. So, I says look, I says, I do this every week for the regulars. She says, I got no money. I said, that's not the point, I said, please take the bag with you."
   Social-assemblage 123: Kelly supported her shoppers and valued their hardships

This further spurred the imagination of activists, who sought to move their food services as far from traditional food support as possible, by professionalising Community food services. The photo illustrations of dishes in the month-by-month thick description are provided for this purpose. It should be observed how the quality of the meals changes over the course of the year: as each month passes, the presentation of dishes improves, and they become more colourful, aligned with the transition from OSFEC Herndon to OSFEC Sterling, and Russell's subsequent push for the 'dining in dignity' concept to become a central rather than peripheral vision. Activists imagined a future where their food services were of the highest culinary standards, communicating social value to customers and promoting food as social justice. They understood that this was what differentiate them from traditional food aid organisations.

"[A similar organisation in Leeds] does cafes in the evening, and they've got professional chefs. Some of their cafes that do bistros, candle lights and that sort of stuff. Lobster and steak. Can you imagine if we did lobster and steak in Littleborough?"

Social-assemblage 67: Justin thinks about offering high-quality meals

The Community had successfully reimagined the food system as a social asset which communicated value, upheld human welfare, and supported people to thrive. This, they believed, could be best supported by 'dining with dignity', and running food services which championed quality food to empower customers to take ownership of their local food system.

Activists placed high valuation on experiences of eating reflecting social life and sought to respect this by supporting food security and sustainability with dignity.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This chapter discusses the results, relating thematic outcomes to the research question: "*What are the cultural meanings of meat consumption in the Birmingham Foodie Community?*". It acknowledges the introspective nature of ethnography, providing reflections of the thesis and the processes used to produce it. In relation to the topical positioning outlined in the review, and the thematic structure outlined in the results, this chapter synthesises conclusions about the cultural meanings of meat, and the implications of those meanings in development of planetary health frameworks. This chapter ends the thesis with the outcomes of the study, viewing cultural meanings of meat as nuanced and complex beyond the scope of traditional health promotion theory and practice, reaffirming urgencies for the reframing of health in the Anthropocene by materialist valuations of "healthing" to support sustainable consumption.

4.1 Interpretations

This section directly addresses the primary research question, considering meaning in materialist contexts aligned to the thirty-two themes outlined in the results chapter. These are interpreted using the Circuit of Culture framework outlined in the review (below) through which meat is understood as an artefact of culture with shared meanings. Using the materialist theoretical positioning, it is theorised that meat supports nuanced affect economies in and between social-assemblages. The cultural meanings of meat are presented holistically, both as meat creating culture, and being created by culture.

Cultural meanings of meat (As interpreted using the Circuit of Culture)		
	Cultural production	*How is meat culturally produced?*
		How does meat produce culture?
	Cultural identity	*How is meat culturally expressed?*
		How does meat express cultural identity?
	Cultural consumption	*How is meat culturally used?*
		How does meat use culture?
	Cultural regulation	*How is meat culturally controlled?*
		How does meat control culture?
	Cultural representation	*How is meat culturally communicated?*
		How does meat communicate culture?

Figure 2: A table describing the further breakdown of the research question in accordance with "moments" of material interaction according to the Circuit of Culture (Hall, 1997).

4.1.1 Meat as cultural production

This sub-section interprets how meat is produced culturally, and the role of meat in cultural production. It identifies meat as having complex functional material properties in the production of social experience of, and beyond, the food system. Meat is dependent upon close materialist interactions between physical matter and social actors to produce sustainability.
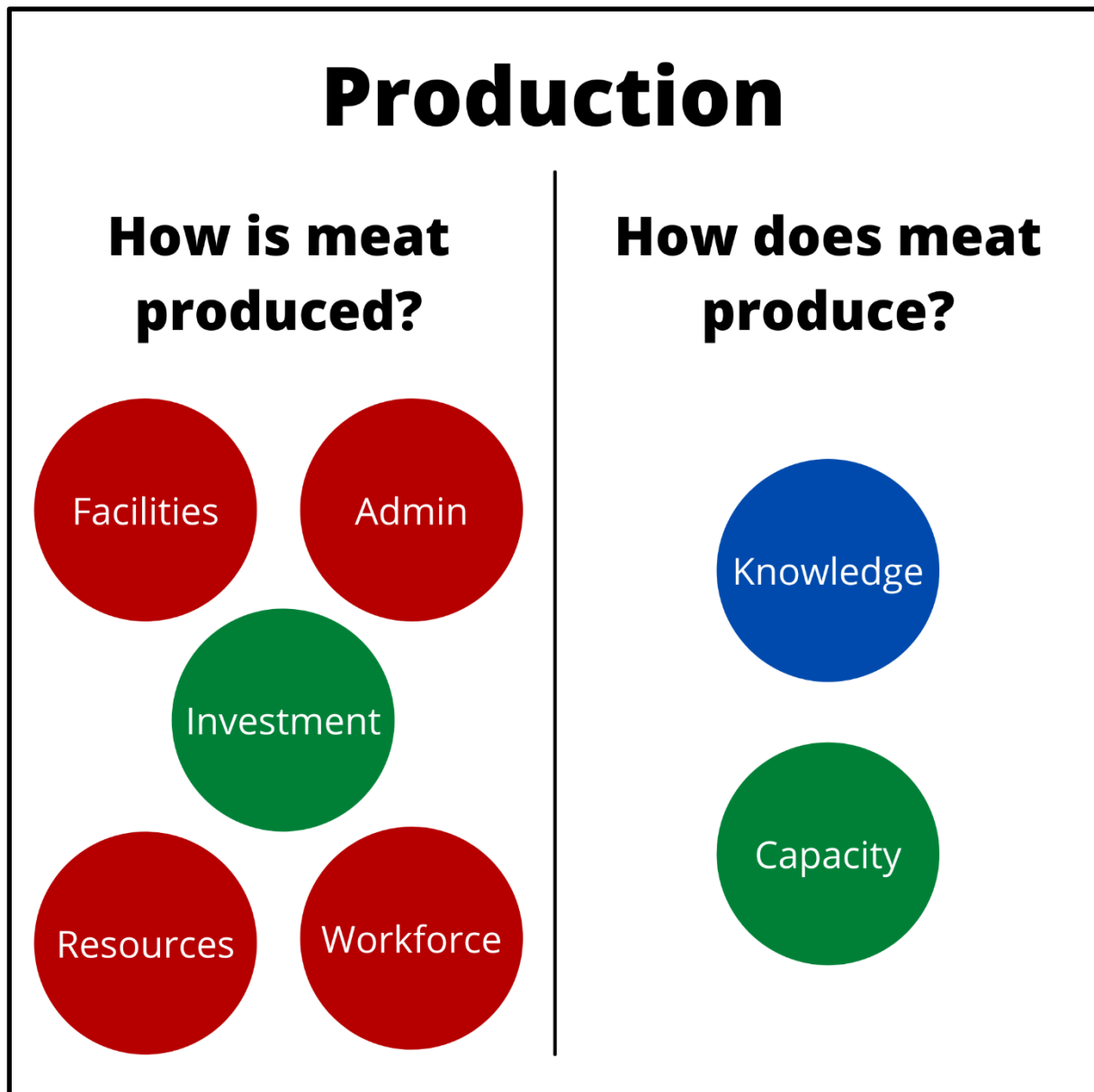
Figure 8: A diagram to show the themes interpreted through the Circuit of Culture to have meaning in the form of meat as cultural production.

How was meat culturally produced in the Birmingham Foodie Community?

How did meat produce culture in the Birmingham Foodie Community?

This interpretation concerns not only how meat was physically produced through culinary practices, but the social processes which resulted in its access through to making it available for human consumption. The analysis showed complex affective flows between the physical materials of food activism, and the food activists who used it to navigate social-assemblages to produce food sustainability. The analytical process highlighted diverse matter needed to produce meat, and the complexities of the involvement of food activists and their competing motivations. As matter with social affect, meat was able to produce social experiences, which are here interpreted to relate to the social function meat played in supporting capacity building and knowledge exchange in the Community. This interpretation finds meat is both produced by culture via material interactions and produces culture by affecting capacity building.

Meat is culturally produced using facilities

Meat was produced through activists accessing, developing, and maintaining food preparation facilities which were scarce and valuable assets. As with all foodstuffs, meat was transported, safety checked, prepared, cooked and distributed in physical locations, which was challenging to access with secure, ongoing availability. Contacts in the Community were used to find and access hidden facilities which could be used for this purpose, although they were typically run-down and in a state of disrepair following years of disinvestment by the public sector agencies which had originally controlled them. Activists would often invest their own time and resources into the regeneration of these facilities to serve as community cafes. The production of meat was facilitated by investing Community funding and time into the development of those facilities, which ensured sustainable food production and distribution.

Meat is culturally produced through administration

Meat was produced using complex logistics which were planned and coordinated by activists responsible for administration of food interception and distribution. Considerable effort was required to obtain and efficiently use resources to produce food, requiring logistical oversight by Community administrators who were tasked with unseen, but highly important, bureaucracy to navigate the local food system. The administrators also coordinated efforts of activists to maximise social impact. Unlike other stakeholder roles, the administrators were excluded from collective conceptions of food activism, and often felt unappreciated despite the importance of their role. The production of meat was dependent upon providing bureaucratic support to

navigate complex regulatory barriers to food security and ensure compliance with standards which might otherwise threaten the longevity and sustainability of the Community.

Meat is culturally produced through investment

Meat was produced reliably because of some activists investing personal financial resources in their organisation to support its survival. Although most organisations were operated on a not-for-profit basis, they required financial capital to cover significant overheads associated with accessing and distributing food, not least to comply with regulatory controls and satisfy environmental health standards. This required investment beyond the nominal donations most organisations obtained under the alternative economic systems they had developed, and such financial capital often came from the food activists themselves. Some activists were so important in this process that their organisation became dependent upon them for continued survival. The production of meat was reliant on a small number of financially secure and altruistic activists who supported food activism using their personal finances.

Meat is culturally produced using resources

Meat was produced only when the requisite resources were readily available and could be accessed by activists without restraint. Food, money, and cooking equipment were not the only consumables needed to run the Community operations. Wider resources were needed, including cleaning products, signage and communication materials, fuel to transport food, virtual infrastructure to market food services, and resources for the Community gardens. There was little financial capital to purchase resources, and activists would need to obtain them through donations, waste re-use and general innovative resourcefulness. Without wider consumables, Community services were crippled until those resources could be obtained. The production of meat was dependent on activists obtaining wider resources needed to facilitate the local food system, typically through philanthropic or regenerative means.

Meat is culturally produced from activist labour

Meat was produced by activists who recognised its social role beyond that of nutritive value. It was commonly agreed across the Community that people were the most valuable asset in food activism: without their labour, skill and commitment, no food services would be operated, and no food security maintenance, enhancement or creation could take place. Though there was no codified unifying standard of activism across the Community, it was commonly agreed that activism should be fun and fulfilling, and respect individual agencies to determine personal involvement. Where those principles were breached, activists would often respond with temporary non-participation, hindering food services. The production of meat was entirely

dependent upon the goodwill of food activists from diverse backgrounds, with a range of motivations which were often conflicting within and between Community organisations.

Meat culturally produces knowledge

Meat produced knowledge exchange by allowing activists to share insights on food and the food system with Community stakeholders. Knowledge of food, cookery, the food system, and local communities was a prized asset, without which little activism could happen. Many activists understood that good intentions alone did not have the potential to create change in the local food system, nor deliver food services that could provide long-term food security and sustainability. The use of meat and other foods as learning materials facilitated exchange of important food systems knowledge in and between social groups, allowing development of food services. Meat produced opportunities for knowledge exchange in intergenerational, intercultural, and interprofessional contexts, allowing for one group to learn and innovate food sustainability from the knowledge of the group that preceded them.

Meat culturally produces capacity

Meat produced capacity by providing opportunities that empowered activists to make their Community more resilient and sustainable. A lingering concern in the Community was its longevity, due to community food services being heavily dependent on a small core group of activists. It was routinely recognised and discussed that some "passing the baton" was needed, mostly from one generation of activists to another, but also between socioeconomic groups as activists sought to empower customers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Inviting new activists to showcase their culinary heritage was key to this capacity building activity and expanding food activism. Meat produced capacity building by enabling new social actors to engage in food sustainability, through celebration of their cultural heritage and culinary identities, expanding the activist base and introducing food activism into new social groups.

Meat and cultural production: reflections on the extant literature

In Harvey and Neo's *Political Ecologies of Meat*, MacLachlan (2015) argues that meat is situated in a capitalistic agricultural-economic complex, which encourages wastefulness and food systems inefficiencies. By comparison, this ethnography examined the micropolitics of meat in community ecologies, where it was found to contribute to a wider affect economy which, conversely, incentivised resourcefulness. The theme *Sustainable Systems: Resources* considers how the scarcity and associated relative value of meat required skilful and efficient use of other Community assets to produce, serve and eat meat, suggesting a material dependency in which a scarcity of meat drives material resourcefulness, but an abundance of meat drives material wastefulness as per MacLachlan's observations. This ethnography

corroborates MacLachlan's position that meat is situated in economic complexes, but furthers these social-physical entanglements, finding these complexes may encourage both efficiencies and inefficiencies in the food system, depending upon the material context of meat.

In *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (2000), Adams argued that meat becomes normalised through use of the absent reference mechanism, through which animals are deindividuated to facilitate their commodification. Although this ethnography conceptualised meat as inanimate matter, and not as any form of nonhuman animal life, there is some emergent analytical corroboration between Adams' use of the absent referent to conceptualise animal life, and activists' use of colloquial language to make sense of abstract concepts surrounding food and its production. This may be understood in the themes *Sustainable Systems: Workforce*, and *Sustainable Communities: Capacity*, in which community discourses around food production were found to relate to "sustainability" in broader contexts beyond environmentalism. In the Community, food was valued as being sustainable if the social processes surrounding its production, mostly related to labour and skills, had ongoing viability: in this sense, "sustainability" of food was not limited to ecological impact. Adams' concept of the absent referent can therefore be used to make sense of activists' conceptualisations of meat as an output of social production: meat itself is not valuable or worthy of mention but serves simply as material illustration of social life. This is further supported by the diverse colloquial lexicon of the Community, which cultivated discourse around a range of slang terms describing, but also directly avoiding, mention of both consumers and the consumed. In ways similar to Adams' appraisal of the social function of meat in the deindividuation of nonhuman animals, meat was seen in this ethnography to symbolise a range of social processes which dominated discourse and supplicated meanings of the organic function of meat, thereby making the meat "absent" in discussions of and about it. This potentially aligns with Freshour's critical vision of a food system of labour politics in Winders and Ransom's *Global Meat* (2019) in which the labour around meat production dominated the politics of food and made meat further absent.

I also reflect here on alignment between Bailey and Tran's chapter in *Global Meat* (2019) which considered the production of meat through a state-corporate nexus, critical of the bureaucracies of food and how this impacted its use and availability. As explored in *Sustainable Systems: Administration*, the Community was heavily reliant on a small number of bureaucratically-skilled activists who could navigate governance systems which, for the most part, concerned interactions and conflicts between state regulation and community enterprise. In *Global Meat*, Howard further supports the destructive role of the state-corporate nexus by suggesting excessive state intervention in the food system hinders innovation, resulting in overproduction and inefficiencies. This ethnography found something similar in the micropolitics of local food regulations in Birmingham. Where Community administrators struggled to navigate the interface of the state-corporate nexus in the forms of food safety

paperwork and governance processes, EHO visits and funding challenges, they would feel unappreciated and often leave, resulting in their vital role being unfulfilled and food being wasted. Howard (2019) spoke only of "big P" politics in his criticisms of the state-corporate nexus on meat production: this ethnography provides new insights about how it also affects food access and production in social and community enterprise at the micropolitical level.

Finally, I observe differences between the ethnography and Davis' (2016) appraisal of meat and knowledge in Pott's *Meat Culture*. Where Davis suggests that a paternalistic knowledge economy legitimises meat by negating the intellect of nonhuman animals, children and domestic consumers, this ethnography upholds quite the opposite: the Community placed high valuation on innovations in food and its role in the sustainability of social life, as explored in the theme *Sustainable Diets: Knowledge*. I provide in the thematic results numerous examples of this interaction between the affect economy of food, and the knowledge economy of cookery, particularly related to Russel's central role as a holder of knowledge about meat production. Davis (2016) argues that meat production is reliant on innovative non-traditional forms of knowledge being ignored, whilst this ethnography illustrates numerous examples of non-traditional knowledge sources which were not only valuable, but essential for the sustainable production of meat.

4.1.2 Meat as cultural identity

This sub-section interprets social identities meat facilitates, and how meat is expressed as a form of identity. It finds that meat supports both individual and community identities by giving social actors meaningful roles in sustainable social-assemblages, and encourages change by disrupting and challenging identities which threaten food sustainability.
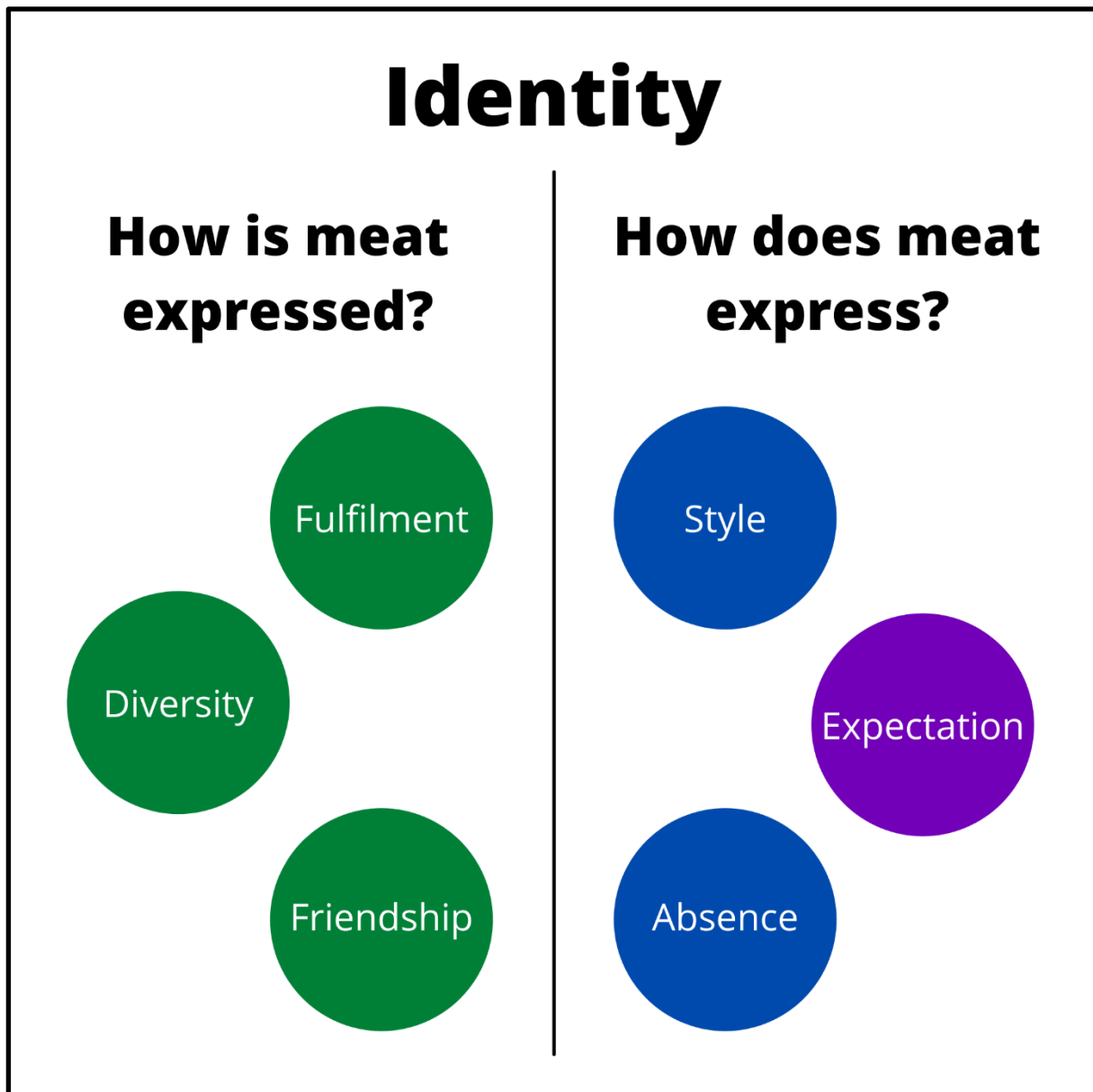
Figure 9: A diagram to show the themes interpreted through the Circuit of Culture to have meaning in the form of meat as cultural identity.

How was meat culturally expressed in the Birmingham Foodie Community?

This interpretation makes sense of the cultural meanings of meat through the diverse role meat played in facilitating and expressing social identities. This is bi-directional, with meat both expressing identity through social actors, and those actors expressing their social identification through meat, other foods, and food-related social practice. The analysis identified the importance of food in the establishment, development, and maintenance of social groups, and how production of activist identity was shaped by the material they worked with. Regarding affective flow, the analytical process showed how connection in social-assemblages happened through, not 'around', food, and how this facilitated diversity in the Community. Similarly, meat used its social affect to express social affiliations and diverse beliefs about the self-in-society. This interpretation finds meat both expresses cultural identity and is used to express cultural identity in social life.

Meat is culturally expressed by fulfilment

Meat contributed to activists being fulfilled in their roles and committing to activism to produce ongoing food security and sustainability. As food activists were recognised as the most valuable asset in sustaining the viability and longevity of the Community, keeping them happy and satisfied in their work was of vital importance. Across the Community, only a few activists were incentivised through paid employment, and the others informally compensated with guaranteed unlimited access to food and use of the Community's resources. This could be facilitated by 'keeping back', when food activists running services retained food for activist friends, which would typically take the form of meats and other scarce resources. Meat was expressed as a form of fulfilment and appreciation for activists for their efforts and dedication to food security and sustainability, by making their activist work satisfying and enjoyable.

Meat is culturally expressed through diversity

Meat supported inclusion of diverse social identities in the Community. Pride in this was expressed through and overtly diverse activist population, aligned with popular political discourses around diversity, taking forms such as ethnicity and religious affiliations. In these social interactions, meat production expressed respect for visible and voiced diversity, through expressions of meat used in forms of cultural heritage, traditional dishes, and meals compliant with ethnoreligious customs. Food activists also sought to value more implicit diversities, such as intellectual diversity and philosophical affiliations. In these deeper social connections, meat had broader meaning about animal rights, environmentalism, consumerism, and politics. Meat

was expressed as recognition and valuation of diversity in microsocial and macrosocial contexts, celebrating and supporting diversity in the food system.

Meat is culturally expressed in friendships

Meat facilitated identification with the Community and its values, creating mutuality that fostered meaningful friendships. Activists formed strong relationships, initially built around common interests which then matured as sociocultural exchange took place. Meat was part of those transactions. Although common social valuations of food connected the Community, those valuations were interpreted diversely and through conflicting social practice. Preparing and cooking food together, and for each other, expressed friendship beyond differences and bridged social divides. Interactions between meat-consuming and meat-avoiding activists, and participation in the opposing "side", expressed respect for conflicting identities. Meat was expressed through Community mutuality, facilitating common bonds between activists and other Community stakeholders that transcended conflicting interests in food sustainability.

Meat culturally expresses style

Meat allowed activists to be identified by, and celebrate, their culinary heritage via stylisation of their food. The diversity in the activist workforce was reflected aesthetically in the food they produced, and Community chefs became known for their individual cookery style, associated with their own culinary character. Meat could be used to express both the traditionality of a dish, and a Community chef's interests in contemporary cooking practices. Whilst those activists preparing food often identified with a particular style of cookery, they were also able to use food, including meat, to express a wider and more innovative experimental approach to styling their dishes. Meat expressed culinary styles and willingness to explore more experimental forms of contemporary cookery, serving as a material of aesthetic social capital through which emergent and developing identities could be expressed and recognised.

Meat culturally expresses expectation

Meat aided customers to identify as activists in a reimagined, inclusive food system, resisting identification as a consumer of the for-profit food sector. The services operated by the Community were run by volunteers, for customers who paid in nominal donations. This reflected a rejection of capitalised consumerism, perceived to be inequitable and incongruent with social justice values. Some customers struggled to make sense of this and behaved as if attempting to navigate the for-profit food sector, demanding foods and service which might be more expected in a restaurant or supermarket. In these interactions, meat bridged the reimagination, forming a constant of high-quality food across private and third-sectors. Meat

expressed common expected outcomes across different food sources, whilst aiding customers to identify as stakeholders of food activism rather than customers of food businesses.

Meat culturally expresses absence

Meat expressed identity by not being consumed, supporting consumers to identify with a range of positions. Regarding the expression of cultural identity, meat was often of greater importance to those who did not consume it. The Community hosted a large number of vegetarians, vegans, and other meat-reductionist, meat-avoidant and meat-abstentionist people, most of whom were happy and comfortable handling, cooking, and distributing meat, despite not eating it themselves. In this sense, the absence of meat consumption was equally of value in forming and expressing social identity, as it enabled activists to both identify with national and global food concerns and express their willingness to act beyond this to support local food security and sustainability. Meat, and an absence thereof, expressed identification with wider food-related movements and forms of posthuman thinking, beyond the Community and a common valuation of food in health.

Meat and cultural identity: reflections on the extant literature

Adams (2000) made explicit reference in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* to the role of meat in forming alliances between unfamiliar and otherwise seemingly unrelated social causes and movements, providing her example of the friendship between the temperance movement and the campaign for universal suffrage in the early 20th Century. This is clearly supported in themes contributing to the interpretative frame of "*Identity*", notably in *Sustainable Communities: Friendship*. Activists' varying valuations of meat, illustrated in this theme, concern diverse motivations for food activism connected by common goals for health, environment, and social justice, as found by Adams in her noted connections between congruent social movements. A physical-social nexus is also seen in this ethnography, where meat was used to express identities which connected activists belong to movements motivated by tangible outcomes (such as the Dumpster Divers, motivated by satiating hunger) to activists motivated by more abstract principles (such as Celia's visions of challenging the social determinants of poverty). This relates well to Adam's second example of meat as a form of identity in the physical-social nexus seen in the relationship between pacifists in the Second World War, and mid-Century vegetarians (Adams, 2000). Meat, as a physical-social material, connects identities formed around tangible social interests and more abstract ideas, supporting Adams' valuation of meat, or the absence thereof, as a material of friendship.

This interpretative frame also relates to Gaard's ideas of meat as a provoking material which challenges the behaviour of the people involved in the critical appraisal of it. In Pott's *Meat Culture* (2016), Gaard explored intersectional connections between meat and

identities surrounding its consumption (or avoidance thereof), and how meat challenges philosophical and ideological positions held by consumers such as eco-critics, environmentalists, health scholars, and sustainability academics. Aligned with this, the ethnography exposed a range of responses to meat as an expression of personal belief, illustrated in the theme *Sustainable Diets: Absence*, in which numerous activists ate (or avoided) meat to communicate their identification with and support for various social causes. Examples of this can be seen in Caroline's avoidance of meat as an expression of her interpretation of Judeo-Christian values, and Justin's decreasing meat consumption throughout the fieldwork phase as he developed critical existential awareness of the role of meat production in the environmental injustices his community work sought to address. In this sense, Gaard's ideas about meat as a critical lens for social identity and self-expression are highly visible in this ethnography, and corroborate my position that meat, whether it is consumed or not, plays an important role in the expression of cultural identity.

4.1.3 Meat as cultural consumption

This sub-section interprets diverse means through which meat is consumed, not merely by ingestion, but in broader social practice. It finds meat is used to engage in wider cultural experiences, and meat uses consumers to affect progression of sustainable social norms and signal social challenges.
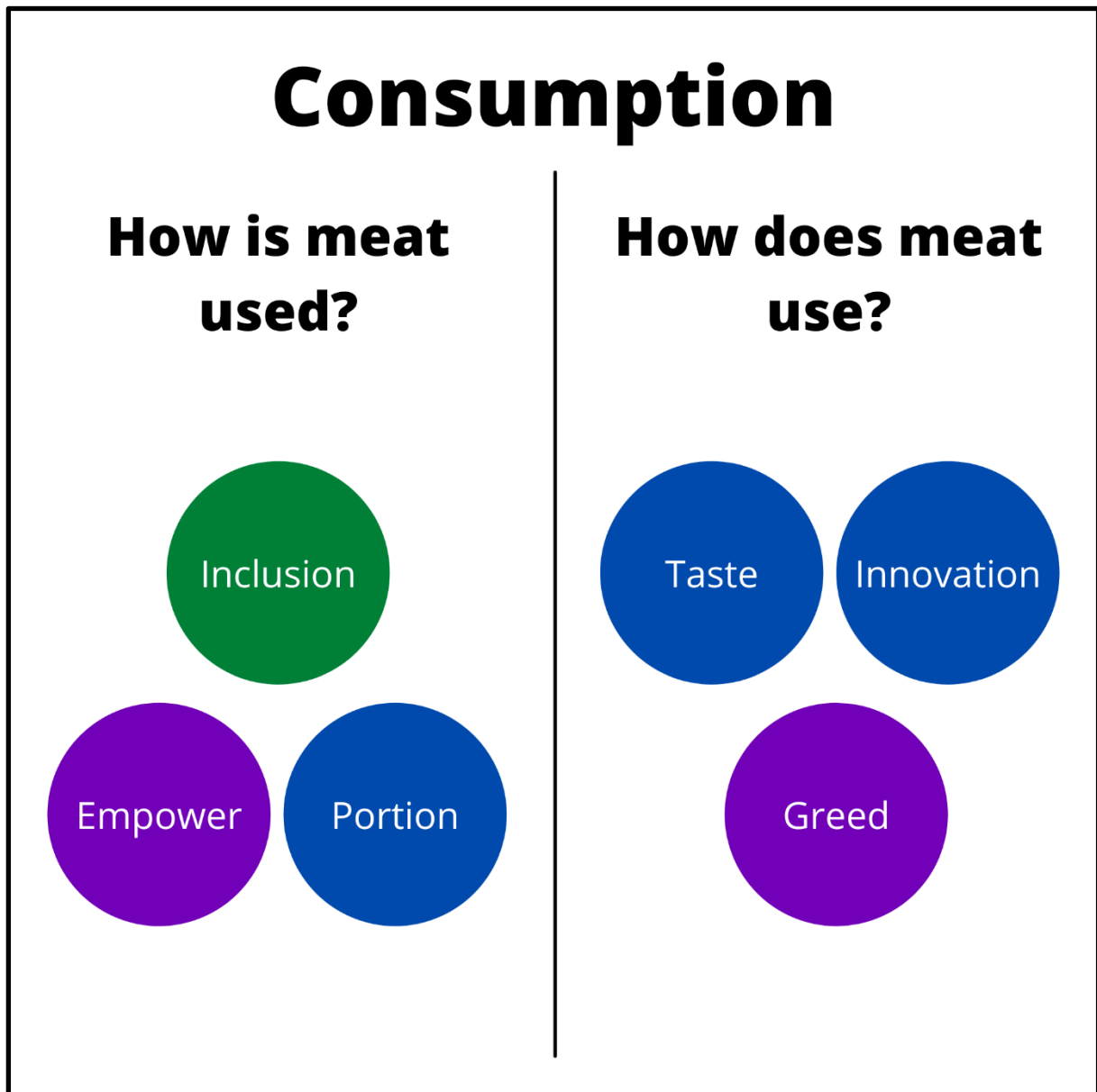
Figure 10: A diagram to show the themes interpreted through the Circuit of Culture to have meaning in the form of meat as cultural consumption.

This interpretation makes sense of physical and social consumption of meat, beyond merely referring to meat being ingested. In this sense, consumption here refers to ways in which material was "used" more broadly. The analysis showed meat was used in diverse ways, with the affective flows connecting microsocial experiences of community food services to wider macrosocial structures beyond the Community. Meat had complex social functions connecting different "levels" of social life and civic engagement, granting ownership over the local food system by empowering people and communities to use food for community development, social justice, and participatory democracy. This interpretation proposes that meat is consumed in more diverse ways than simply being eaten, but rather that it is used to form, develop, and grant access to broad social experiences of food systems and wider society.

Meat is culturally used for inclusion

Meat was used to make food services inclusive and welcoming beyond traditional conceptions of social inclusion, towards universal food security. The Community was characterised by an unwavering belief in the concept that "everyone is welcome", referring to an assumed human right to food, and participation in the food system. Activists made concerted efforts to differentiate their community food services from traditional food-related support operations, such as food banks and soup kitchens, believing those well-meaning activities to be exclusionary and inaccessible to those experiencing 'hidden hunger'. Meat was used to create a program of inclusive local food services that challenged the inequitable and exclusionary characteristics of food in the private sector, but also to progress beyond the well-meaning but questionable social functions of traditional food-related support in the third and public sectors.

Meat is culturally used to empower

Meat was used to empower and energise people and groups to take control of their local food system. The abundance of food and the flexibility of the systems used to obtain and distribute it, meant that participation in decision making about the Community's activities was commonplace. Activists recognised a stark difference between the "real" food system in which they were a passive recipient, and the reimagined food system they could shape and manipulate for social justice, environmental, and health outcomes. This created a common sense of empowerment: food activism granted ownership over the food system through which food could be used for a range of social functions beyond simply generating profit. Meat, and

other foods, were used to empower activists to own and control their local reimagined food system to successfully achieve broad social goals.

Meat is culturally used in portioning

Meat was used to support healthier and more equitable meal portioning, being decentralised to make staple foods the focus of dishes. The plating of food, and portioning of constituent elements of a dish, was considered an important part of the 'dining in dignity' concept which many Community organisations upheld. One activist in particular was known to champion this, believing that the way in which food is presented determines how it is valued and used, explicating the materialist role of meat in developing a meaningful physical-social nexus of food for planetary health. Portion controls were used to ensure that customers of the community food services were treated equitably and without preference or prejudice, with meat in particular being subject to rigorous controls by community chefs to ensure it was a decentralised, but visible, element of a dish. Meat was used as part of portion control exercises to minimise excessive greed and consumption which would present food insecurity to others.

Meat uses culture through taste

Meat invited a novel demographic of customers to support the Community financially, via participation in authentic food experiences. The custom-base of the Community included a group known as "foodies": loyal supporters of the Community from more affluent backgrounds, serving an important role in providing cash donations which kept the organisations financially viable. This subsidised the cost for customers who did not have means to pay for their food with cash money. The social experience of the Community food services was complementary to what they saw as an artisanal food experience, attracted by food being used to create unique culinary experiences through novel taste sensations. Meat used the novel-experience-seeking interests of food-conscious individuals to create new culinary experiences which attracted that demographic to social spaces they might not otherwise inhabit.

Meat uses culture to innovate

Meat harnessed the imagination and skills of community chefs to create tasty, attractive, and resource-efficient meals everyone would enjoy. The scarcity of meat forced culinary creativity to make most efficient use of resources. Community chefs used phrases such as "spreading" and "padding" to communicate their use of other produce such as widely-available staple foods to ensure all customers could have some meat as part of a dish, without running out of this scarce resource, thereby compromising equitable provision. This required chefs to innovate, and in this sense, meat used their ingenuity, skill, and dedication to local communities, to make efficient use of scarce foods, forcing them to develop culinary imagination. Meat used the

social consciousness of activists to develop new ways of strengthening perceived efficiencies in the food system without compromising human dignity.

Meat uses culture by greed

Meat signalled activists to cases of people in need of immediate support, through reasonable acts of greed in food services. Although most customers were visibly appreciative and respectful of the altruistic nature of food activism, some struggled to navigate the Community, behaving in ways characteristic of their problematic experiences faced in getting support from traditional third-sector organisations, or wider social or economic support from the public-sector. These customers usually faced absolute food poverty. This sometimes resulted in hostile interactions between those customers and activists over control of material in the Community. Meat could, occasionally, be used to facilitate greed bourn from extreme poverty and social exclusion and be used to signal activists to urgent needs of specific people and families that needed immediate support beyond food services.

Meat and cultural consumption: reflections on the extant literature

One of the most valuable reflections for this interpretative frame relates to Sauri and March's position in *Political Ecologies of Meat* (2015), that meat creates social and physical challenges populations then struggle to navigate, generating micropolitical conflicts. Although this ethnography certainly found and illustrates the micropolitics of meat in community development, it finds the Community used those conflicts to navigate the struggles of the food system, rather than simply being subject to them. In the theme *Sustainable Cultures: Empowerment*, illustrations suggest the difficulties posed by inefficiencies and injustices in the food system allowed for and fuelled the reimagination of food. Meat consumption did therefore create challenges as per Sauri and March's critical position, but it also generated opportunities for community cohesion and transfer of power and agency in the food system. I observe this creative navigation of the micropolitics of meat in the theme *Sustainable Diets: Innovation*, in which the challenge of food activism was seen not to be battling against the threats posed by the social injustices of meat, but rather one of valuing creative solutions to address those injustices through community actions. This ethnography therefore supports Sauri and March's view that meat creates challenges which consumers must then navigate, deepening this position by suggesting that such navigation allows for the creative empowerment of consumers and communities to resolve inefficiencies in the food system.

This social consumption of meat to take ownership of historical injustices further relates to Freshour's perspectives on labour in the food system in Winders and Ransoms' *Global Meat* (2019). I note here illustrations provided in the theme *Sustainable Cultures: Greed*

which exposed conflicts arising from inequities in the food system and, in the Community, the affect economy, in which some people had secure access to meat whilst others had no access at all. This draws parallels with Freshour's description of conflicts which arise in meat production through the injustices of labour in the American animal agriculture industry. Freshour argued that the foundations of the global food system, rooted in historical oppression, perpetuate and maintain social injustices fuelled by greed, resulting in conflicts between meat producers, meat labourers, and meat consumers. This can be seen in *Sustainable Cultures: Greed*, where conflicts arose between activists, notably Shirley and the House Shop volunteers, and her "shoppers", when meat scarcity forced inequitable distribution. I describe this in my thematic interpretations as "hostile interactions", which is an accurate description of my lived experience of being witness to them. However, the magnitude of these hostilities does not speak to the much more violent and traumatic oppressions Freshour described in *Global Meat*, such as the American poultry industry being rooted in slavery in the southern States (Freshour, 2019). This ethnography examined some of the ways in which meat shapes conflicts in local-level institutions as described by Freshour, without clear vision of the historical or broader oppressions upon which those conflicts are based.

Further considering the role of meat in maintaining historical oppressions, Adams' theorisations in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (2000) may be challenged by this ethnography. Adams wrote of the social consumption of meat as a form of oppression, in which the cultural ubiquities of meat are used to maintain traditional social hierarchies and supplicate minority groups to positions of relative subordination. This ethnography challenges that position, through observations in themes such as *Sustainable Cultures: Inclusion*, which illustrate the considerable efforts activists undertook to uphold an uncodified, unofficial Community principle that "everyone is welcome". Indeed, much of the micropolitics of food explored throughout this ethnography actually concern differing perspectives on how best to uphold and support diverse voices in the food system. Many of the hostilities Justin and I experienced with Celia and Michael, which I theorise through the new materialist concept of "lines of flight", arose from a collective vision of differing views on how best to identify, challenge, and disrupt historical oppressions in the food system facilitated by a falsehood of Western superiority which supports the cultural ubiquity of meat. As explored in *Sustainable Cultures: Inclusion*, activists saw the traditional third-sector response to food insecurity (food banks, soup kitchens) as upholding that false superiority, and perpetuating historical oppressions through cultural ubiquities of many foods, including meat. Where Adams suggests that meat is used to maintain those oppressions, this ethnography therefore presents more empowering visions of meat as a material of hegemonic disruption.

4.1.4 Meat as cultural regulation

This sub-section interprets controls imposed on and by meat in the Community, and how use of material was governed. It finds meat was subject to stringent governance through varying shapes of formal and informal agencies and power, and also that meat partially controlled its own efficient use.
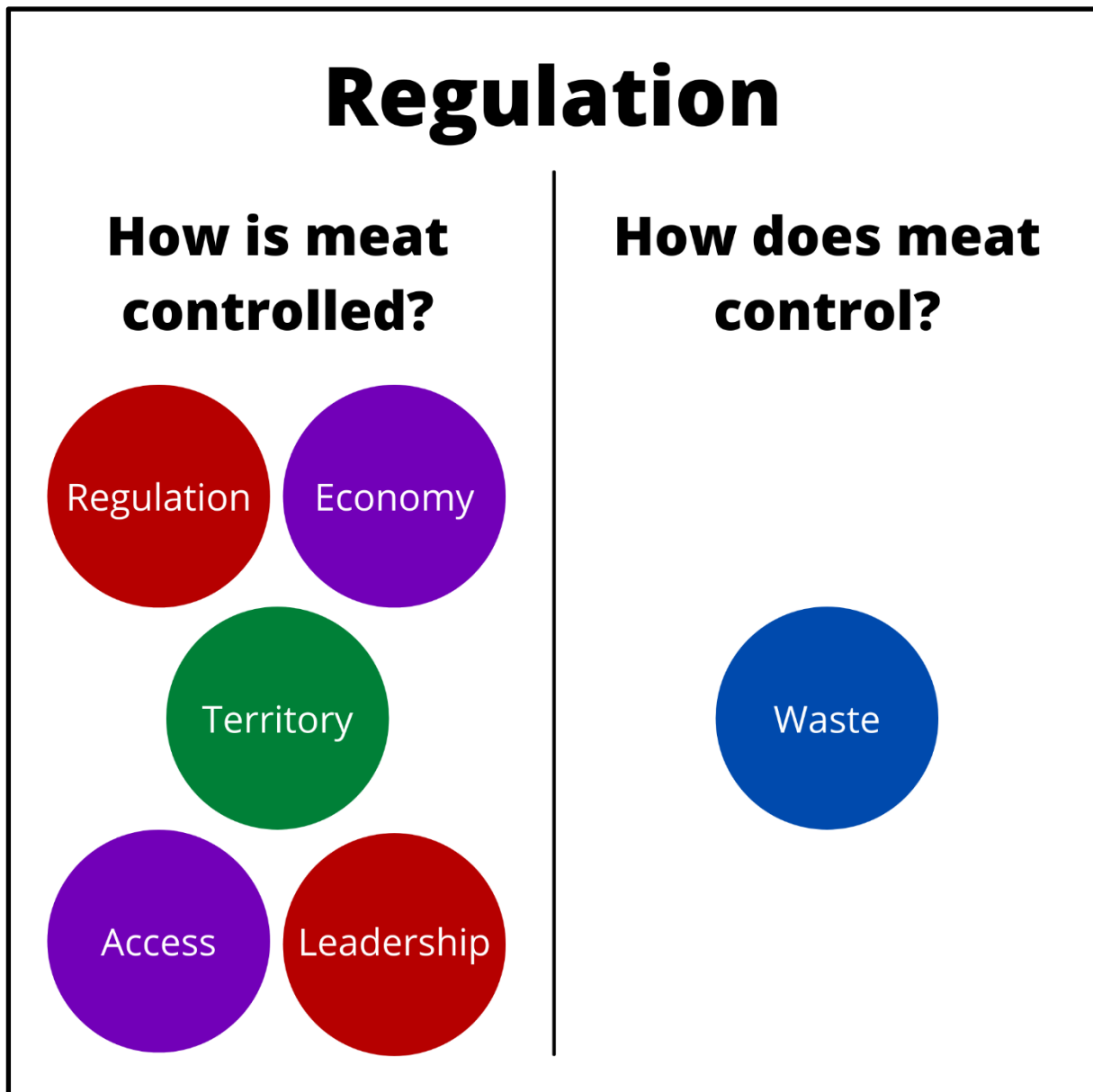
Figure 11: A diagram to show the themes interpreted through the Circuit of Culture to have meaning in the form of meat as cultural regulation.

This interpretation considers ways in which meat was governed, in its production, movement, access and eventual consumption. Although the Community had no unified governance, individual organisations were externally regulated through quality controls, environmental health standards, and economic constraints. Equally, organisations imposed internal governance on the movement of meat, to ensure it was used efficiently and fairly. The analytical process showed affective flows that were more rigid in structure, as formal attempts had been made to systematise parts of the social-assemblage to form controls between material and social interactions with it. This interpretation finds meat consumption is subject to cultural regulation through formal and informal means, and that to a lesser extent, it acts as a regulatory barrier for production and control of food waste.

Meat is culturally controlled by regulation

Meat was controlled by internal food safety policy, primarily to avoid more challenging external regulation. The Community existed in a curious but precarious legal grey area, in which activism was neither particularly recognised nor prohibited by law. Treading a fine line so as not to 'tip the balance', activists would respect food safety regulations so as not to alert authorities and become subject to stricter external governance which might compromise the social impact of activism. Meat was particularly important in this regard, as food-borne disease was known to be more dangerous in meat products. Organisations wrote and implemented internal food safety policies, required food safety training, and recognised certification of all activists handling food. Meat was regulated by strict internal organisational governance so as not to draw attention from more stringent external environmental health agencies.

Meat is culturally controlled by the economy

Meat was subject to the realities of operating not-for-profit organisations in a system reliant on financial capital for survival. Activists took immense pride in the alternative economic systems they developed, which were typified across the Community by inclusive economic principles. Although this generally supported inclusion in the local food system, it also created tensions between activists and organisations concerning the continued viability of their food services. If a service ceased being financially sustainable, organisations would typically close it quickly to prevent financial risk to other food services. This created precarity in the Community. Meat was regulated by the broader economic viability of the food system and how customers valued

it through financial contributions, which could result in rapid changes in access to meat if the alternative economic systems ceased functioning.

Meat is culturally controlled through territoriality

Meat provision was dependent upon organisations declaring and protecting conceptual and physical territorial claims, granting access to space. The organisations of the Community formed close, but hawkish, relationships: whilst they shared food, resources, and social connections, they also competed for the most scarce resources such as space and money. This resulted in organisations engaging in territoriality, declaring primacy in parts of the City and demanding other organisations respect them. Some areas of the City, often those with the greatest social deprivations, were most subject to territorial claims, with the Community being banished from some localities entirely for fear of local conflict. This territoriality restricted access to foods. Meat was regulated by territorial claims concerning primacy in localities, influencing the types of foods different localities could securely and sustainably access.

Meat is culturally controlled through access

Meat was governed by the same macrosocial structures which dictated inclusion or exclusion in other areas of social life. Activists sought to identify, challenge, and dismantle systematic barriers to food, assuming an earth-human nexus in which secure access to food would inherently lend to more sustainable food systems, and visa-versa. Activists exposed an array of barriers, and displayed use of novel methods to address them. This generally related closely to macrosocial exclusions and deprivations which were more expected, such as inclusion of people with learning disabilities, mental health challenges, language barriers, gentrifications, and homelessness. Access to meat was regulated, as with other foods, through broader social construction of the food system and the systematic barriers which resulted in poverty, deprivations, and social exclusion.

Meat is culturally controlled by leaders

Meat was governed by the interests of Community leaders who were able to shape activism. Though the organisations boasted participatory democracy as foundations their services, all were controlled ultimately by figureheads who served as the public-facing leader of the organisation. The leaders, whilst theoretically representative of the wider activist network, were often placed solely for being founders of an organisation or being the most well-spoken and therefore perceived to be most able to navigate external scrutiny. The visions and political beliefs of those leaders were highly influential in the direction of their organisation's work, which in turn regulated how food was used, to whom it was made available, and on what

conditions. Meat was regulated by the influence of organisational leaders who could exert control over access to food and involvement in the Community.

Meat culturally controls food waste

Meat exerted some control over disposal of secondary waste. This generally concerned inedible parts of food such as bones and foods deemed unsafe for human consumption. The Community used two secondary waste disposal sites, each with limited capacity for cooked foods and non-plant matter to be disposed by anaerobic digestion. The digestors for non-plant matter were slow to digest meat, frequently broke down and required repair. This limited how much meat could be disposed of using legitimate means under the zero-waste principle. The only other option for secondary waste was feeding it to animals, which was not an option for meat produce as the Pig Man and urban farmers would not take it to feed their livestock. This way, meat regulated its own use in determining its resourceful utilisation, as activists struggled to imagine alternative disposal sites which would not compromise the zero-waste principle.

Meat and cultural regulation: reflections on the extant literature

This interpretative frame relates well to ideas in the extant literature about solutions to the global meat crisis. The initial framing of policy mechanisms as a potential opportunity for interventionism are explored in Johnson's concluding chapter of *Political Ecologies of Meat* (2015), which suggest meat can be regulated through meaningful processes of policy development, currently stifled by political placation. This was plain-to-see in the ethnography, largely through activist interactions with regulatory agencies which became a random, unpredictable presence and threat in Community life. I describe in *Sustainable Systems: Regulation* how much of food activism existed in a legal grey area, being neither explicitly legal nor illegal, but constantly at-risk from regulatory intervention from the Local Authority. Beyond the Community, OSFEC UK was also involved in ongoing disputes with food policy through the court system, whilst their leader George Jones simultaneously acted as an invited consultant to the UK Government, on food policy development projects. This can be viewed as a form of placation as per Johnson's framing, in which meat is political enough for inclusion in policy development exercises, but not political enough for state interventionism.

When further considering the form policy might take to regulate meat production or consumption, in *Global Meat* Denny (2019) concludes that political inertia towards meat, and the state-corporation nexus which compounds it (Bailey & Tran, 2019) will almost certainly mean that only demand-side interventionism can be reasonably expected. This is visible through the themes *Sustainable Diets: Waste*, in which consumers were required to find eco-friendly outlets for corporate refuse, *Sustainable Communities: Territory*, in which activists had

to provide and protect their own personal homes to facilitate food security, and *Sustainable Systems: Leadership*, in which these actions were voluntarily coordinated by well-meaning but largely powerless community leaders. A clear connection between many of the thematic outputs of this ethnography links patterns of transference of responsibility from corporations to the state, and the state to the community, through a process that ultimately results in irresponsible supply-side decisions being addressed through voluntary demand-side activism. It might be argued, particularly through the coordinated efforts of the Community as seen in *Sustainable Systems: Leadership,* that local-level regulation of meat production and consumption by activists disrupted the final stage of Denny's theorised transference of responsibility: that which concerns transfer of problems from the community to the consumer, thereby truly facilitating supply-side problems caused by corporations to be transferred to demand-side responsibilities to be navigated by the individual. The thesis illustrates the considerable role of the third-sector in Birmingham in taking responsibility for food systems inefficiencies and injustices which could be regulated through meaningful policy, supporting Denny's sombre admission that any impactful change in the production or consumption of meat will come from the actions of consumers and communities, not policy instruments.

Finally, thinking more broadly about regulation of human activity beyond policy, in Pott's *Meat Culture* (2016) Watt describes meat as representing the end-form of human intervention in, and ownership of, natural processes, resulting in human regulation of nonhuman ecologies. The thematic outputs which contribute to this interpretative frame do not speak so clearly to this view, perhaps because they do not overtly reflect on natural resources or ecosystems. In *Sustainable Diets: Waste*, illustrations are provided which display affect economies in which activists attempted to resolve material "lines of flight" (Fox and Alldred, 2015), by finding uses for the excesses of the inefficient food system. This might be understood as a form of reparative activity, in which activists recognised that which Watt's considers to be meat as human regulation of the nonhuman, and sought to challenge or disrupt it. Whilst the ethnography did not find more explicit lived or analytical examples or Watt's conceptualisation of meat as a form of human regulation over nature, the focus on food activists motivated by environmentalism and sustainable development presents new spaces for considering food activism as disruption of anthroparchy.

4.1.5 Meat as cultural representation

This sub-section interprets communication of meat, and social messages meat was used to voice. It finds that provision of meat has important material function in supporting individual relationships with macrosocial structures, determining engagement with the food system through democratisation of food and supporting dignity in consumption.
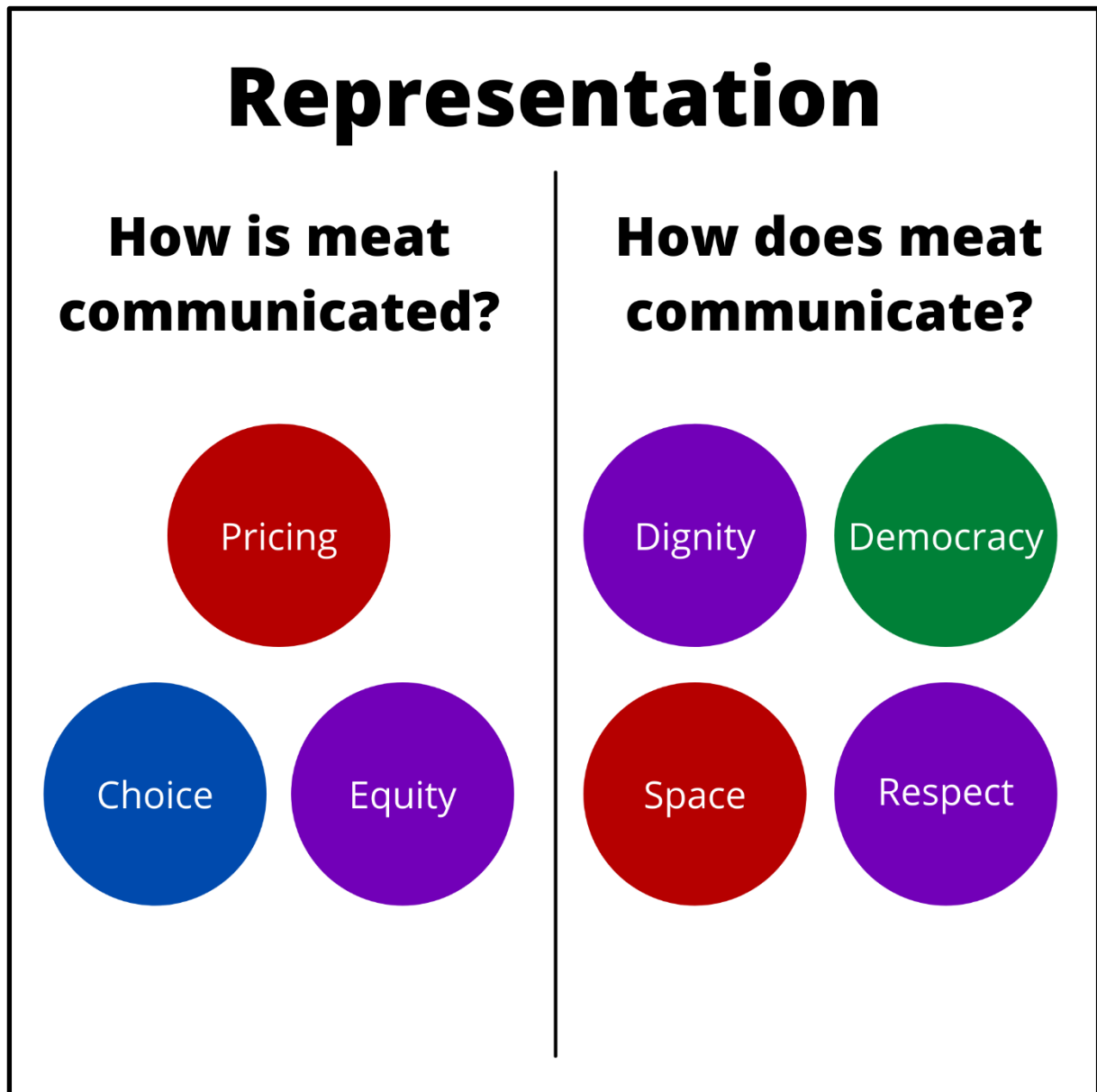
Figure 12: A diagram to show the themes interpreted through the Circuit of Culture to have meaning in the form of meat as cultural representation.

This final interpretation reflects upon how meat was communicated and marketed in the Community, and how it communicated the visions and values of activists. These interpretations refer to affective flows which represent deeper social messages, connecting the lived experience of the food system with traditions and customs. The communication of meat, and the messages meat communicated, not only situated meat at the centre of complex social-assemblages, but also illustrated the situation of those social-assemblages in the social world, highlighting the macrosocial nature of food sustainability. Some of these meanings are more symbolic, whilst others are more tangible. This final interpretation finds meat is used to communicate relationships between the self and the social world, but also communicates an individual's role in the food system and wider consumer culture.

Meat is culturally communicated through pricing

Meat was communicated via the pricing structures used in the Community to convey social value of food beyond commodity status. The Pay What You Want model employed by most of the organisations, meant that meat products were effectively the same cost as other foods, unlike in the 'real' food system. This sometimes meant that new customers would hoard meat products in the food markets and ask to take meat dishes home from cafes. Activists used subtle, but not coercive or instructive, messaging to communicate the social value of responsible and fair consumption, lending to collective approaches to food security. Meat was communicated through inclusive pricing structures to be a product that all consumers could, but did not necessarily have to, access, and moderated consumption was gently encouraged by activists to support collective food security rather than individual consumer preference.

Meat is culturally communicated via choice

Meat was used to present consumers with more limited menu choices and reject meat-heavy dishes as the default meal option. Although meat products were more scarce at the food markets, in the cafes a meat dish was always provided: a choice between a single meat dish, and a single meat-free dish. This developed over time so that the meat-free dish also offered a vegan alternative in most organisations. This meant that unlike for-profit restaurants, meals in the Community's food services did not offer meat dishes as the default, but rather rejected their primacy by presenting meat as a choice alongside a meat-free dish. Meat was communicated through limited menus to be a choice on equal par with meat-free options,

encouraging more frequent meat-free meals and supporting resourceful use of scarce resources by changing the default meal option, encouraging novel tasting of meat-free dishes.

Meat is culturally communicated as equity

Meat was used to communicate aspiration for, and reimagination of, an equitable food system that supported sustainable wellbeing. The organisations operated food services on the premise that all customers would be treated the same regardless of means or background, using the alternative economic concepts to facilitate equal service provision with customer-envisioned end-point transactions. The food, including meat, represented a fairer and more equitable approach to consumption in which food was assumed to have common social function and health impact, irrespective of differences in financial means. This conveyed the message that all customers would be valued based on their status as people who needed to eat, rather than people who could afford to eat. Meat was communicated through a lens of equitable consumerism, valuing consumption for broader holistic conceptions of wellbeing.

Meat culturally communicates dignity

Meat consumption communicated how social experiences of eating reflected engagement with and inclusion in the social world. Activists championed the Community concept of 'dining in dignity', referring to their rejection of traditional third-sector food support services, which they felt lacked humanity, and their aspiration for more dignified social eating experiences. From this grew the standard Community provision of table service in the cafes, activists learning customers names, saving foods customers were known to like, and focusing on the visual presentation of food. Activists recognised that the way people ate reflected their interactions with wider social institutions and structures, and prepared food to support this concept. Meat communicated the social value of eating, representing activists' high valuations of the people eating and enjoying it, and the social experience of eating food together.

Meat culturally communicates democracy

Meat promoted a collective conception of food as material of democratised consumption, communicating the participatory nature of the reimagined food system. Beyond the tangible aims of the organisations concerning food sustainability, was the deeper concept of food sovereignty: activists upheld the concept that consumers should be able to make decisions which shaped the values and conduct of the food system, allowing it to be adaptable and dynamic to support health needs of populations and the environmental needs of the planet. This was facilitated by organisations adopting bottom-up participation strategies and codifying organisational constitutions as such. Meat represented democratisation of the food system

through reimagination of the role and agencies of social actors, reorienting the role passive consumers to that of active decision makers, contributing to direction of the food system.

Meat culturally communicates welcoming spaces

Meat consumption and the wider provision of food in the Community presented the cultivation of progressive, inclusive, and welcoming spaces. Activists appreciated that, beyond the food itself, their work created wellbeing by providing physical spaces in which people could feel a sense of belonging, with most Community spaces being open long before and after the food services operated. Good food acted as an openly false pretence for this. By providing food services, vulnerable and lonely people did not need to voice their isolation or need for support, but rather voice a need for food as a perceived legitimate, and less embarrassing, request for help. This created easily navigable pathways to reducing loneliness. Meat communicated the social value of collective consumption, and the shared experience of eating by facilitating navigation to inclusive spaces where people felt welcomed.

Meat culturally communicates respect

Finally, meat communicated the activists' respect for their customers, and the limitations of natural resources. Activism challenged the exclusionary and inequitable characteristics of the 'real' food system, by identifying and dismantling systematic barriers which prevented food security and sustainability. The mere efforts and vision of this alone, regardless of the impact the efforts had, was appreciated by customers who were vocally grateful whatever the outcome of activism. In producing high-quality meals, making them accessible to everyone and serving them in a dignified manner that respected the social value of eating, activists conveyed a sense of respectful consumption. Meat communicated that in these democratised food spaces, people would be respected simply for the condition of being human, and that their access to food as a perceived human right would be recognised and upheld.

Meat and cultural representation: reflections on the extant literature

In *Political Ecologies of Meat*, Colombino and Giacarria (2015) proposed that meat is socially constructed through complex processes of biopolitical knowing and doing, further interpreted to suggest information has a limited role in the reduction of meat consumption (Neo, 2015). This becomes clear in the interpretative frame "*Representation*", where ways of knowing about and communicating meat are found to be considerably complex beyond merely having nutritive properties. The biopolitics Neo proposed as a hindrance to traditional methods of public health interventionism are evident in the ethnographic illustrations, particularly in *Sustainable Cultures: Dignity*, in which there is a clear physical-social nexus at the interface of eating for nutritive sustenance, and eating for sociocultural fulfilment, and the theme

Sustainable Cultures: Respect, illustrating activists' appraisal of "the" food system (the recognised physical institution of producing and disseminating food) and "the food system" (the localised social institution of community development through food sharing). The ethnography supports Colombino and Giacarria's thoughts, which largely concerned the reductionist nature of information-giving as a method of impactful interventionism, illustrating through both lived experience and analytical outputs that the complexities of meat in the social world are communicated more meaningfully through a range of social experiences than through overt information-dissemination. This further supports ideas from the Chatham House report *Changing Climates, Changing Diets* (Wellesley et al., 2015) about the limited potential for health education or media campaigns as a means of reducing meat consumption.

Reflecting on the broader social potential and role of food activism in the cultural representation of meat, and disruption of hegemonic representations which position meat as culturally ubiquitous, Adams' ideas about anti-meat movements and presence in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (2000) provide some insight about the role of activists in creating public representations of food. Adams' valued this as being central to the transference of meat as an animate to inanimate material, claiming that vegetarians and other anti-meat movements disrupted normalisation of the absent referent. This might be seen in the theme *Sustainable Communities: Democracy*, in which activists were seen to uphold the dynamic and adaptable nature of the food system, challenging notions of rigid inflexibility of inanimate material and instead creating new animacies in food through democratic exercises. In some sense, this theme proposes that the animacy of activism gives animacy to material, disrupting representations of transition from animate to inanimate in the ways Adams described as being central to the subordination of animals for use in meat production. A contrast exists, however, between this ethnography and that which Adams claimed would be the result of this public representation of animacies and inanimacies. Adams suggested that anti-meat movements, by publicly representing meat as having social animacy, isolate vegetarians and contribute to the "othering" of people and communities which seek to disrupt anthroparchy. Conversely, this ethnography followed a community in which people were open-minded, accepting, and inclusive of anti-meat perspectives, and placed upon them high valuation as means of innovating sustainable diets. As explored in the themes *Sustainable Diets: Choice* and *Sustainable Systems: Space*, the Community actively avoided "othering" when novel representations of meat, food, or other material was displayed. The ethnography therefore supports Adams' notion of public representations of meat being threatened by anti-meat movements but disputes the social exclusion of these people and communities for representing meat as animate.

4.2 Implications

This section develops the answers to the research question, to relate them to public and planetary health challenges presented by excessive meat consumption, and their potential relevance to health promotion practice and policy. Following the structure of the 'topical positioning' section of the review, this section considers the overall findings of the study. It presents ideas about the future of meat consumption, not in terms of concrete activities or strategies, but conceptual framing for the approaches taken to promote and achieve sustainable meat consumption. This section asserts the conflicts between meat consumption, planetary health, and population growth, through a materialist theoretical lens.

4.2.1 Meat and consumption

This sub-section relates cultural meanings of meat consumption to wider global consumption trends outlined in the Review, focusing on the relevance of community and culture in challenging excessive consumption.

Image 58: Shredded chicken donated by a national restaurant chain that pre-cooks chicken prior to customers ordering it, resulting in food waste at the end of the evening. Activists intercepted this meat and used it innovatively in diverse dishes by "padding" the dish with vegetables and starches, reducing meat consumption. This chicken was used to make over 50 meals.

Meat was the end-point material of a messy social-assemblage of actions and actors. Its consumption was known in the Community to represent effort and participation in reorienting the food system, and was the end-product of altruism. Customers appreciated meat more for visibility of the social processes which created it than its nutritive properties.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be promoted through greater visibility of the processes and labours involved in its production.*

Social identities formed around meat consumption, but these were typically respectful and seen to uphold progressive values such as diversity and inclusivity. As this generated more holistic appreciation for the role of food in social justice, meat consumption was respected across demographic and social groups as material of social identity.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be encouraged by supportive discourses across culinary heritages and amplifying voices of groups with differing perspectives.*

Meat was 'consumed' in diverse social contexts, and physical ingestion of meat was moderated by a micropolitics of the community food services which limited excessive consumption. By privileging collective food security, consumers made more efficient and equitable use of scarce foods such as meat to support collective wellbeing.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be facilitated by greater consumer cognisance of the social injustices generated by food insecurity and the production of food.*

Interactions with meat were regulated by formal and informal governance, limiting access to food. Community controls exerted influence over moderated consumption without ever explicitly restricting or prohibiting it. Social responsibility through mutuality in Community membership, was a considerable control in moderating sustainable meat consumption.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be considered by consumers who conceptually link individual dietary intake to social inequalities.*

Meat consumption represented personal connections and incompatibilities with wider social structures and cultures. It signalled engagement in, or exclusion from, mainstream consumerism, which could be used to communicate rejection of the inequitable food system, or exclusion from food security. This represented broader social and cultural capital.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be gratified by exposing disproportionate burdens of unsustainable food systems and their relation to mainstream social justice interests.*

Image 59: The textural changes resulting from precooking meant that the chicken could only be served shredded, making it easier to integrate into dishes in minimal quantities. This had the effect of using scarce meat to produce many dishes. This low-meat chicken and bacon spaghetti was popular with customers and Jane was proud to have produced so many meals with so little meat.

4.2.2 Meat and health

This sub-section interprets cultural meanings of meat consumption in development, promotion, and protection of health, in reference to the impact of excessive consumption on physical health presented in the review, linking materialisms of meat to consumption.

Image 60: Fried chicken donated by a fast-food chain. This was rarely served in the form its original producer intended, instead being served in minimal quantities with fresh salads, or stripped of the battered coating and used in curries or stews. This supported customers to try new foods whilst retaining some of the familiarity with meats they already knew and liked.

There was little conception in the Community that meat was necessary: health was a relational parallel process to food activism, 'healthing', not an end-point indicator of impact. Meat was typically seen as healthy as its production represented local-level control over the food system and created health in broader social and environmental contexts.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be normalised by reorienting conceptions of wellbeing from physical health to planetary health.*

Activists formed identities around their membership in the Community, which provided them with material needed to support and maintain health. As food aided identification with activism, activists found health through greater use of material to support wellbeing, through a process of healthing in which the food activism itself was a form of wellbeing.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be promoted by consumers supporting civic engagement in the food system through volunteering activity in food aid organisations.*

When presented as one of a limited range of choices, meat no longer served as the default option, encouraging the eating of healthier novel foods and meat-free dishes. Customers would self-regulate their meat consumption, not for personal health but to support food security and sustainability efforts across the Community.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be normalised by offering fewer meat dishes to challenge primacy and presenting greater balance with meat-free meals.*

As meat posed a threat to health if not subject to stringent food safety controls, it was tightly regulated by internal governance. Health was protected by organisations maintaining reliable administrative infrastructure and engaging in planning of the management of the food supply to ensure food safety measures were adhered to, avoiding external scrutiny.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be incentivised through promoting reduced risk and burden of food-borne disease from plant-based foods.*

Food activists spoke of health in multidimensional contexts, which was represented primarily though food security and food sustainability as health indicators in their own right. The nutritional properties of meat were of less importance than access to and availability of the material. Health was seen to derive from food security and sustainable supply, not ingestion.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be encouraged by consumer participation in food security efforts to debase primacy of focus on individual nutritional intake.*

Image 61: At St Gerald's café, there was a choice of a single meat dish and a single meat-free dish. Dee's roasted vegetable pastry was a hit with the customers, "beating" Russell's seafood paella. The limited menu encouraged novel meal choices, resulting in the cafes serving these dishes in a roughly 50:50 split, in comparison to the dominance of meat in other settings.

4.2.3 Meat and environment

This sub-section connects cultural meanings of meat consumption to current and future actions to mitigate and prevent further dangerous climate change. It finds links between food and environmental activism, linking health promotion and policy to protection of ecosystems.

Image 62: Shirley was good at "keeping back", saving scarcer foods for other activists to reward their efforts and support a happy workforce. The food in this photo was destined for a landfill site but was used to support activists and their families. Members of the Community saw sustainable eating as a form of activism, promoting consumption of meat destined-for-waste to protect the planet.

The social processes of producing meat allowed for innovation in sustainable modifications of the food system, requiring activists to imagine zero-waste strategies, make meals more efficient and reduce consumable waste. Meat itself was not considered environmentally harmful as it was the result of environmental privileging in the earth-human nexus.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be supported by building public interest in the environmental harms of food waste to make more efficient use of meat.*

Although the Community activities privileged natural resources and ecosystems, most activists did not consider themselves environmentalists. Meat and other foods were used to identify with a new, holistic form of activism which advocated a diet to balance human preference with posthuman urgencies for a more sustainable anthropo-ecological relationship.

> *Reduced meat consumption may come from development and promotion of the EAT-Lancet planetary health reference diet and similar such concepts.*

Activists used meat to reduce anthropogenic emissions via the zero-waste principle. Consumption processes were inherently environmentally friendly, with meat and the social experiences surrounding it consumed only through socioecological principles which privileged natural ecosystems. This conceptually made meat consumption a carbon negative practice.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be gratified through visibility of reduced food miles and the relatively less environmentally impactful logistics of plant-based foods.*

Resources were controlled tightly to ensure their efficient and effective use, primarily because of limited financial capital to purchase material. Meat was governed to ensure its efficient use, and exerted affect by presenting activists with challenges in its disposal, further promoting innovation in environmental thinking for sustainability to comply with Community values.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be pressured by regulatory actions and policy concerning use and disposal of food and food-related consumables.*

Members of the Community were proud of the socioecological impact of their work, sharing metrics about salvaged foods and how they had been used sustainably to produce meals. Meat was presented as sustainable for contributing to those socioecological impacts regardless of its literal environmental harm and use of natural resources.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be promoted through gamification of sustainable consumption and sharing of metrics on digital media.*

Image 63: A fresh and colourful salad served at a community event, including vegetables grown abroad. Food activism served to bring a stopping point to food mileage, using food before it could travel any further. This photo represents roughly five 'bellies fed'. Sustainability referred to a holistic appreciation of the earth-human nexus in which consumption was important for planetary health.

4.2.4 Meat and sustainability

This sub-section synthesises implications of cultural meanings of meat, to interpret the roles community, culture, and meat consumption play in planetary health. It reaffirms the earth-human nexus and interdependencies of environmental viability and optimal human health.

Image 64: Russell advocated "deconstructed dishes", which saw him cook a casserole and the pastry separately, then bring the two together to portion the dish once he knew how many customers it was needed to feed. More customers did not necessarily mean more food was needed; only that more innovation was needed to make scarce resources stretch further, generating sustainability.

As meat was the product of healthy and environmentally friendly processes, and resulted in the reclamation of emissions, it was not perceived to be unsustainable. The Community emphasised sustainability in activism to conceptualise the material itself as both healthy and environmentally responsible. Meat was considered a sustainable product in the Community.

> *Reduced meat consumption may come from reframing discourses of sustainability from ecosystems-focus to a socioecological nexus.*

Being a member of the Community meant identifying with a future-focused, alternative lifestyle centred around sustainability. Meat consumption represented a shift in social identity towards a vision of planetary health, not limited by traditional concerns which privileged either people or the planet independently. Activists identified themselves as the future of food sustainability.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be supported by democratisation of planning food systems for the future, in local and global settings.*

Meat was consumed sustainably because the Community conceived sustainability to refer to social processes that bought about the act of consumption, rather than the moment itself. Sustainability included sustaining social life, through equitable treatment of activists and investment in spaces and resources, which were recognised as assets of sustainability.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be gratified through food systems mapping and consumer reflection on the efforts used and required to access meat.*

Sustainability did not require conscious regulation, as the impact of food activism was evident in human affect. The governance employed by Community organisations ensured social processes and resource use was sustainable, therefore the end products of activism did not require controls to ensure sustainability in local food systems.

> *Reduced meat consumption may be encouraged by gratifying all reductions, however minor, as a food sustainability achievement.*

Sustainability was presented as a sociocultural asset, not merely an environmental concept. Meat represented balanced privileging in sustainable development: consuming meat through activism supported human health and natural ecosystems. Meat was sustainable because of the Community's holistic, social, and multidimensional conceptions of sustainability.

> *Reduced meat consumption may emerge from broader grassroots social movements around planetary health challenging human exceptionalism in the food system.*

Image 65: When the beef ran out, Russell used the remaining pastry squares of the deconstructed casserole to top a chicken stew. Customers were encouraged to realise the more they ate, the less there would be for others. Although activists could readily innovate, they could only sustain services for as long as customers used them respectfully by seeing sustainability through a social lens.

4.3 Reflection

This section provides a reflective evaluation of the study and the thesis it presents, following a post-fieldwork consideration of the positioning of the study through to its implementations. Attention is paid to the orientations of the thesis and their use in research practice. Publications resulting from the study are recognised, to identify scholarship beyond the thesis. This section identifies practices which enhanced the quality of the study, recognising how the study upholds and negates scholarly critique of the theoretical and conceptual positionings of the thesis.

4.3.1 Conceptual reflections

This sub-section reflects upon the adoption of planetary health as the conceptual positioning of the study, emphasising the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis. It concludes that planetary health served as a novel lens for making holistic sense of health, though fraught with ontological schisms which present challenges in their translation to health promotion practice.

Planetary health – the concept, framework, emergent scholarly traditions and 'new' academic discipline – has developed throughout the production of this thesis. When the study began in 2016, planetary health was in its infancy, with the seminal Lancet-Rockefeller Foundation paper having been published only the previous year (Horton & Lo, 2015). Since its conceptual 'launch', planetary health has been criticised from a range of scholarly perspectives, further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. David et al. (2021) summarise this critique into two areas of scrutiny.

Firstly, they identify that the primary ontological positioning of planetary health asserts structural relationships between individual people and the global ecosystem, questioning whether the concept of planetary health trivialises structural barriers which prevent realistic affect between single human and the entire physical planet. In this thesis, the ethnography captured those tensions, but also observed negotiation and navigation of them through a relational process of 'healthing' (Fox & Ward, 2008; Fox, 2013) via food activism. In the Community, it was recognised that activism confronted but did not necessarily 'solve' the conditions which prevent planetary health. In this sense, sustainable development activity did not trivialise systematic barriers to interdependence of people and the planet, but rather gave them meaning and empowered people to start a process of healthing to address them. This is explored and supported in Meier-Magistretti et al.'s paper (2021) theorising connection between planetary health to Salutogenesis, supported by the materialist understandings developed in the thesis. I thereby dispute that planetary health trivialises structural barriers connecting people and the planet, but rather that the material nature of wellbeing facilitates such a connection.

Secondly, David, et al. (2021) voice concern that emergent 'solutions' to structural barriers often take the form of 'financialisation' and "*technoscentific management of the living world*" which characterise the very capitalised harms which threaten planetary health. In this thesis, although a micropolitics of activist financing and infrastructure has been recognised and discussed, the thick description of the ethnography presents overwhelmingly practical efforts in food activism, and how most impact was actually created due to limited financial or technoscientific capital. This thesis presents a role for 'finacialisation' in planetary health, but one which develops meaning through bottom-up process to empower communities to confront

challenges in their food system, rather than support top-down public health policy or capitalisation. Concerning the 'technoscientific management' of interdependence between people and the planet, the ethnography documented the minimally-invasive practices employed by the Community to document their efforts to inform their impact metrics, again suggesting that whilst such a role for technology exists in supporting a healthy earth-human nexus, it need not replicate those socioeconomic objects which threaten planetary health.

A further third critique of planetary health as a conceptual framework for the creation of wellbeing concerns the potential for planetary health to perpetauate, maintain, or be a novel form of colonialism. Baquero et al. (2021) assert that planetary health uses colonial approaches to "disreard alternative knowledge" which might present novel insights for sustainable health and development, instead imposing expert-led transformative actions on peoples who did not request them. The actions of the Community, as illustrated throughout this thesis, negate this claim. Food was used as the connection between people and the planet, and food activism was the action which negotiates its materialisms. The orientation of those actions totally embraced alternative knowledge, explicitly rejecting the formal structure of the 'real' food system, and in doing so deligitimising a form of systems colonialism and epistemic authority. As described in the theme 'knowledge', meat was navigated as a material of sustainable diets using and celebrating alternative knowledge. Although this thesis does not claim to evidence the impact of food activism, the food sustainability activity which the study observed might suggest that the use of alternative ways of knowing was successful in supporting planetary health, disputing that such knowledge perpetuates neocolonialism. This thesis finds planetary health, whilst ontologically imperfect, was an appropriate and progressive conceptual framework for this research question.

The conceptual-theoretical relationship this thesis presents has developed as a separate body of scholarship. Following presentation of this developing thesis at the 23rd IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion (Sallaway-Costello, 2019), the International Union for Health Promotion and Education took interest in the conceptual-theoretical relationship on which the thesis is positioned, attracting interest from the IUHPE Global Working Group on Planetary Health. This resulted in development and delivery of a two-year global knowledge exchange project led by the University of Nottingham and Lucerne University of Applied Arts and Sciences, entitled "People-Planet-Health", which sought to recognise the material interactions employed by grassroots activists to support planetary health activity and goals. Although reframed as a form of Salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1979) this presented a novel opportunity to further test the use of materialist thinking for planetary health, albeit in real-world global health practice and policy development. An overview of this work is due for publication following submission of this thesis (Meier-Magistretti, et al., 2021)

Comparative reflections on planetary health

In 1.2.3 Scholarly positionings, I outline the basic assumptions of the EcoHealth and One Health conceptual approaches as competing scholarly frames with planetary health. Whilst planetary health is focused on the interdependencies between people and the planet, EcoHealth favours a rhizomatic approach in which the planet is prioritised on the assumption that people will benefit from sustainable ecosystems (Charron, 2012). EcoHealth emphasises saving the planet, not people, lending to a scholarship centred around concepts of resilience on the assumption that people must compromise wellbeing and welfare for the planet (Berbes-Blazquez, et al., 2014). This position is one I contest using my thematic outputs and year in the Birmingham Foodie Community. What I found through working with food activists was that sustainable consumption, and the social interactions related to it, are wholly enjoyable. Whilst I did uncover a great deal of activist micropolitics, being part of the Community was largely a fun and exciting experience: food activism was essentially fuelled by an unspoken resistance to the EcoHealth assumption that people must be resilient in the face of planetary compromise.

Comparatively, the One Health approach places much greater emphasis on the wellbeing of nonhuman animals and, accordingly, has a much more biomedical vocabulary, centred around veterinary practice, risks of zoonotic disease, and animal-handling roles (Gibbs, 2014). Although the Community certainly fostered a social and political ecology of food, the One Health approach is rooted in the role of biological ecologies in climate change (Zinsstag, et al., 2018) which I did not observe in the ethnography. I wonder, reflecting on my own rural background and thinking about the vast differences in social life I saw in the urban spaces of this ethnography, whether the distinct absence of discussion around nature and human-animal relationships in the Community reflected the urban positioning of Birmingham. Future research might wish to consider ethnographic methods using the One Health concept in rural settings, where interactions with animals and natural resources may lend to greater discourses around natural ecologies of climate change.

4.3.2 Theoretical reflections

This sub-section reflects upon the use of New Materialist Social Inquiry in the development of the bespoke post-anthropocentric analytical process, and their use for interpretation of cultural meanings of meat in diverse social-assemblages. It finds new materialist thinking offers potential in the reimagination of consumption but requires greater methodological praxis.

This study was experimental in its design and, in some regard, pioneering in its use of new materialist thinking as the theoretical framework for an ethnography on food. Fox and Alldred's seminal paper (2015) was published shortly before the study began, leaving little precedent in praxis as few scholars had used their ideas to progress post-anthropocentric studies.

Whilst Fox and Alldred recognised the micropolitics of social-assemblages, they did not comment on how these might be inextricable from and influenced by macropolitical affairs, such as national elections and geopolitics, and the role these having in the process of healthing. This study identified complexities in making sense of 'closed' social-assemblages, without reference to the wider politics of food, environment, and health, which was frequently discussed and partially shaped activists' beliefs. They also spoke of the (de)stabilising nature of territoriality in social-assemblage, based on Deleuze and Guattari's theories of 'dis-assembly' (1998) but did not account for the creative social potential afforded by destabilisation. In this study, countless examples were observed of activists being empowered by destabilisation of social-assemblages, and using that disruption to form new, emancipatory processes of healthing towards food security, most obvious in the thick description of the 'revolution'. 'Dis-assembly' was seen to result in social production just as much, if not sometimes more, than assemblage. These deviations from new materialist theory are minor and could be seen as developments of theorisations of 'lines of flight' (Fox & Alldred, 2016). Ultimately, the adoption of New Materialist Social Inquiry as the theoretical framework for the study was a fruitful choice, as it lent to clear linkage between planetary health and the Circuit of Cultures. Future scholarship in this area might better consider how to capture and illustrate healthing which occurs as a result of dis-assembly as much as assemblage.

Comparative reflections on new materialism

The New Materialist (and indeed, "old" materialist") school of thought was new to me upon commencing doctoral study, having been published only years before the study began. My comparative reflections here largely concern the use of "new" theory to explore longstanding challenges, and whether theorisations from "older" schools of thought might have offered different outcomes. Work in this regard is diverse, using "classical" sociological theory such as the works of DuBois to make sense of the racial injustices of climate change and the

transformative role of Black power in developing sustainable agriculture (Niazi, 2018), and ecofeminist interpretations of veganism (Hamilton, 2016) and meat consumption (Calvert, 2014). Novel contributions from broader classical social theory include that from the "old" materialisms, including works on human-animal relationships and their impact on medicine (Longo & Malone, 2006).

I reflect on my thinking in 1.2.3 Scholarly positionings, in which I was cautious of using the area studies approach to interdisciplinarity for fear of viewing Birmingham as being culturally exceptional, ultimately defending this thesis as an interdisciplinary work without the area studies approach. In reflecting on the "new" and "old" social theorisations that might explain meat consumption for planetary health, I am drawn to The Lancet definition of planetary health which describes the field as "the science of exceptional action": "exceptional" not used as a synonym for "great", but rather to reflect the urgent nature of climate change and the exceptional state of having only one chance of doing something about it (Prescott, 2019). In this regard, perhaps there is a need for newness and exceptionalism in theorisation, given the newness and exceptionalism of climate change as a threat to wellbeing. Recognising the "historical crossroads" of planetary health and the challenges it seeks to address, Gill and Benatar call for a new ontological framing for this new discipline (Gill & Benatar, 2020): perhaps this justifies the need for new theory to explore longstanding challenges. However, The Lancet has since published sociologically-based planetary health works employing more classical perspectives, including studies of interactions between planetary health and the COVID-19 pandemic from a Marxist ecofeminist perspective (Mair, 2020), and a structural functionalist take on urban planning for planetary health (Capon, 2017). There exist, therefore, applications of new and old sociological theory in the urgent and emergent solutions to planetary health.

I came about studying new materialism in a somewhat backwards fashion: reading and writing about Fox and Alldred's ideas of affect and assemblage before discovering the "old" materialisms and the ontological basis of materialist thinking. In developing future analytical practices for the study of planetary health, I am intrigued by rhizomatic approaches more closely aligned with "old" materialisms (Deleuze & Guattari, 1998). This line of inquiry has already begun, with the use of "old" materialisms to solve "new" challenges being referred to in the literature as "vitalist materialism" (Bennett, 2010), producing some publications related to climate change (Bauman, 2015) and posthuman conceptions of wellbeing (Saha, 2021). Future ethnographic work in this field may therefore be guided as much by classical social and sociological theory, whilst still respecting the exceptional nature of the urgencies of planetary health.

4.3.3 Ethnographic reflections

This sub-section considers my experience of a year of ethnographic fieldwork. It concludes that ethnography was an appropriate methodological approach for the thesis and aligned with the exploration of social-assemblages, but also recognises expected and more unusual challenges of ethnographic research.

Despite initial reservations about ethnography due to its messy and unpredictable nature, my year spent working with the Birmingham Foodie Community was one of the most intellectually stimulating and enjoyable experiences of my career in public health and social science. One of the first challenges to overcome was getting the balance right between capturing too much data (disrupting activism) and getting caught up in the moment (compromising data collection). I found that this was easier to balance when engaged in static activism (i.e., cooking in a kitchen) but harder to achieve when mobile (i.e., transporting food), but over time this was resolved by participant-led efforts to remind me to capture data when they felt it told part of our story together. I was surprised and pleased that the mutuality in the Community transitioned through to my study, as participants felt a sense of ownership in the ethnography and would routinely give me artefacts (usually printed documents) to enter into data collection.

I am also mindful of an early conversation with my supervisors prior to fieldwork in which we expressed concern that I might not be accepted into the Community because of my obvious absence of a regional accent making it apparent I was not 'local'. However, my supervisors and I were pleasantly surprised that this was in no way problematic. This was actually considered a valuable asset to some organisations as it was perceived by some to aid organisational navigation of external scrutiny. The Community was connected through a shared vision of a sustainable and equitable food system, so my compliance and alignment with this vision was really the only qualifying membership criteria.

Considering what I might do differently in future ethnographic practice, I would likely seek to expand the data formats further to include audio-visual material from social media disseminated by activists, and also make greater use of minutes from formal organisational meetings, to capture Community governance. Although I did not have time to run such an exercise for this thesis, I would also like to trial a feedback session to give participants the opportunity to voice their opinions on my final research outputs: this was originally planned to happen in the summer of 2020 but was scuppered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reading through the thesis several times now, I realise some of the activists in the Community come across as 'heroes' and 'villains', notably Justin, Shirley, Russell and Caroline being presented in overwhelmingly positive lights, in contrast to Celia's terse relationships with other activists. I would like to note here in my reflections that I maintained a strong friendship

with, and respect for, Celia during the time that we worked together in the Community. I think this is best reflected in the theme 'empowerment, in which Celia's conceptions of interventionism and paternalism showed her strong dedication to the Community and its work, and it was simply her unique vision of how these things were best supported which resulted in tensions with other activists. As described in that theme, this had material value in social progress and development of the food services, although I recognise the difficulty Celia had in expressing herself and her (seemingly well-meaning) ideas about empowering people through food. Celia had immeasurable affect in the social-assemblages which, in their totality, I deemed to be supportive of the production of health and wellbeing in the Community. Michael is also presented in less-than-favourable framings, and as described in the methods chapter, this reflects his affect as being 'lines of flight', incongruent with the social-assemblages but valuable in their own rights. I remind myself here that Fox (2013) celebrated the potential of those divergent affective flows as new and as-yet not understood forms of healthing, meanings and experiences, and interpret Michael's role in the Community to be one which presented novel and ambitious, if perhaps slightly premature, insights for advancing food activism. Overall, Michael's role was instrumental in bringing about a needed shift in the Community towards new methods of activism, and he had positive total affect across social-assemblages.

To end this evaluation of, and reflections on, my ethnographic practice, I relate the final conduct of the study to the characteristics of ethnographic practice as outlined by Lambert et al. (2011), in reference to the initial design of the study as described in the review chapter.

Characteristics of ethnography (Lambert et al., 2011)

Useage 3: Evaluating the ethnography

Lambert's primary characteristics of traditional ethnography for health research are presented here to reflect on how or if the study was genuinely ethnographic. This table was presented in *1.4.1 Ethnographic inquiry* to illustrate use of these ideas to design the study, and again in *2.1.3 Ethnographic methods* to show how they were realised in the fieldwork exercise.

"Ethnography explores: it is about discovery"

This thesis explored an expansive and diverse network of food activists in the West Midlands to discover cultural meanings of meat in the Community. It was open to the activities, pathways and views of activists and used them to discover novel insights about planetary health, health promotion, and sustainable diets in the Anthropocene.

"Ethnography relies on collecting data in the natural environment"

This thesis saw me visit many places and spaces of food activism, and the new materialist analysis enabled exploration of the value of those environments in the development and delivery of Community food services.

"Ethnography does not de-contextualise as with an artificially structured interview"

This thesis asked only questions of the data via the theorisation of the study: no activists were asked anything. The activities we undertook together resulted in food security and sustainability and were far from artificial; they were socially impactful.

"Ethnography values multiple perspectives, including researcher and researched"

This thesis found cultural meaning in the social-assemblages by valuing the affect economies which existed between not only me and the activists, but also the physical matter, places and spaces on which food sustainably was dependent.

"Ethnography observes what people do, it does not rely totally on what people say, but sees, visualises and creates a picture through first-hand experience of it"

This thesis presents exploration of the social-assemblages of food activism, and their relevance to cultural meanings of meat, through traditional ethnographic 'thick description' by valuing not just what activists said, but the matter they used to 'say' it.

"Ethnography uses a variety of different methods, multi-modes of data collection"

This thesis collected a vast data set comprised of audio recordings, photographs, field notes, physical artefacts, sensory information and video recordings.

"Ethnography sees that no variables are purposively manipulated"

This thesis was led by activists, for activism. The activities undertaken, the spaces visited, and the networks explored, were decided by the natural actions of food activists going about their work without coercion, including those where they used the researcher's volunteerism.

"Ethnography forms intimate relationships between the researcher and the researched"

This thesis saw me develop close friendships with activists, explored as a theme, and engage with them in social activities in and beyond data collection. I maintained close relationships with the Community long after the fieldwork phase ended.

"Ethnography embraces that phenomena cannot be analysed divorced from social and cultural context"

This thesis performed a post-anthropocentric new materialist analysis which not only valued, but was entirely reliant upon, the social and cultural contexts of food activism, and the physical matter which exerted affect in the social-assemblages of that Community.

"Ethnography is about the immediate social and cultural contexts, and the broader socioeconomic and political contexts"

This thesis found a complex micropolitics of food activism which compounded and developed cultural meanings of meat, food security and sustainability, and was inextricably related to broader local, national, and global social and political discourses.

"Ethnography is guided by, and generates, theory"

This thesis employed a complex social theorisation of meat in the Anthropocene, connecting new ideas about public health in planetary contexts, and social life through material affect, to make sense of cultural meanings of meat, generating further novel ideas.

"Ethnography is about culture, holism, naturalism, and flexibility"

This thesis embraced the messy, unstructured, dynamic nature of food activism to explore the messy, unstructured, dynamic nature of the social-assemblages and the role they play in forming cultural meanings of meat and food that structure social life. It presents a colourful story of food sustainability, and the friendships that formed amongst activists as they sought to improve human health and natural systems using food. This thesis ultimately finds culture, holism, naturalism, and flexibility in planetary health itself.

Comparative reflections on ethnography

My thoughts here concern methodological positioning, rather than alternative methods which are considered in *4.3.6 Ethnographic insights*. Whilst my thoughts here reflect a broadly "successful" ethnography in the scholarly sense, with clear alignment to ethnographic tradition, I am mindful that the advanced theorisations employed to make sense of the cultural meanings of meat, influencing the analysis and interpretations of the outputs, denied voice to the participant worldview (further explored in *4.3.6 Ethnographic insights*). I recommend here that future ethnographic work in planetary health take a more grounded approach, deriving theory from data rather than using established theoretical frameworks to colonise participant voice and worldview (Walker & Myrick, 2006), which this thesis lacks. In reference to my troubled relationships with Celia and Michael in particular, the grounded approach may have enabled me to see the Community from their perspective (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021), rather than simply address them as affective "lines of flight" using the new materialisms.

4.3.4 Construct perceptions

This sub-section considers how my thinking around key abstract constructs changed throughout the fieldwork exercise, focused on my evolving perceptions of affect and power, community, culture, and meat consumption. It concludes with my reflection that meat as a public health challenge is more complex than I initially imagined, but that solutions for radical change may be found in community-level responses to planetary health threats.

Affect and power

The concept of affect was new to me when I commenced doctoral study. Although I had long been familiar with social scientific conceptions of power, I had assumed underlying human exceptionalism: that only people can have power, and therefore all social life comes from people using that power (alongside a naïve assumption that power was generally used knowingly). New Materialist Social Inquiry challenged my thinking around the abstract concept of power, introducing the term "affect" to indicate the influence held by inanimate matter as much as living people. The new materialist concept of affective flow, referring to the directionality of affect and its exertion between the animate and inanimate (which I explore in *1.3.4 Power in social-assemblages*) was particularly influential in this regard.

One of the things I enjoyed most about my doctoral study was the opportunity to work with abstract concepts through complex social theorizations. What I had perhaps not anticipated was the extent to which ethnography would allow me to see the social world in ways which make theoretical concepts and abstract social ideas visible in everyday life. Through seeing spaces and events as social-assemblages, I now find myself somewhat unable to ignore how social life occurs through and around, rather than simply in the presence of, material. I now envisage greater use of new materialist thought in my public health research and health promotion practice. Interested in the potential for upscaling these ideas to develop health policy, I have worked with a colleague at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, and the International Union of Health Promotion and Education, to develop a new materialist approach to exploring contributions of activism to planetary health on a global scale, concerning the use of material to form sustainable affect which achieves equitable resource use (Meier-Magistretti, et al., 2021).

Community

I distinctly recall a conversation with one of my supervisors during the first sixth months of my doctoral study in which she asked what community meant to me. Coming from a rural background with little sense of community, the only example I could communicate on short notice was that of a community hall owned by the parish council of my hometown. Community

was not a word which made much sense to me. The interpretation of the analytical outputs using Hall's Circuit of Culture has given great meaning to the new materialist framing of affect and power in communities, and has also enabled me to see how communities construct, and are constructed by, culture. An early theoretical challenge I faced in the first year of my studies was identifying a cultural model which would enable me to "see" culture in this unusual, unestablished community, and I am pleased to have been able to use the Circuit of Culture to see how the Birmingham Foodie Community engaged in cultural exchange through regulation, identity, representation, production, and consumption.

It is clear to me that my understanding of community, and its role in health and wellbeing, has changed considerably over the years of my doctoral studies. This is not just influenced by my research. The positioning of my thesis in community settings, and my unexpected involvement in a community development program through my co-founding and directorship of OSFEC Sterling, has given me hands-on experience of health promotion in Birmingham communities: I have learned a great deal of new skills through my involvement with Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, navigating the governance of running a Community Interest Company, and seeing organic growth of this organization over time.

Culture

Culture is arguably the "largest" and most abstract concept I worked with in this study. My thoughts around culture before the ethnography largely concerned other cultures, and I struggled to see what, if any, cultures existed in this country. In hindsight, I recognize through my positional exercises pre and post-ethnography that I did have some realistic understanding of culture, as I understood that my lived experience and expected norms related to it differed greatly from the largely working-class communities in which I was about to immerse myself. As an overtly global citizen, jetsetter, Americanist and international wanderer, I acknowledge here that I have always held a strong bias against recognizing culture in the UK.

I link back here to my thoughts around the controversies and limitations of the area studies approach (which I describe in *1.2.5 Cultures of Birmingham*), in which I made sense of critical receptions of area studies that undermined the exceptional framing of specific Western localities. On reflection, I wonder whether my hesitance to engage in exploration of such exceptionalism originated in my pre-ethnographic assumptions that there was no culture in Birmingham to uphold as exceptional. My exploration of the historical Birmingham School came long after the ethnographic fieldwork had ended, and for future research activity, I wonder whether Hall's vision of "Birmingham ethnography" might hold some methodological merit in exploring what may be some facets of exceptional unique cultures in the city.

Meat consumption

I had stopped eating meat nine years before this study began, and my six years of dedicated study and work focusing on it have not much changed my mind about going back to it. I was vegan long before this study, and I will be vegan long after. It is fair to say I have an unusual relationship with meat. It is not something I eat, nor something I think about in my personal life, but it has been focal point of my academic career and professional activity throughout my entire adult life. I often wonder whether scholars working with similar public health threats, like tobacco or illegal drugs, experience something similar. The result is that meat is everywhere and nowhere in my life. It is effectively the central focus of everything I have done professionally for the last decade, but also something in which I have no personal interest.

Connecting to the originally proposed methods of public health and policy intervention outlined in *1.2.2 Emergent solutions*, my thinking here is altered from a position of direct interventionism to a cautious current standing of innovation and imagination. When I was accepted to study for my PhD, I simplified the envisaged study for friends and family by telling them my study would be about "*finding a way of getting people to eat less meat*". I think the most valuable outcome of this study is that meat is not so much something which is eaten, but something which is "done": in reference to the Circuit of Culture and my interpretation of the thematic outputs, I observe that meat is regulated, produced, used to form identity, represented, and consumed in more complex social forms than simply as part of dietary intake. The proposed policy mechanisms I describe in the Review sound even more feeble now than they did when I first read the Chatham House report in September 2015. The complexities of meat consumption in community and culture require considered investigation and theoretically informed interventionism, which I see through my work with OSFEC Sterling as being largely driven by local-level and participatory innovations.

4.3.5 Positional development

This sub-section presents a reflection on my shifting insider/outsider position, in terms of my relationships with participants, my research practice, and my developing ethnographic insights throughout the fieldwork exercise and beyond.

When the initial scoping exercise began in the summer of 2016, I had not long graduated from my first degree and made the transition from quantitative to qualitative research. On reflection, my background in experimental psychology of the diet lent to a professional confidence when working with participants, which was naturally authoritative: my job at Food Dudes Health was to "take" data from participants (children) who had not themselves provided consent to my being there. Examples of these broadly authoritative research practices can be found in a publication of that work (Marcano-Olivier, et al., 2021). Upon starting the scoping exercise, I therefore found myself out-of-character, which numerous participants commented on at the time as being characteristic of a quiet and reserved personality I do not realistically have.

As my understanding of ethnographic methods, and the Community, developed, my positionality shifted and I became more vocal, leading to some participants to think that I was initially scared of them and had grown to become confident. Justin, even now, more than four years after the fieldwork exercise ended, recounts stories of "*that time when I finally convinced Jake to go to the pub*", not realising that this shift in research practice was actually based upon my receiving of a Favourable Ethical Opinion from the Faculty Ethics Committee and therefore being able to commence more immersive data collection activity. It would also be useful here to recognise my growing confidence in academia and diminishing concern for institutional boundaries, which allowed me to engage in practices that might otherwise seem unprofessional or inappropriate, such as going to participants houses, or drinking with participants at a local pub. I came to find, however, that those spaces were vital for data collection as it was there that the micropolitics of food and community were unpacked: tensions which built during food activism could not be discussed during a public-facing community café, for example. Conversations which took place in social settings beyond the spaces of physical activism were to be an integral part of the data collection, requiring me to be more social. I have explored the challenges of navigating professional academic expectations whilst engaging in highly immersive ethnographic fieldwork through practice sharing in a national PhD student colloquium (Sallaway-Costello, 2017) with a view to reconciling the scholarly benefits with the structural challenges of "going native".

A third position in my interactions with participants came about in the summer of 2017 when "the Revolution" split the Community through the breakaway of OSFEC Sterling from OSFEC Herndon, through which I became something of a leader in the Community. This was

challenging from a research perspective as the intention of the ethnography was not to colonise food activism, but rather to develop a meaningful mechanism throughout the fieldwork exercise which would allow me to step away when data collection ended. I have conflicting thoughts about my role in this. Thinking about my early reflections on a need to be cautious of the "*new middle class*" of Birmingham based on Hall's fears of an incoherent and unrepresentative cultural analysis, I am conscious that at the time of ethnography, I was part of the new middle class: broadly affluent outsiders who came to Birmingham for work or study. My initial vision of wariness of new middle class participants skewing the study, was perhaps undermined by my own taking of control of the Community and being the new middle class presence that skewed the representativeness of the analysis. On the other hand, I reflect upon insights like those from Russell, who stated "I was inspired by you and Justin, you had ideas and you went for it". This reflects the considerable impact of the work of OSFEC Sterling, the social enterprise I established with some members of the Community, lending to a doctoral study which has a considerable, physical, ongoing legacy in Birmingham and continued to provide food security to thousands of people long after my fieldwork exercise ended. I have had the opportunity to share these challenging conflicts in participatory research through the British Sociological Association Early Careers Forum (Sallaway-Costello, 2020), and hope my reflections on the challenges of working in/with communities without taking control of them, offers insight to other ethnographers hoping to engage in non-colonising practices.

Considering how the ethnography changed me, it is fair to say that I held pre-conceived ideas about working-class people and culture before the ethnography, particularly regarding what relatives in my middle class upbringing had referred to as "folksy ways", which the ethnography has challenged. My longstanding belief that working-class people "lived in each other's pockets" was a perception of mine that the ethnography has forced me to reconsider. My limited interactions with working class people and communities before coming to Birmingham lent to an understanding that working class culture dictated an expectation that people spend time together without cause, in conflict with the generally colder and more distanced approach to family life I experienced in a rural middle class family. Throughout my time working with the Birmingham Foodie Community, and particularly the participants with whom I formed close friendships such as Justin, Shirley, Caroline, Deborah and Russell, I enjoyed having closer relationships with which I had not previously been accustomed, and came to see the value of this physical closeness in both community development activity and research practice.

Comparative reflections on positionality

As a form of recognition of my evolving positions in the Community, and to bring a final sense of "closure" to the ethnography as an ethical mechanism for assuring participants, with whom I maintained relationships after the fieldwork, that data collection had ended, I originally intended to hold some form of light-touch analytical validation exercise. This was inspired by the methods used by Barbara Howard-Hunt, who had supported my doctoral studies as internal assessor, in her own ethnography (Howard-Hunt, 2013).

I had discussed with Barbara my intentions to engage in some form of intellectual "give back" to the community after my lengthy fieldwork exercise, and she shared with me her use of a celebration event, inviting Somali women who participated in her ethnography to a formal dinner at which Barbara presented her thesis and invited scrutiny from the people it was about. Although I loved the embodiment of Barbara's principled ethnographic practice in this exercise, this is not a novel approach. Post-ethnographic data transparency is an expected part of ethnographic practice in the 21st Century, as an attempt to challenge colonial legacies of ethnography (Murphy, et al., 2021): sharing findings with participants before scholarly publication is advised (Moors, 2019).This exercise, termed "participant validation" or "member checks" (Thomas, 2017) can be a contested but empowering tool in qualitative research, particularly in immersive observational studies (Slettebo, 2020).

I had originally intended to deliver a final exercise, post-ethnography, for which I would seek secondary ethical approval from the Faculty REC, in the form of a new materialist validation lunch: a participant validation exercise inspired with the new materialist framework on which this thesis rests. My intention was to invite key participants, notably Justin, Shirley, Russell, Caroline, and Deborah to lunch away from the spaces of our normal food activism and present my final thematic outputs of the study. The subsequent informal discussion around our lived experience of my interpretations would be recorded and used here as a form of evaluation, according to an established framework (Goldblatt, et al., 2011). This was planned to take place in the summer of 2020 but was scuppered by the COVID-19 pandemic preventing social contact. I regret that, for this reason, my participants had to find out about my submission of my doctoral thesis via a post on social media.

In future ethnographic work, there may be value in a participant-led validation exercise, supporting co-production of the task to develop a form of feedback which is further supportive of the complex ethical challenges around ethnography (Mero-Jaffe, 2011).

4.3.6 Ethnographic insights

This sub-section reflects on the diverse and complex worldview of participants, identifying their advanced thinking about planetary health challenges, and considers whether a grounded approach might have been more valuable than advanced scholarly social theorisations. Some suggestions about the development of such a methodological approach are subsequently explored in the recommendations for researchers.

Participant worldview

In reflecting on what I would do differently in my ethnographic practice and scholarship in future work, one of the greatest regrets I have of this study is the use of complex scholarship to explain life in the Birmingham Foodie Community. I have conflicting thoughts about this. On the one hand, I take pride in the great learning I undertook to develop advanced theorisations which connected conceptual, theoretical, and methodological scholarly frames to deliver this cohesive study: there is value in this work because of the use of extant abstract ideas. At the same time, my participants themselves had profound ideas about the food system, social justice, environmental sustainability, climate change, and wellbeing. I give examples here of how my final analytical outputs and associated recommendations for policy and practice align closely with the worldview of my participants, and what role my study therefore plays in legitimising, colonising, using, or amplifying their voices.

The data I have collected and illustrated in this thesis shows not just concern for food activism and the health and environmental benefits of it, but also a great philosophical maturity regarding the humanity of food and sustainability. Russell was always a good example of this. He would repeatedly talk at length, and with great passion, about his ideas for developing a community-owned sustainable cookery training scheme, and jokes were often made about his obsessing over minor details around how he could make specific meals more environmentally friendly. In hindsight, however, this is reflected in the advanced social theorisations I used to come to that exact conclusion, for example, in *4.2.2 Meat and health*, following years of extensive scholarship, to which Russell himself contributed. Similarly, I suggest in *4.2.3 Meat and environment*, that reduced meat consumption may be gratified through the sharing of metrics related to the impact of food on ecosystems. Shirley knew this long before my analysis gave scholarly backing to the concept. Her keen business mind gave her great insight into the needs and motivations of her customers, particularly at the house shop, and she knew they and her volunteers were highly motivated by hearing the numbers related to the amount of food they had saved: the numbers were so extraordinarily large that no one could possibly make sense of them in any meaningful way, but Shirley knew the ever-increasing nature of them was a primary motivator for sustainable eating amongst her shoppers. Examples like

these make me question the value of using established theory for advanced social theorisation, and whether there may be more natural ways of processing and making sense of this data that speak to its original meaning. For this purpose, perhaps a grounded approach is needed to uphold the authenticity and holism of the ethnographic data.

I am not sure what this would look like in research practice. For example, in *4.2.1 Meat and consumption*, I interpret my thematic outputs to recommend public health activity around promoting reduced meat consumption using greater visibility of the processes and labours involved in the food system: in reality, this is something Justin did every day in his role as the food interceptions manager for OSFEC Sterling, when he would approach suppliers, funders, and community figures seeking to work with the organisation, and would use visual examples of volunteer labour to emphasise the social justice implications of OSFEC Sterling's work. This would commonly result in partners providing the necessary resources for sustainable consumption, similar to the recommendation I made using scholarly analytical practices. Perhaps some form of a two-phase study, or two-phase analysis, could be used to first identify those practices in a traditional ethnographic manner, then shift towards exploring them using participant worldviews using a more grounded approach. It is not clear to me how this might happen in reality, as I expect a formal interview to discuss Justin's ideas would rather disrupt our otherwise close relationship, undoing the work I had undertaken to form intimate relationships with participants in the ethnographic tradition.

Perhaps a final example may give insight into novel research practices which marry the ethnographic and grounded approach, in a methodology closer to critical ethnography. In *4.2.4 Meat and sustainability*, I interpret analytical outputs to recommend a general reframing of sustainability discourses from the current dominant environmental-focused, to a socioecological-focus more befitting of the planetary health physical-social nexus. Caroline had long been an advocate of this approach in her community development work, arguing that spaces of activism should not be fragmented (i.e., using the church hall at St Gerald's solely to host a OSFEC Sterling community café), but should instead integrate intersecting welfare services across and beyond the Community (i.e., using that space to host a community café, Stay-and-Play children's creche, a mental health advisor, and a benefits advisor at the same time) thereby integrating ecological meanings of wellbeing with other forms of heath. After the fieldwork exercise ended, Caroline worked closely with St Gerald's Church and, with help from numerous Community figures, myself included, made this vision a reality, which has now been operating for more than 3 years. In this sense, the ethnographic exercise could be used to identify participant worldview and innovations related to them, followed by a critical ethnographic exercise in which those worldviews and innovations are implemented, allowing for ethnographic immersion combined with a grounded approach to realising and theorising participant voice. To some extent, this did happen inadvertently in this study through my

significant role in "the Revolution" which saw the creation of OSFEC Sterling, though this was unplanned and, by my central role in that activity, the innovations were led more by my expertise in health promotion than participant worldview. Taking a grounded approach to analysis, or a critical ethnographic approach to exploring participant worldviews, may lend to future ethnographic practice which is genuinely respectful of those voices, and avoids potentially needless scholarly theorisation which adds little to nothing of value.

Relationships

In this final reflection, I consider the ethical implications of ethnographic practice with reference to developing intimate relationships with my participants, and how this has shaped my work beyond the fieldwork phase. When I first joined the Community and sought to gain access to a range of organisations, spaces, and activities across the network, I was initially a volunteer, openly known to be conducting a research study. This firmly established my initial relationship with participants as one of a more traditional researcher-participant dynamic, to which some activists were initially hostile, as described in my account of the Scoping Exercise in which a few activists expressed disillusion with academic research following interactions in the past with undergraduate students conducting questionnaire-based studies. This critical caution from activists towards research spoke to the need for a highly immersive ethnographic approach, in which I would need to provide equity in the research exercise and my relationship with participants to ensure the Community got as much, or more, out of my participation in their activism, as I did from their participation in my research.

As the ethnography progressed, I developed close intimate friendships with a number of participants, notably Justin, Shirley, Caroline, Deborah, and Russel. In the first four months of the fieldwork exercise, from January to April, my role transitioned, and our relationships developed from researcher-participant to researcher-friends-participant. This was when it became vital to routinely use verbal prompts in audio recordings to remind participants that I was still conducting a research study, and that their ongoing informed consent was necessary. It was also around this time that some of those participants with whom I had established close relationships, particularly Russell and Caroline, and to a lesser extent Celia, came to see themselves as "key" participants in the study, interpreting the ethnography as an anecdotal account of their personal involvement in activism rather than the Community at-large. Examples of this are instances where Russell insisted that I sit down with him to discuss matters of his beliefs related to food and faith, seeing my role as an ethnographer as something as an personal archival service in which I would collect his words to be immortalised in writing, and Caroline telling me to include specific facts about members of the Community in this thesis. I had to remind these participants routinely that my role in the Community was not one of capturing specific lives, but rather the interactions between social actors in these

spaces. Participants were always respectful of this need and did not question my ethnographic methods, although they often took interest in them and asked how I would present their lived experience in writing. This hopefully explains my cautious wording of the introduction to Chapter 2, in the spirit of actively and carefully communicating the story of activism with those who expressed an interest in reading it.

Fran's death in April was certainly influential in adding a further level of intimacy in my relationships with a number of participants, both positive and adversarial. The emotive experience of her passing connected, and divided, members of the Community and it was at this time that I was quite assured I was one of them. Here, I identify my relationship as shifting from researcher-friends-participant to researcher-friends-leader-participants, when Justin and I began to challenge the inequities in the running of OSFEC Herndon and commenced the separation away to form OSFEC Sterling. This was to be maintained until the end of the fieldwork phase in December.

What has happened since that time, having finished the fieldwork phase of the ethnography, and with the final submission of this thesis, my doctoral study, is that the "researcher" element has faded away. As I moved away from Birmingham to work at the University of Nottingham, regularly offering to step-down from my role as a director of OSFEC Sterling and routinely being asked by members of that organisation to continue the role for another year, there has also been a shift away from my leadership role, in which I now serve as an administrator for that organisation from a remote distance, but otherwise have little involvement in the day-to-day operations of OSFEC Sterling. I therefore position my current relationship as being one of friends-colleagues. Former participants, through my ongoing friendship with them, are mostly aware that the study has formally ended with the thesis submission, and that my academic role at the University of Nottingham now concerns other areas of research mostly unrelated to this thesis. In this sense, "Jake the researcher", my initial starting role in the Community, feels like a legacy rather than an ongoing role. The ethnographic nature of this study allowed me to transition out of a formal researcher-participant relationship very quickly and into something more empowering and human, which I hope speaks to the value and authenticity of this thesis, and the value of ethnography in health promotion research.

In reflecting on the ethical challenges ahead, I note two conflicting lines of thought. Firstly, that my shifting relationships with participants, though always under the control of the participants themselves, were messy, in the ethnographic traditions I have outlined in various places throughout the thesis. Although in these reflections I speak of "participants" as if they were a single homogenous group, I have ongoing contact and close relationships with only a small number of the people who took part in the original study, and have long lost contact with many of the activists who were eminent in organisations I did not remain involved in beyond

the fieldwork phase. I therefore wonder whether, for those participants who never saw a formal "end" to this study, I am still "Jake the researcher" to those people. This creates ethical challenges in the practice of ethnography, in determining how and when to give clarity to the finality of the ethnographic immersion and the data collection associated with it. In the context of the spaces I inhabited, it would be impossible to conduct a meaningful ethnography in which controls were put in place to contact every person I met in Birmingham throughout the calendar year 2017, to provide written confirmation of the ending of the study. I welcome future ethnographic thought on how to give sense of "closure" to ethnography without compromising the integrity of legitimate scholarship.

Secondly, my ethnographic immersion and the shifting nature of my relationships with participants, whilst messy and potentially ethically challenging, resulted in obvious, tangible public good, through the creation of OSFEC Sterling, and the works that continue through it today. These are explored before the concluding remarks. Had I not become so highly immersed in the Birmingham Foodie Community, nor been open to relationships which involved friendship, intimacy, leadership positions or adversarial interactions, that organisation, which creates more than 250,000 meals a year for vulnerable people in Birmingham, would never have existed. This thesis sought to explore how meat is socially constructed and socially constructs, and I find my final reflections here recognising that my own presence had a structuring influence on the lives of people in the Birmingham Foodie Community, in ways which I hope this thesis defends as positive and progressive.

Beyond the ethnography

Before presenting final remarks about this study to inform the conclusion of the thesis, I would like to end the thick description of the ethnography with a brief account of what happened to the food activists, their organisations, and the Birmingham Foodie Community after the study ended. This dynamic network of activists continues to operate today.

After the fieldwork phase, I had no further interactions with OSFEC Herndon beyond occasionally meeting and talking to activists at public events. OSFEC Herndon later made the decision to rebrand to support a transition away from their alternative economic model and left the OSFEC group. OSFEC UK, the umbrella organisation which inspired the regional OSFEC movements in the West Midlands, ceased activity shortly after the fieldwork phase ended, and was later dissolved.

OSFEC Sterling, the social enterprise I founded with activists in August 2017, is still operating. As of the final published submission of this corrected thesis (September 2023), OSFEC Sterling has saved over 415 tonnes of edible, in-date food from going to landfill, and activists have used it to support 1.2 million 'bellies fed' (quantified as either a three-course cooked meal in a community café, or one bag of food in a community market). OSFEC Sterling

provides paid fixed-hours employment to eight people and has been supported by 49,392 hours of activist volunteering. Founded with no starting funds, the organisation remains financially sustainable after six years, having only ever operated on 'Pay What You Want' donations. OSFEC Sterling has supported knowledge exchange activity with other food activism groups in Australia, Egypt, France, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland and Uganda, and its activists have played a central role in planetary health policy development through the International Union of Health Promotion and Education. I am still in frequent contact with some activists, and occasionally support them to run a community café when I am in the West Midlands.

The community partnership between OSFEC Sterling and St Gerald's Church continues to be strong. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Caroline, Deborah, and Russell took temporary control of OSFEC Sterling's food supply and St Gerald's kitchen facilities to establish a full-time food hub to support clinically vulnerable people, using the assets of both organisations to run a free meal delivery service which provided around 53,000 meals. Shirley was forced to close her food market during the pandemic but has since reopened it as a daily service. She still has close relationships with her shoppers and continues to provide food security to thousands of families, although she is glad the days of her 'house shop' are over.

Justin and I continue to be close friends and have acted as pro bono consultants for the formation, development or troubleshooting of food activism organisations, social enterprises, and community development projects all over the UK. We continue to serve as co-directors for OSFEC Sterling and have founded and developed two other food-related social enterprises together to further support food security in the West Midlands.

4.4 Recommendations

This section presents my ideas surrounding broader findings of this study in planetary health contexts. The exploratory nature of the ethnography provides diverse insights concerning frameworks for promoting sustainable meat consumption, here presented through a range of stakeholder-focused recommendations.

4.4.1 For researchers

This sub-section identifies secondary questions arising from this study and thesis, for further research exploration in planetary health. It welcomes future inquiry from ethnographers in the development of ethnographic methods and post-anthropocentric analytical practices.

- Future ethnographic inquiry on sustainable consumption could concern end-point consumers in more "regular" public spheres and consumption patterns. The Birmingham Foodie Community was chosen as the participant base for this thesis because of their existing recognition of the need for post-anthropocentric development of the food system. Future work may transition this beyond activist communities to reflect the lived experience of sustainability for the vast majority of consumers who are not actively involved in the reimagination of the food system. This may generate less aspirational data but better reflect wider sociocultural conceptions of sustainability.

- Subsequent inquiry could progress the activist-led ethnography towards an action research perspective. Due to the Community activists seeking my support in developing a new company to strengthen food services, this study became something of an inadvertent action inquiry, with researcher and participants working together to address a specific planetary health challenge. This was entirely unplanned and the data between the two halves of my ethnography is inconsistent as a result. Future research may invite activists to address a challenge from the beginning, to develop consistency in the data and form richer narratives around participatory action.

- Ethnographic work in planetary health may take a more grounded approach to analytical processing. Where this study used advanced social theorisations to make sense of the cultural meanings of meat in the Community, it ignored the maturity of experience, philosophical thought, and value systems of participants, ultimately drawing conclusions through analytical outputs which closely aligned with their long-held worldviews. Future work in this area may use grounded approaches to derive theory from data, rather than automatically using established scholarly thought.

- Researchers using traditional ethnographic methods must be mindful of institutional constraints on authentic ethnography, but also be open to the formation of close intimate relationships with participants if they are to be fully immersed in the community and culture of focus. Being open to new sites of food activism, such as drinking with participants at a pub, going for lunch with participants at non-Community cafes, and attending parties, gave me access to "down time" in which activists had mental and physical space to speak openly about their reflections on food activism. Those spaces must be recognised as valuable sites of ethnographic inquiry and data collection.

4.4.2 For activists

This sub-section communicates advice regarding food sustainability to food activists in the West Midlands and other urban localities. It highlights the value of community-level efforts in building resilient food systems, and potential for activists to play a vital role in planetary health.

- Organisations could be encouraged to develop locally-oriented practice guidelines to support activists to develop and deliver effective and meaningful food services. This study identified collective values of 'dining in dignity' and documented partial attempts to codify such concepts to ensure the social value of food and eating was supported. Activists may be encouraged to engage in participatory processes of value and target setting in their organisations, to orient the social value of their activism around intended social impact. Such codification of values to guide activism may enhance delivery of sustainable community food services.

- Food activists could be supported to engage in critical capacity building in community development, to further support reimagination of sustainable food systems. This study identified an aspirational but ageing activist base, with knowledge exchange opportunities valuable, but rare. It may be recognised that the future of activism and the development of sustainable food systems, must involve new generations, potentially through greater linkage of food sovereignty to popular social justice causes and environmentalism. Activists may work with education providers to support training opportunities for a younger and diverse activist base to continue their work.

4.4.3 For policymakers

This sub-section presents some ideas about how local and national policy development might involve food activists through participatory processes to support their work, via consideration of food safety legislation and Community Asset Transfers.

- Environmental health agencies in local and national government could work constructively with activist organisations to resolve tensions in food safety practices, with which activist organisations were generally highly compliant, but fearful of potential infractions. This study found activists were widely supportive of safety controls and implemented these with relative stringency, but were hesitant to engage with authorities for fear of repercussions. National-level audits of food safety legislation may identify incongruencies between legislative intent and policy implementation, by inviting participation of food activists in food safety policy development.

- Local Authorities could invest in third-sector food support by divesting publicly-owned assets through Community Asset Transfers (CATs). This study identified considerable potential and environmental impact of activism in supporting food security and sustainability, but also highlighted the material dependencies that exist between food, people, spaces, and places, the latter two being difficult to access without financial capital. Rather than investing funding in community food support, Local Authorities could make greater use of CATs (as permitted by UK Government) to support local-level reimagination of the food system, supporting health needs of local communities.

4.4.4 For scholars

This sub-section invites scholars in planetary health, materialist ontologies, posthumanism, and ethnography to scrutinise and develop the theorisations of this thesis, specifically regarding the intersections of sociological thought and health and environmental challenges.

- Scholars in planetary health could engage in greater critical scholarship surrounding posthuman privileging. Although this study identified means through which planetary health – the privileging of nonhuman entities to support human health – occurred, it is questionable whether this is legitimately posthuman. By assuming human gain from environmental sustainability, planetary health retains human privilege as an end-point goal, achieved through posthuman framing of development activity. Critical appraisal of this conflict might lend to reconciliation of posthuman tensions with the realities of supporting human urgencies, or present radical scholarly thought on sustainability.

- Salutogenesis scholars seeking novel theoretical insights in planetary health could further develop praxis concerning implementation of new materialist thought using salutogenic approaches. This was considered numerous times throughout the production of this thesis before ultimately being reserved for future scholarship activity. As outlined by Meier-Magistretti et al. (2021), 'healthing' for planetary health may be explained as a relational learning process of supporting the Sense of Coherence (Antonovsky, 1987). Activists may facilitate this through efficient use of scarce resources to give local people a sense of meaningfulness, comprehensibility, and manageability of overwhelming challenges in the global food system. In a global webinar on planetary health in July 2020, Dr Ruediger Krech (Director of Health Promotion, World Health Organisation) spoke directly of this potential using the example of the work of OSFEC Sterling.

"Planetary health is everybody's business, it's not somebody else's business to create a healthier world. I think this COVID crisis shows us very well what will not work in the future. We cannot leave it to those who have organised before. We need to engage, we need to show a new way of making societies more sustainable, how we can include people much more in the way we organise our local communities, and how we actually produce wellbeing. In OSFEC Sterling, you are showing how this can work. You will have so many bigger returns on what you are putting in."

Dr Ruediger Krech (WHO, 2020)

Making greater sense of the contributions and potential of grassroots activists in planetary health, particularly through framing activism as a form of planetary Salutogenesis, might lend to greater scholarly imagination around planetary health as either a relational learning process (Antonovsky, 1979) or a relational 'doing' process through the new materialist concept of 'healthing' (Fox and Alldred, 2020). This thesis presents a case for valuation of activists in health promotion activity, and scholarship in this area may develop novel insights by valuing their potential in creating wellbeing.

Conclusions

If the purpose of the conclusion of ethnography is solely to answer the primary research question, then I may end the thesis by reaffirming that the answer to the question "*what are the cultural meanings of meat consumption in the Birmingham Foodie Community?*" is sociologically complex. Viewing meat through the new materialisms, this thesis found meat is a material which supports the cultural structuring of social life, and is in turn shaped by those structures, developing diverse meanings which can be understood as meat producing/being produced by, identifying/being identified by, consuming/being consumed by, regulating/being regulated by, and representing/being represented by social life. The ways this may be interpreted to progress sustainable consumption for planetary health are suggested in this thesis in some immediate visions of policy and practice development, but the thesis offers a more valuable contribution in supporting the viewership of meat through new materialisms, for planetary health. Therefore, to give a more straight-forward answer to my research question, I assert that culture creates meat, and meat creates culture. Understanding those processes of creation may lend to effective and empowering forms of planetary health activity to better support the earth-human nexus, and sustain a reimagined food system, capable of supporting a growing population to enjoy healthy and sustainable diets on a tired but regenerating planet.

This thesis began with a claim that "*calculating meat consumption is methodologically challenging*". In that first chapter, this statement referred only to the quantification of ingestion, assuming that meat was consumed only by being eaten, and the relevance of this calculation was to assess the risks to human health caused by doing so. What follows is a story that negates this simplicity. The consumption of meat was found to refer to broader social processes of consumption not merely limited to its ingestion, and complicated, diverse cultural meanings of meat in which meat both created culture and was created by it. The interactions, or affect, which occurs between meat as physical matter, and meat as social life, speak to a dynamic material which presents no easy answers in terms of policy and practice for planetary health. The latter half of the early statement, however, was equally as underestimated, but was conversely certainly truthful. In the conduct of a traditional ethnography employing a contemporary post-anthropocentric new materialist framing, a messy and overwhelming methodology developed which supported me to view social-assemblages, and how they are centred around food, in ways which my own sociological imagination had never before realised. This leads me to end this thesis with a reflection on the paradoxical nature of meat and planetary health that this ethnography illustrates. My study ultimately finds there are no easy answers to supporting sustainable meat consumption for planetary health, but my year with the Birmingham Foodie Community saw food activists navigating that process with skill and ease. The social-assemblages I inhabited for that year draw me to a conclusion about

food activism in creating sustainable consumption through the sustainability of social life, leading me to believe that the answers to complex planetary health challenges are likely to be found in the most local, surprising, and unique of social spaces.

This thesis used an advanced social theorisation to make sense of the cultural meanings of an otherwise seemingly simplistic material. This resulted in diverse and complex findings and interpretations which go some way to exploring my research question. Ultimately, the original contributions to knowledge follow this diversity of positionings, situated amongst the topical outcomes and their onto-epistemological framings.

Following a review of topical, conceptual, theoretical, and methodological literature, and examining these in relation to the unique outcomes of the study and its conduct, the thesis claims to make the following two original contributions to knowledge:

1) The study presents multidimensional affective flows illustrating that meat both socially constructs, and is socially constructed by, culture, challenging traditional sociological primacy of human affect in consumption. By rejecting exceptional human capacity of affect, this thesis finds meat has affect over social life and is not merely affected by social life. This posits complexities of addressing meat as a threat to planetary health.

2) The study employed novel theoretical interpretations of New Materialist Social Inquiry to view meat consumption through a post-anthropocentric lens which facilitated the balancing of the urgencies of human wellbeing and environmental sustainability. This thesis finds that post-anthropocentric analysis of meat consumption can support exploration of human urgencies by decentring human agencies in social-assemblages.

I end this thesis with a quote from Russell, which he used to describe his commitment to activism to connect his ideas about food and faith. I think Russell's conception of the social value of food speaks to the interdependencies in the physical-social nexus, the potential of food activism in promoting sustainable consumption, and the cultural meanings of meat.

"*Food is about community, and people coming together. This is the essence of my faith. When we bring people together through food, they intermingle. If we can just get them sitting and eating, we can get them talking about what connects them. And I think that's important.*"

Russell

This thesis presents no firm or simple answers about sustainable meat consumption, but rather the sociological complexities and nuances of meat and the new materialisms which give hope for a food system that supports both human wellbeing and environmental vitality, for planetary health.

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Conference presentations

This thesis and its findings have been disseminated via peer-reviewed conference papers and presentations at:

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2021) 'Meat, meaning and materiality: an ethnographic exploration of sustainable consumption in local food systems'. BSA 7th Food Study Group Conference, Durham, UK [Online], 22 June 2021.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2021) 'Meat and the new materialisms: exploring food activism for sustainable diets in the Anthropocene'. IV ISA Forum of Sociology, Porto Allegre, Brazil [Online], 27 February 2021.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2020) 'Keeping yourself in (a) good company: using entrepreneurship to reimagine participation in public health nutrition'. BSA Early Career Forum – Designing and Undertaking Participatory Research, Sheffield Hallam University, UK [Online], 9 December 2020.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2019) 'Community, Culture and Meat Consumption: An ethnographic exploration of routes to sustainable diets through reduced meat consumption'. IUHPE 23rd World Conference on Health Promotion, Rotorua, New Zealand, 8 April 2019.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2018) 'Meat As a Material of Food Activism: An Ethnographic Investigation of the Relationship between the Consumer and the Consumed'. XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology Conference, Toronto, Canada, 19 July 2018.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2018) 'Community, Culture and Meat Consumption: The Cultural Meanings of the Western-Pattern Diet in a Post-2°C World'. Environment and Society Pre-conference to XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology Conference, University of Toronto, Canada, 14 July 2018.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2017) 'Sustainable diets for a sustainable world; framing meat consumption as an issue of planetary health'. 2nd BSA Society, Environment and Human Health Conference, University of Cardiff, UK, 27 October 2017.

Sallaway-Costello, J. (2017) 'Community, Culture and Meat Consumption: Preliminary Findings of an Urban Ethnography in the West Midlands'. 49th BSA Medical Sociology Group Conference, University of York, UK, 13 September 2017.

Appendices

Appendix A   Participant Information Sheet (3 pages)

Appendix B   Letter for gatekeepers of BFC organisations (2 pages)

Appendix C   Letter of Ethical Approval from HELS FAEC (1 page)

BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

8ᵗʰ of December 2016 V4

Community, Culture and Meat Consumption

Participant information sheet

You have been invited to participate in a research study. Please read this information sheet carefully so that you can decide whether or not you want to participate.

Introduction

Jake Sallaway-Costello is a researcher at Birmingham City University. He is doing research on what meat means to people in the West Midlands, for a study called "Community, Culture and Meat Consumption". You are invited to take part in this research.

You do not have to decide today whether or not you will take part. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with. This information sheet might use words that you do not understand. If you have any questions, please let Jake know and he will take time to explain anything. If you have questions later, you can ask them at any time.

What does Jake want to find out?

- To gain an understanding of the cultural significance, relevance and importance of meat to people living in urban communities in the West Midlands.
- To gain an understanding of how the cultural meaning of meat is associated with identity, such as by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and religious affiliations.
- To use this understanding to suggest how sociocultural values of meat consumption may challenge or influence public health interventions designed to encourage a reduction in meat consumption.

What questions is Jake trying to answer?

- What is the cultural meaning of meat consumption to individuals in the West Midlands?
- How does meat consumption (or lack thereof, for vegetarians) relate to cultural identity in a demographic sense?
- How does meat consumption (or lack thereof, for vegetarians) relate to cultural identify in an ideological sense?
- What challenges do cultural values of meat pose to governmental or supranational governmental interventions to reduce meat consumption?
- How do cultural meanings of meat relate to the exponential increase in British and Western meat consumption?

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are a customer or volunteer of The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham. Jake wants to find out what meat means to people in your community. The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham has been asked to be part of this research because the project is all about food and focuses on community development. You are an adult who is a representative of your local community.

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8th of December 2016 V4

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is voluntary – that means you only take part if you want to take part. You don't have to be involved in this research if you don't want to be. When you are talking to Jake, he will remind you about the study and ask if you want to take part. If you don't want to, just say no. You don't have to give a reason.

I don't want to take part. What do I have to do?

Tell Jake. He won't ask why you don't want to take part – it's up to you. If you haven't seen Jake around and he starts talking to you, he will remind you about the study and ask if you want to take part. If you don't want to, just say no. You can still be a customer or volunteer of The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham.

If there are any culturally sensitive issues discussed and you do not want to talk about them, you can choose not take part in that particular conversation, or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. Just tell Jake.

I want to take part. What do I have to do?

Nothing! Jake is interested in your normal life and the experiences you have when you come to eat or volunteer at The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham. If you say something Jake thinks is important, he might record you saying it, but he will ask first. If you have something important you think Jake might want to hear, tell him!

Are there are benefits of taking part?

This research is being done in order to improve the health and wellbeing of people in communities like yours. By taking part, you will be helping to achieve this goal.

Are there any risks of taking part?

Because you don't have to say or do anything at all, there are no risks of taking part in this research.

Is the research confidential?

Yes. Your confidentiality and anonymity are important to Jake. He will never write down your name or personal details. When Jake writes up the research, he might use a fake name to describe you, but never your real name. When Jake goes home, he will lock the voice recording in a cabinet in his office at Birmingham City University so that no-one else can listen to the recordings. It's okay if you mention your name in the voice recordings. When Jake types them up, he will take out your real name.

For how long will the recordings be kept?

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 Birmingham City University will keep the voice recordings and other notes for five years. They will only be accessible by Jake and his supervisors.

What are my rights as a participant?

- You have the right to informed consent. If there is anything you do not understand about this study, you are welcome to ask Jake who will be very happy to explain anything to you.
- You have the right to not take part. If you don't want to take part, just tell Jake. He won't ask for a reason and you don't have to give one.
- You have the right to anonymity. Your name and personal details will never be taken.

Who is funding this research?

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BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

8ᵗʰ of December 2016 V4

This study is funded by Birmingham City University.

How can I get information on the findings of this research?

It is hoped that the research will be published on a publically available research database. If this happens, Jake will inform The Real Junk Food Project Birmingham, who will pass the documents on to members of their mailing list. Jake will also deliver a public presentation of the research to customers and volunteers of the Real Junk Food Project on multiple occasions, which you will be invited to attend.

Who is responsible for the study?

Jake's supervisors, Dr Kate Thomson and Dr Anne Robbins are also responsible for the study. If you want to ask them any questions or make a complaint, email kate.thomson@bcu.ac.uk or anne.robbins@bcu.ac.uk.

How can I get in touch with Jake?

If you have any questions, comments or just want to get in touch, you can email Jake on jake.sallaway-costello@bcu.ac.uk .

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet carefully. If you have any questions, just ask Jake!

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BIRMINGHAM CITY University

29th of October 2016 V2

Community, Culture and Meat Consumption

Letter of access

Community, Culture and Meat Consumption is a doctoral research study being carried out by Jake Sallaway-Costello of Birmingham City University under supervision of Dr Kate Thomson and Dr Anne Robbins.

This ethnographic study will involve the researcher engaging in your community project as a volunteer, observing the project, volunteers, customers and other individuals associated with the project. When volunteers, customers and other individuals are talking about a topic of interest, he may record the conversation with a Dictaphone. This will be done with the full knowledge of the individuals being recorded. He may also take notes about what is happening in order to understand how the project works. Participation is entirely voluntary.

The community project .... has been invited to take part in this study as the project has been identified as one focused on community development and engagement with a central focus on food production, preparation and distribution.

Volunteers, customers and other individuals associated with the project will be made fully-aware of the researcher's intentions in order for them to assess whether or not they wish to participate. No one will participate without informed consent. Their admission of consent will be recorded on a Dictaphone. If they choose not to participate, they will not be directly recorded and nothing they say or do will be used in data analysis. Where possible, any recordings already made about them will be destroyed. No names or personal details will be recorded at any time.

Please read the participant information sheet carefully. This will be widely distributed before the study begins and will be available at all times during the study. The participant information sheet will give project volunteers, customers and other associated individuals the information they need to decide whether or not they wish to participate individually.

If you are happy to continue, please carefully read the next page.

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BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

29th of October 2016 V2

Community, Culture and Meat Consumption

Letter of access

I …………………………, Director of ………………………hereby certify that I am authorised to grant permission of access to Jake Sallaway-Costello of Birmingham City University in order to facilitate data collection for the doctoral research study *Community, Culture and Meat Consumption*.

Please tick next to each statement with which you agree:

I have read and understood the participant
information sheet   ………

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.   ………

I understand that participation of volunteers,
customers and any other people associated with
the community project is entirely voluntary   ………

I understand that both individual participants and the
community project can withdraw at any stage without   ………
prejudice

I understand that all participants have a right to anonymity
and confidentiality in data collection and analysis   ………

I agree to Jake Sallaway-Costello making
overt recordings when engaging with our project   ………

Signed

………………………………   …………………………………

………………………………   …………………………………

Director of …………………….   Researcher

Date ………………………………………

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Appendix C
Letter of Ethical Approval from the HELS Faculty Academic Ethics Committee

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Science Research Office

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham
B15 3TN

HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

09/12/2016
Mr. Jake Sallaway-Costello

223 Ravensbury House, Birmingham City University
Westbourne Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B15 3TN
United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Jake Sallaway-Costello

Re: Community, Culture and Meat Consumption - Sallaway-Costello /Rhag /2016 /RLRA /0636

Thank you for your amended application and documentation regarding the above study. I am happy to take Chair's Action and approve the study which means you may begin your research.

The Committee's opinion is based on the information supplied in your application. If you wish to make any substantial changes to the research please contact the Committee and provide details of what you propose to alter. A substantial change is one that is likely to affect the

- safety and well-being of the participants;
- scientific value of the study;
- conduct or management of the study.

The Committee should also be notified of any serious adverse effects arising as a result of this research. The Committee is required to keep a favourable opinion under review in the light of progress reports.

I wish you every success with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Merryl Harvey

On behalf of the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee