

**AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
ALLOTMENTEERING: PRACTISING
SUSTAINABILITY?**

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Abstract

In an era where global climate change, ecological degradation and the depletion of natural resources have become increasingly prevalent, the need to identify ways in which we can pursue more sustainable ways of living and conserve an ecological balance has become of great importance in society. The pernicious effects that society's (global) food production and consumption practices have on the environment is one prominent area of concern.

Much of the existing literature that has explored environmentally responsible consumption has been preoccupied with developing an understanding of the environmentally responsible consumer, the social, symbolic and political significance of environmentally responsible consumption and the potentiality of alternative food systems to alleviate the environmental consequences of our globalised food system and other issues concerned with sustainability on a broader level. Conversely, very few studies have drawn attention to everyday practices and the ways in which consumers engage with environmental issues on an everyday, practical level. This is crucial to gaining an insight into the ways in which we can envisage change and naturalise more environmentally responsible ways of living into routine, everyday consumption practices.

To remedy this gap, this thesis explores the practice of allotmenting from a practice-theoretical perspective and attempts to advance our understanding of the ways in which consumers engage with environmental issues on a day-to-day basis. Based upon an ethnographic approach, this study develops a rich, in-depth understanding of embodied, (mainly) skilled practitioners, processes of 'doing' allotmenting and other practices embedded in the practice of allotmenting.

This study contributes to the field of environmentally responsible consumption by demonstrating how allotmenters engage in environmentally responsible consumption patterns unintentionally. More specifically, it shows how these consumption patterns transpire through allotmenters' close intimate engagement with nature and through the ways in which they personally invest themselves; their time, energy and effort into processes of nurturing and domesticating nature. Thirdly, it shows how the practice of allotmenting has the potential to trigger more unsustainable consumption patterns. These findings have implications for the ways in which we understand and make sense of environmentally responsible consumption.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Allotment gardening or allotmenting occupies a distinctive place in British cultural heritage, marked largely by periods of austerity, following bouts of economic depression, the advent of two world wars and prevailing social and cultural interests (Crouch and Ward, 1997). Nevertheless, these historical, social and cultural associations have begun to make way for more contemporary representations framed around environmental sustainability. The following discussion provides a brief overview of the history of allotments, as a means to demonstrate the different roles that allotment gardens have carried throughout their history and show how allotments have come to form part of a broader movement for more sustainable forms of food production and consumption.

1.1.1 A Brief History of Allotmenting

In the 18th Century, when the idea of providing land for labourers was rather novel, there were a number of different forms of land provision including; cow pastures, potato grounds, gardens or simply fields (no more than five acres) of arable land, which contemporaries often referred to interchangeably, making it difficult to distinguish allotments amongst them (Barnett, 1967; Burchardt, 2002). However, the Allotment Act published in 1922, which outlines the permitted use of an allotment, defines an 'allotment garden' as 'an allotment not exceeding forty poles in extent, which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family'.

Due to a dearth of research and national survey data, the origins of allotment gardening are understood to be relatively vague (Acton, 2011; 2015). Nevertheless, Lesley Acton (2015), a conservation and cultural heritage consultant, identifies several ‘beginnings’ within her publication; *Growing Space; a history of the allotment movement*, which trace the origins of allotment gardening back to both rural *and* urban settings as outlined below. A brief history of allotments during the war, interwar and post war periods will follow before outlining their role in the present day.

1.1.2 Rural Beginnings

The emergence of allotments in rural settings can be traced back to the land enclosures taking place during the 18th Century and the deployment of labour-saving technology in the farming industry, in the early 19th Century. Following the Enclosure Act 1773¹, landholdings previously owned or rented by small-scale producers became enclosed and placed under the authority of one or two landowners (Acton, 2015). In doing so, this process largely disrupted the existing land order and many rural labourers lost their right to use common land, for their keeping of livestock and other agricultural undertakings (Burchardt, 2002). Adding to this, Burchardt (2002, p.10) describes how, between 1793-1830, ‘increasing unemployment and underemployment, the more severe seasonal imbalances in demand for labour, falling real wages and enclosure all led to increased dependence on poor relief’. Owing to the meagre poor relief² entitled to labourers at that time, which was not enough to relieve poverty and partly, to compensate disenfranchised proletarians for their loss of rights to commons land, several proposals were made for the

¹ Otherwise referred to as the *Inclosure Act 1773*.

² A form of economic assistance in place to subsidise wages and alleviate poverty.

provision of land for agricultural labourers and the idea of allotmenting came into being (Acton, 2015; Constantine, 1981).

At the beginning of the 19th century, during the Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), the emergence of industrial *labour saving* machinery (i.e. thrashing machines) in the farming industry led to further unemployment and distress for agricultural labourers (Acton, 2015). This prompted further appeals for the provision of land for the poor (Burchardt, 2002). The growth of the allotment movement was further coerced by the Captain Swing riots in 1830, which were fuelled by the widespread use of labour-saving machinery and high unemployment rates (Archer, 1997; Burchardt, 2002). Shortly following the disturbances of the Captain Swing riots, the Labourer's Friend Society (LFS) became established; the first national society formed to promote allotments. The LFS 'rapidly' gained support from parliamentary patrons, including, William IV, alongside a number of Lords, Bishops and MPs and the society started and continued to play a pivotal role in the allotment movement for the next twenty years (Burchardt, 2002). Furthermore, it has also been reported that during the 1830s and 1840s, considerably more emphasis was placed on the value of allotments, in terms of their ability to *reduce crime* rather than increase the production of food (Burchardt, 2002). Relating to this, Archer (1997) suggests that around this time, allotments were not necessarily offered to labourers who would have benefitted from the practical value of growing fruits and vegetables for domestic consumption. Rather, he suggests that allotments were employed as a form of moral control, for during this period, allotmenters who misbehaved or disobeyed those in authority could risk losing their allotment. Moreover, he demonstrates how people who occupied and tended to an allotment were considered to be 'morally superior' (Archer, 1997, p.29) to those who did not occupy an allotment and so, as Archer (1997, p.32) points out, if allotmenters strayed too far from the

'narrow path of deference and obedience' they risk losing both the tangible benefits of growing fruits/vegetables that allotment provides and their superior status.

Furthermore, Archer (1997) claims that, around this time, allotments were intended to provide an appealing diversion from the 'beerhouses', as allotmenters were expected to spend their time after work tending to their allotments. Providing allotments to the *labouring poor* also enabled them to gain some independence as they became less dependent upon the poor relief (Moselle, 1995). From this brief summary, obtaining and cultivating an allotment is represented as a matter of necessity; a form of sustenance for rural labourers, owing to the economic inequalities, insecure employment and the loss of land. During this period, allotments were also employed as a strategic form of social control, 'as a means of keeping the poor man from drunkenness' (Burchardt, 2002, p.18; Constantine, 1981).

1.1.3 Urban Beginnings

Research undertaken by Professor Harry Thorpe and the *Committee of Inquiry into Allotments* (1969) revealed a 'surprising number of allotments around large towns, such as Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham, Sheffield and Southampton, to name but a few', by 1700 (Thorpe, 1975, p.170). Acton (2015) explains how, during this period, the demand for housing was accompanied by a demand for gardens. Particularly during these periods, both Sheffield and Birmingham were considered to be 'high wage' economies (Flavell, 2003). Adding to this, Thorpe (1975, p.172) informs us that there was an emphasis on recreation, besides the value attributed to cultivating the land.

Whilst there is evidence to suggest that allotments prevailed within urban landscapes during the early 1700's (Acton, 2015; Thorpe, 1975), many early town planners who owned the land soon transformed the allotments into building ground for urban development, once they became aware of the full potential of their investment (Acton, 2015; Flavell, 2003). Within the late 1800s and early 1900s; the advent of the second industrial revolution, urban development gave rise to an unprecedented growth of rural populace in more urban settings as more labourers moved from rural settings to urban settings (Acton, 2015).

In contrast to the origins of the allotment movement in rural settings, as outlined above, within more urban industrialised settings, allotment provision was somewhat associated with sociocultural trends and tastes. For instance, the demand for housing in more industrialised settings was accompanied by a demand for allotments. Here, allotment gardening was a matter of *choice*, whereas in more rural settings, labourers *needed* to tend to an allotment, to meet their necessities (Acton, 2015). Besides these rural and urban 'beginnings, Acton (2015, p.45) also considers how the rise in horticultural education developed and became an important part of education for children in schools across Britain and considers how the allotment movement in Britain established as part of a 'wider international community'.

1.1.4 The Allotment; A Service of War

Following the onset of World War 1 in 1914, allotment gardening reached its all-time apogee. Under the authority and regulations ensuing from the Defence of Realm Acts of 1914 and 1916, the government was provided with 'emergency powers' to commandeer land and property for wartime use (Acton, 2015, p.61). Acton (2015, p.61) informs us that 'soon every spare piece of land, however small, was turned into a growing space'. Public parks, royal grounds and playing

fields were turned over for the cultivation of vegetables (Acton, 2015). Furthermore, widespread campaigns, gardening demonstrations and efforts to educate and advise people on the subject of gardening and cultivating their own food took place (Acton, 2015). Reflecting pre-war conditions and the use of allotments in rural areas, the significance of allotments was, first and foremost, placed on increasing the production of food. By the end of the First World War in 1918, the number of allotments rose substantially from around 570,000 to over 1.4 million, during which time, they became an urban phenomenon predominantly (Acton, 2015; Crouch and Ward, 1997; Thorpe, 1975).

Despite the end of the war in 1918, the demand for allotments continued to rise (Crouch and Ward, 1997), owing to food rationings which continued to take a hold after the war, an increase to the cost of vegetables and the introduction of the Land Settlement Act³ in 1919 (Acton, 2015; Crouch and Ward, 1997). Crouch and Ward (1997) reveal that allotments were also valued for recreation alongside their more utilitarian benefits. Nevertheless, Acton (2015) informs us that eviction notices were distributed to allotment holders across the country, as property requisitioned during the war was returned to its former proprietor and/or former use.

The establishment of the Allotments Act in 1922 and subsequently, the Allotments Act 1925 and the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1926 intended to secure the provision of land for allotments. The Allotments Act 1925 stipulates that 'allotments should be considered in every town and planning scheme' and moreover, that, 'the land purchased or appropriated by a local authority for use of [statutory] allotments must not be disposed of or used for other purposes without Ministerial consent (Thorpe, 1969, p.18).

³ The Land Settlement Act 1919 authorised local authorities to provide both smallholdings and allotments to war veterans (Acton, 2015).

On September 1st 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War gave rise to concerns regarding the supply of food and the threat of starvation (Acton, 2015). At this point, as Ginn (2012, p.296) informs us, Britain was importing '70% of its cheese and sugar, 80% of its fruit, 90% of its cereal and 50% of its meat'. Consequently, increasing the quantity of home-grown and allotment-grown food became a matter of necessity. The Ministry of Agriculture instigated a national campaign; Dig for Victory, which appealed to people to grow their own food and raise their own livestock, provoking another surge of interest in allotment gardening. It was during the Second World War when the allotment garden reached its zenith, surpassing the number of allotments established during World War 1. From the outset of World War 2, there were approximately 740,000 allotment plots in England and Wales (Acton, 2015), which soon escalated to a total (estimation) of 1,500,000 allotment plots by 1942, covering 143,000 acres of land (Thorpe, 1975).

It has been argued that wartime propaganda advocating the idea of *Digging for Victory* was imbued with 'national significance' (Ginn, 2012, p.297) and portrayed the idea of growing one's own food as a 'social duty' (Crouch and Ward, 1997, p.10) and a 'way for families to display 'the highest form of citizenship' during the war' (Ginn, 2012, p. 296). For instance, Smith (2013, pp. 43-44) shows us how one appeal within London's *Evening Standard* newspaper published on 6th September, 1939, draws a parallel between both the gardening tools and weapons of war *and* the idea of growing one's own food and the 'defeat of the abhorred enemy':

Britain must learn to dig ... Not only must we dig in the cities. Every spare half acre from the Shetlands to the Scillies must feel the shear of the spade ... Turn up each square foot of turf. Root out bulbs and plant potatoes. Spend your Sunday afternoon with a hoe instead of in the hammock. Take a last look at your tennis lawn and then hand it over to the gardener. And if you meet any poor

fool attempting to beat the plough share into a sword, tell him that this war may be won in the farms as well as on the battlefield ... [...]. Remember, therefore, that food wins victories as surely as gunpowder ... By husbanding our food resources, by searching out new soil from which to add to our stores, we may contribute perhaps decisively to the finish of this contest. Tell your neighbour and remember yourself that the order is to dig. The spade may prove as mighty as the sword. DIG.

Behind newspaper reportings, there were a great number of gardening books and publications, radio talks, leaflets, lectures and both gardening and cooking demonstrations (by the Ministry of Food and the Women's Institute, for instance) educating and advising people on how to tend to their allotment plot and cook with their allotment-grown produce (Acton, 2015; Crouch and Ward, 1997; Smith, 2013). Mr. Middleton, a BBC broadcaster, who became a *national* gardening figure during the war, endorsed the campaign by giving talks on his horticultural radio programme *In Your Garden* and around different parts of the country (Middleton, 2008; Smith, 2013).

Following the post-war period, the demand for allotment gardens diminished considerably (Crouch and Ward, 1997). Acres of land that had been requisitioned temporarily for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables during the war were recovered and absorbed into plans for urban development and rebuilding towns and cities that had been affected by the war (Acton, 2015; Crouch and Ward, 1997). Moreover, the end of food rationing in 1954 saw a rise in the standard of living and greater levels of economic prosperity and consequently, there was no longer the *need* for people to grow their own food (Acton, 2015; Crouch and Ward, 1997). Around this time, there were also developments in technology, including television and refrigerators and the rise of supermarkets, frozen foods and the need for convenience following post-war rationing (Acton, 2015). By the mid-1950s, convenience foods constituted one fifth of

people's food expenditure (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016). The move towards greater prosperity, prompted many gardeners to purchase frozen (Crouch and Ward, 1997; Thorpe, 1975), packaged and convenience foods, which were associated with 'style' and often distinguished from the 'drudgery' of the daily preparation of food (Short, 2006, p.36). Also, people had started to look upon the allotment as something 'anachronistic' (Acton, 2015, p.130) belonging to a time characterised by poor standards of living and economic adversity. During this time, participating in *other* leisure and recreational activities became increasingly important (Thorpe, 1975). Moreover, the very nature of leisure and recreation evolved to become a 'commodity' itself, with an increasing number of facilities, (i.e. leisure centres) and equipment becoming available for people to engage in other forms of recreation (Crouch and Ward, 1997).

Following the decline in allotment sites across the UK, the Minister of Land and Natural Resources commissioned a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments, in order to, 'review general policy on allotments in the light of present-day conditions in England and Wales and to recommend what legislative and other changes, if any, are needed' (Thorpe, 1969, p.2). The Committee, chaired by Professor Harry Thorpe, published the report in 1969, otherwise referred to as the *Thorpe report*, producing forty-four recommendations, based upon the piecemeal development of allotment legislation since 1908 which was 'in urgent need of revision', particularly due to the 'stigma of charity' associated with allotments, none of which had been acted upon (Crouch and Ward, 1997, p.7). Within the report, Thorpe and his committee advocated for a reorientation of allotments, to what they referred to as 'leisure gardens', with an emphasis on 'beauty, as well as productivity' (Thorpe, 1975, p.178).

Despite Thorpe's efforts to revive the allotment and place more emphasis on recreation, the practice of 'growing one's own' lapsed until the 1970s when it regained popularity for a short period of time. The growth of allotments during this period has been found to coincide with both the environmental movement which started to emerge and the outset of an economic recession (Acton, 2015; Crouch and Ward, 1997; Willes, 2014). Acton (2015, p.160) informs us that, Friends of the Earth, an environmental organisation founded in 1969 which was amongst the first organisations to campaign for a range of environmental and social issues, advocated for the use of allotments as a means to 'put people in contact with nature again'. Furthermore, both Acton (2015) and Willes (2014, p.364) describes how the arrival of a British television comedy series in 1975 called *The Good Life*, 'captured the mood of the times' and further championed the interest in allotment gardening around this time.

1.1.5 Present Times

In the UK, there has been a revival in the interest of growing one's own food and the demand for allotments over the past few years (Ethical Consumer Organisation, 2015; Local Government Association, 2009). There are approximately 330,000 allotment plots in the UK currently, with around 90,000 people on the waiting list (National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, n.d. a). It has also been reported that an increasing number of parishes in England are dedicating parts of their churchyards over to members of the local community in response to the demand for growing-your-own (Bingham, 2016). Furthermore, the National Trust has created 1,200 new allotments and growing spaces providing local communities with the opportunity to start growing their own food (National Trust, n.d.).

Although, contrary to the working-class origins of allotment gardening (considered earlier in this chapter), Mintel (2017) informs us that, working professionals who demographically fall within the AB social class are “more likely than average” to own an allotment garden nowadays. Adding to this, Mintel (2017) also inform us that the revived interest in allotments, which was previously bound up in the practical, utilitarian and (to a lesser extent) recreational benefits that they provide, is a reflection of people’s increasing interest in “fresh food” and “healthy eating”. Indeed, this ‘politicised’ notion of food, in relation to issues around health and food safety has become more and more pronounced in “medialised” discourses, which call upon consumers to question and change their everyday food consumption routines (Halkier, 2010, p.1). Aside from their ability to provide people with a fresh source of healthy fruits and vegetables, the national allotment society reveal how a quarter of people who took part in their recent survey have an allotment because it enables them to socialise with like-minded others (National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, n.d. b). Consistent with these findings, Litherland (2017) demonstrates how allotments provide a space through which individuals and the local community can come together.

Supporting the growing interest in allotmenting and ‘growing-your-own’, there are numerous gardening television programmes including *Gardeners World*, *Love Your Garden*, *Beechgrove Garden* and *The Big Allotment Challenge*⁴, and an array of allotment handbooks, magazines and guides such as *Grow Your Own*; *Kitchen Garden*; *Amateur Gardening*; *Simply Vegetables*; *Allotment and Leisure Gardener*. Which? (2017), the Consumers’ Association released an advice guide in 2017 for growing vegetables fruit and herbs, and offers advice for consumers regarding how they can secure an allotment. Furthermore, the market research company, Mintel (2016),

⁴ The Big Allotment Challenge broadcast on primetime television in 2014 attracted an average audience of 1.9 million people (Appleby, 2014).

estimate that the market for gardening products will increase by 13% between 2016 and 2021. Amongst the more popular products bought in the last twelve months (from March 2016), Mintel (2017) have recorded that consumers are spending money on bulbs/seeds (for both flowers and vegetables), garden chemicals (e.g. fertilizers and weed killers), fruit/vegetable plants, hand tools (e.g. rake, spades and hose pipes) and power tools (e.g. mowers and hedge trimmers).

The development and rise in the interest of growing-your-own has also paved the way for more community orientated food projects, such as the Incredible Edibles, in Todmorden (Incredible Edible Network, 2017), the development of community allotments (Crossan, Shaw, Cumbers and McMaster, 2015; Portsmouth City Council, 2017) and the growth of 'guerrilla gardening' (Ethical Consumer Organisation, 2015). Adding to this, the Ethical Consumer Organisation (2015) informs us that growing-your-own has become a 'popular' curriculum activity in primary and secondary schools and universities.

In recent years, the idea of allotment gardening has also become absorbed into discourse and strategies surrounding local sustainable development (Acton, 2015; Bramall, 2011; Crouch and Ward, 1997; Ginn, 2012; Local Government Association, 2009; Miller, 2015) in terms of concerns around the safety of food, the environmental implications of the current food system; healthy eating, improving mental and physical health⁵ and/ or bringing communities together (Adams, 2010; Armstrong, Raper & Whewell, n.d.; Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, 2009; Local Government Association, 2009; 2010; National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, n.d. b; Soil Association, n.d. a). A number of campaigners and non-government

⁵ Although, it is important to note that allotments have previously been recognised as a source for nutrition, as part of a healthy diet (Burchardt, 2002) and for improving allotmenters' physical and mental well-being (Thorpe, 1969).

organisations supporting more localised forms of consumption have even gone to the extent of drawing a connection between the 'Dig for Victory' campaign which received national recognition during World War 2 and growing concerns around industrial agriculture and the environmental impacts of consumption, emphasising the more political facets of allotment gardening (Bramall, 2011; Ginn, 2012). In fact, Ginn (2012, p.295) succinctly suggests that,

...rhetoric supporting a present-day grow your own revolution draws on a shared understanding of the past, but places it in a forward-looking national narrative, in which we are no longer fighting the evils of national socialism but mitigating the self-inflicted wounds of industrial modernity.

Despite the growing interest in allotment gardening and the exceeding lengthy waiting lists, allotment sites are still vulnerable, owing to the increasing pressures placed on local councils to use the land for (often urban) development (McVeigh, 2015). Fairly recently, allotment-holders at Farm Terrace allotments in Watford lost their allotment site in a high court battle against the local authority in November, 2016, which will be used for development (Siddique and Topping, 2016).

The discussion thus far, has outlined the most prominent values that have been attributed to allotments since their establishment in the late 1700's. Embedded within a working-class sentiment, in rural England, allotments were originally valued for their support during times of economic adversity, increasing the economic independence of rural labourers and as a strategy for the development of a more civilized society and as a means to occupy one's leisure time in more urban areas.

Like allotments, domestic gardens can also represent productive spaces through which people can cultivate their own fruits and vegetables for their own consumption (Mintel, 2017). Indeed,

gardening (i.e. growing flowers, fruits, vegetables and other vegetation) is considered to be a favourite pastime amongst UK households (Mintel, 2017). Therefore, before the discussion develops further, there are a couple of distinctions between allotments and domestic gardens that are worth drawing attention to here.

Firstly, the term 'gardening', as it is often applied to the practice that gardeners perform in their front gardens, back gardens, on their patios and/or on their balconies, is more encompassing than allotmenting; whilst it embraces the process and practice of cultivation and a way in which people can 'engage with nature', it has increasingly become associated with the cultivation of flowers and the practice of maintaining/ caring for a lawn (Bhatti and Church, 2004). Bhatti and Church (2004) argue that this particular change in gardening practices at home, in part reflects the size of the average garden, which has gradually decreased over the past 20-30 years or so.

Secondly, domestic gardens, particularly gardens located at the back of the home, are (to varying extents) seen to be more secluded, private and personal spaces that are "hidden from public view" (Bhatti and Church, 2014, p.42; Don, 2016). Thus, if we think about the idea of 'growing one's own' fruits and vegetables in a domestic garden, it can be understood to be a relatively solitary affair. On the contrary, allotment sites are inherently social spaces that provide allotmenters with the opportunity to meet and socialise with other allotmenters, learn from the experience of others and also share their own experiences/ advice with fellow allotmenters (Acton, 2011; Crouch and Ward, 1997; National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, n.d. b). Indeed, some allotment sites have communal areas or community buildings, where allotment holders can gather, hold meetings and social events and also trade gardening tools and materials

to help support the upkeep of their allotment site (Armstrong, Raper and Whewell, n.d.). Somewhat connected to this point, allotment gardens are considered to be more inclusive, with plots in close proximity to one another that are (if at all) separated by low fencing. On the contrary, domestic gardens at the back of people's homes are commonly partitioned by tall fencing that separates one person's back garden from their neighbours'.

Thirdly, people's back gardens or "secret gardens" as Bhatti and Church (2014, p.42) have defined them, are designed, shaped and used in ways that reflect peoples' different 'orientations to garden life' (Chappells, Medd and Shove, 2011, p.707). Whilst they can be productive spaces for gardening and cultivating produce (as I have mentioned earlier), they also represent social, leisurely spaces for entertaining family and friends and relaxing (Appleby, 2017; Chappells, et al., 2011; Mintel, 2017). Mintel's (2017) most recent report on gardening demonstrates how a trend towards "outdoor living" and "entertaining" manifests in the increase in sales of barbecues, garden furniture, patio heaters, fire pits, solar lighting and garden ornaments. Thus, it appears as though the social aspects of both allotment gardens and domestic gardens are bound up in a sense of place; the everyday practices that take place in and around the home or on an allotment (Chappells et al., 2011; Crouch and Ward, 1997).

Building on this point, Mintel (2017) also inform us that the visual aesthetics of people's gardens have also grown in importance, since 49 percent of their respondents have invested in garden improvement projects (i.e. landscaping) over the past year (Mintel, 2017). In connection with this, Avis-Riordan (2017) shows how a growing trend in artificial grass, allows people to enjoy an 'immaculate lawn all year round with no need for maintenance', with a 35% increase in sales year-on-year. In comparison, allotments are predominantly productive, labour-intensive spaces,

which are *primarily* designed for the purposes of growing fruits and vegetables; sowing, propagating and transplanting plants rather than for their aesthetic appeal (Crouch and Ward, 1997).

The following section outlines the ways in which allotments have become incorporated into strategies for more sustainable forms of food production and consumption.

1.2 Food and Sustainability

Since issues such as climate change, rising sea levels and the depletion of natural resources (to mention but a few) have become prominent features of society, the need for change has become paramount. Through the concerted efforts of the UK government, non-governmental organisations, the media and academia (through the development and implementation of environmental policies, food policies, strategy and action programmes (e.g. Local Agenda 21), campaigns and research, for instance), the idea of sustainable development has become increasingly prevalent in society and securing sustainable food sources is now a key issue on international, national, regional and local agendas (Cabinet Office, 2008; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2010; Local Government Association, 2009; Sustainable Development Commission⁶, 2008; 2009; Transition Town West Kirby, 2017; United Nations, 1987; United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992).

Over the course of the past 20-30 years, discourses formed broadly around chemically-intensive agricultural practices; the advances in biotechnology and genetically modified organisms; the

⁶ The Sustainable Development Commission was the UK Government's independent advisor on sustainable development until 2011 when it was closed.

use of preservatives; the distance travelled by food (from 'Farm to Plate'); and the amount of food wasted each year (for instance), have often been associated with environmental challenges such as; deforestation, climate change, soil erosion, less biodiversity and/ or the weakening of wildlife and aquatic ecosystems (Halkier, 2004; Lang, 2004; Lang, 2008; Lang and Heasman, 2004; Lang, Barling and Caraher, 2009; Oxborrow, 2015; Soil Association, n.d. b; Sustainable Development Commission, 2011; Tansey and Worsley, 1995; Udall, Rayns and Mansfield, 2015; WRAP, 2017a). For instance, research conducted for the Food Climate Research Network and WWF-UK in 2009 revealed that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released as a result of the food system in the UK equates to 30% of the UK's total carbon footprint (Audsley et al., 2009). This includes agriculture processes through to consumption and disposal and land use changes (such as deforestation) that have taken place overseas for food consumption in the UK. Furthermore, the most recent statistics released from the Waste Resources and Action Programme (WRAP, 2017b) reveal that 4.4 million tonnes of what they define as 'avoidable' household food waste was thrown away in 2015. According to the Waste Resources and Action Programme (WRAP, 2017b), this proportion of household food waste is associated with 19 million tonnes of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent), equivalent to the emissions released by 30% of the cars on UK roads every year.

There are a vast number of businesses, organisations, partnerships, campaigners and networks that have become established in part or entirely as a means to deal with such food-related issues. For instance, there is WRAP, which supports the growth of a more sustainable economy and society. One of their main priorities is to reduce food waste, both in terms of food production and also consumers' disposal of food (WRAP, 2017a). They have recently developed a food waste prevention guide alongside a global food waste prevention campaign; *Think. Eat.*

Save. Reduce your Footprint, working in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organisation aimed at governments, businesses and local authorities. Furthermore, one of their consumer campaigns; *Love Food Hate Waste*, which attempts to encourage consumers to change their behaviour, has received both national and international recognition since it became established (WRAP, 2017c).

Another example is the Soil Association (n.d. c), which is a charity that campaigns partly, in response to our intensive food and farming systems for 'healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use'. The Soil Association is currently running a number of campaigns, some of which are concerned with the harmful implications of certain agricultural practices. For instance, one campaign is focused around banning the use of neonicotinoids (systemic pesticides) due to the harmful effects they have on the wildlife and another is concerned with increasing the amount of 'soil organic matter' in our soils and reducing 'soil damaging practices' across the UK. Owing to such damaging agricultural practices, the charity proclaims that, 'one quarter of the world's arable soils are severely degraded' (Soil Association, n.d. d).

A further example is Foodlinks; a European project (which was carried out between 2011-2013), which aimed to facilitate collaboration between researchers, policy makers and practitioners working together in the area of sustainable food production and consumption. Whilst the project was underway, Foodlinks developed a guide for Urban Food Strategies to support the growth of more holistic⁷, sustainable food systems within towns and cities embracing various policy concerns, including health and well-being, community development and the environment

⁷ Foodlinks indicate that preferably urban food strategies take a holistic approach, in terms of both, integrating various policy areas including; health and well-being, community development, environment and embracing the different stages of a food system from production through to consumption and waste (Moragues et al., 2013).

(Foodlinks, 2013; Moragues et al., 2013). Within the Urban Food Strategy guide, Foodlinks provided examples of the ways in which various towns and cities have put Urban Food Strategy goals into practice.

Through the development of the Bristol Food Network (2015), Bristol is one example of a town that has implemented urban food strategy goals by encouraging, promoting and supporting individual and community projects and businesses centred around local, organic and/ or seasonal food production and consumption and the redistribution of food waste (Moragues et al., 2013). Other examples in the UK include Brighton and Hove (Moragues et al., 2013) through the establishment of the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, which has instigated a number of community projects organised around healthy eating, growing-your-own food, reducing food waste and learning how to cook; and Todmorden, with the development of the Incredible Edible urban gardening project, which promotes local food production by growing herbs, fruits and vegetables around Todmorden (Incredible Edible Network, 2017). The growth of Community Supported Agriculture projects in the UK, which localise food supply chains by bringing together farms and people in the local community (Community Supported Agriculture Network UK, 2015; Fowler, 2016) represent another type of food network that has become established (partly) in response to sustainable development issues.

As demonstrated by the community strategies and projects outlined above, which are carried out across different parts of the country, Britain's food culture is gradually changing to embrace more sustainable forms of food production and consumption and it appears as though allotments have come to form a part of this change. For example, within the House of Commons Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (2009) report; *Securing food supplies up to*

2050: the challenges faced by the UK, the committee recognise the value of allotments, in terms of their ability to reduce one's carbon footprint, contribute towards securing food supplies and reconnect people to food production processes. Alongside this, the Local Government Association (2009); working as an intermediary between national government and local councils, has developed a publication; *Growing in the Community*, which is dedicated to the future development of allotments. Reflecting upon the Local Government Act (2000)⁸, this publication, encourages various stakeholders with an interest in allotments (such as allotment managers) to think about allotments in a wider context and consider how they address multiple issues of concern to local authorities, including leisure and recreation, health, ecology, the use of green space and community development (Local Government Association, 2009). Both this publication and a number of local council allotment strategies/reports recognise the environmental benefits (amongst other benefits) of allotment gardening, in terms of waste management (reducing food packaging and food waste that might otherwise be sent to the landfill), reducing food miles, recycling, reducing the amount of energy which would otherwise be consumed in food processing and distribution, preserving seed varieties and/ or their contribution to local biodiversity and wildlife, for instance (Armstrong et al., n.d.; Brighton & Hove City Council and the Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation, n.d.; Local Government Association, 2009; The Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, 2017).

1.3 Introducing the Research

Since its origins, it appears as though the allotment has served many different (sometimes critical!) roles throughout its history, pertaining to times of economic adversity and the rise of

⁸ The Local Government Act (2000) provides local authorities with the responsibility of promoting the economic, social and/ or environmental well-being of their areas.

two World Wars, prevailing social and cultural trends around housing and recreational interests and has more recently become subsumed within discourse around environmental sustainability. However, very little is known about;

- 1) What it is like to engage in the practice of allotmenteeing in reality,
- 2) How or the extent to which environmental sustainability features in the practice and
- 3) How these environmental sustainability 'benefits' (as highlighted above) transpire in the practice.

Based on these gaps in the literature, this thesis aims to develop an in-depth understanding of how allotmenteeing overlaps with and relates to these conceptualisations of environmental sustainability. In order to achieve this aim, this thesis answers the following question; *How is allotmenteeing sustainable?*

1.3.1 Why Allotmenteeing?

Reflecting upon the arguments made in section 1.2, it appears as though the practice of allotmenteeing embraces a range of activities, which fall in harmony with more environmentally responsible ways of living; allotment sites feature prominently in local council strategies as a means to help support the growth and development of more sustainable food systems within towns and cities. Thus, exploring the practice in greater detail, should provide us with a more holistic understanding of the ways in which more environmentally responsible consumption patterns may transpire in everyday food-related consumption routines and allow us to consider

how we might grapple with (even if partially) some of the food-related environmental issues that society currently faces.

To date, most research has explored the practice of allotmenting from an historical perspective (Acton, 2011; Burchardt, 2002; Crouch and Ward, 1997; Flavell, 2003; Moselle, 1995), sociological perspective (Kettle, 2014), or otherwise a geographical and cultural perspective (Crouch, 1992; Crouch and Warde, 1997). Thus, exploring the practice in the field of consumer behaviour allows us to develop our understanding of allotmenting from a new perspective; a perspective which sheds light on the interrelationship between the production and consumption aspects of the practice.

As I have previously acknowledged in section 1.1, allotmenting is a practice that is historically and traditionally valued as a means through which people can *produce* their own fruits and vegetables (Acton, 2011; Burchardt, 2002). Therefore, it becomes necessary to demonstrate why this thesis, which centres around environmentally responsible *consumption*, focuses on the practice of allotmenting.

Over the past few decades, academics in the social sciences have come to appreciate that two previously distinct and hegemonic concepts; 'production' (i.e. labour, work) and 'consumption', used to understand and make sense of social phenomena, are 'interrelated' (Ritzer, 2014, p.3). In light of this, various concepts have been defined as a means to capture the sense in which processes of 'production' and 'consumption' are intertwined, including: 'prosumption' (Ritzer, 2014; Toffler, 1980), Do-It-Yourself (Watson and Shove, 2008), 'productive consumption' (Moisio, Arnould and Gentry, 2013) and craft consumption (Campbell, 2005). Whilst these

concepts have only recently been developed, Ritzer (2014) informs us that processes of 'production' and 'consumption' have *always* been interrelated and that it is the links between the processes of 'production' and 'consumption' that have become of great importance in contemporary social science research more recently (Ritzer, 2014). According to Ritzer (2014), the way in which we have traditionally conceived of 'production' and 'consumption'; as distinct concepts, has prevented us from thinking about what is taking place in the social (and economic) world, in other ways (i.e. the ways in which consumption is embedded in production and production is entwined with consumption).

In the field of environmentally responsible consumption, there are a number of studies (as I illustrate in chapter 2), that move debates about consumption forward, beyond the 'traditional binaries' (Eden, 2017) of consumption/production and appreciate how focusing on the more productive aspects of consumption provide us with the opportunity to advance our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption, particularly in terms of *consuming* in more environmentally responsible ways (Eden, 2017; Moraes, Szmigin and Carrigan, 2010; Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a). Thus, consistent with these more recent studies, this thesis focuses on the practice of allotmenting as a means to demonstrate how the more productive forms of consumption can cast a light on environmentally responsible consumption.

1.3.2 Defining Environmentally Responsible Consumption

In the field of environmentally responsible consumption, academics have defined and applied diverse conceptualisations appertaining to the idea of environmentally responsible consumption, which I demonstrate in the following chapter. Therefore, in spite of the increasing prevalence of

'environmentally responsible consumption' in academia, within published journal articles and textbooks for instance, what we take to mean by the term remains elusive. Adding to the complexity, the notion of 'environmentally responsible consumption' has increasingly become subsumed within various and again, ambiguous concepts, such as; sustainable consumption, ethical consumption, anti-consumption, prosumption, and movements including; voluntary simplicity movement and the slow food movement, which embrace various environmental, social, animal and/or economic issues/concerns (Black, 2010; Cherrier, 2005; Connolly and Prothero, 2003; 2008; Eden, 2017; Evans, 2011; Lee, Fernandez and Hyman, 2009; Iyer and Muncy, 2009). For example, Seyfang's (2007) concept of 'sustainable consumption' encompasses 'localization', 'reducing ecological footprints', 'building communities', 'acting collectively' and 'building new institutions'. In contrast, Evans (2011) defines 'sustainable consumption' as 'a matter of consuming differently in order to reduce adverse environmental impacts'. To avoid misinterpretation within the literature review chapter, I use the terminology that academics have defined and/or adopted themselves when reviewing their work.

Owing to the ambiguity around different terminology, the multitude of behaviours and practices that may/may not be embedded with different terminology and the understanding that people can impute their own ideas about what environmentally responsible consumption 'is' and what it entails, this thesis adopts the term 'environmentally responsible consumption'. In the context of the present study, this term acknowledges and embraces the more fluid, participatory, social aspects of consumption (as well as the traditional view of consumption as an act of purchase), which will become clearer as the literature review unfolds (Moraes, et al., 2010). Beyond this, this concept also encompasses both activities and practices that embrace preservation, waste

prevention and/or the idea of working with nature (rather than against it), to support local biodiversity and wildlife.

1.3.3 The Theoretical Perspective and Methodological Approach of the Research

I use a practice theoretical approach to frame my analysis of allotmenting and sustainability. The ways in which allotmenting and environmental sustainability interrelate with one another is a relatively unexplored area, particularly within the field of consumption, and even more so when looking at it from a practice theoretical perspective.

This theoretical approach provides us with the opportunity to advance our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption (and consumption more broadly), in a number of ways, three of which are outlined here. Firstly, it allows us to explore and understand consumption as a phenomenon that transpires in and through the performance of practices, rather than as a phenomenon that takes place as an end in itself. Thus, it places environmentally (un)responsible consumption in the context of consumers' everyday lives. Secondly, it quashes the polarity between structure and agency, and human and material entities. Therefore, it allows us to (1) shift the focus away from 'consumer agency' and debates around consumers' responsibility for solving environmental problems and (2) appreciate that agency is something that is dispersed among the various elements that compose a practice, in the performance of a given practice. Thirdly, adopting a practice theoretical approach allows us to draw attention towards the ways in which consumers use objects on a practical, routine level and (in doing so), place emphasis on the interactions between consumers (bodies/minds) and materiality. A more detailed discussion around practice theory and my justification for using this theoretical approach is presented in chapter 3.

This research is based upon an ethnographic approach, which (consistent with a practice theoretical perspective) allows us to move the focus away from ‘individuals’ *per se* and call attention towards the social, cultural and performative nature of everyday practices. Drawing heavily on participant-observation (alongside other methods, e.g. interviews) allows me to give prominence to what people ‘do’ (predominantly) as opposed to what people say and in so doing, cast a light on some of the often taken-for-granted processes and practicalities that are embedded in the practice of allotmenting.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Having set the scene and outlined the aim of the thesis in this introductory chapter, chapter 2, ‘Understanding and Conceptualising Environmentally Responsible Consumption’, provides a critical review of the literature in the field of environmentally responsible consumption, before briefly introducing the theoretical perspective that this research is based upon. My examination of the literature moves progressively from understanding environmentally responsible consumption at the micro-individual level, towards an understanding at the meso-level (e.g. environmentally responsible consumption communities). At the same time, we can see how, the scope of what consumer research defines as ‘environmentally responsible consumption’ broadens as the literature review evolves.

In chapter 3, ‘Practice Theory’, I consider practice theory as a theoretical lens; a way of understanding and making sense of social phenomena. In order to do so, I present the origins of practice theory and provide a comprehensive overview of the key tenets of the theory before

exploring in more detail *what a practice is*. In addition, this chapter explores writings which draw attention to the role of materiality in practices, providing the link between what is conventionally a 'social' theory towards one that is more fitting for the study of consumption (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). Lastly, this chapter presents and justifies the theoretical framework developed by Shove et al. (2012) comprising materials, meanings and forms of competence, which I have used to frame my analyses of allotmenting and sustainability.

In chapter 4, I outline the methodological approach of this study. This chapter begins by describing the philosophical underpinnings of this thesis before providing a brief overview of ethnography. I then provide a rationale behind the ethnographic methodological approach of this research. This chapter then goes on to explore the notion of 'fieldwork' and conceptualises the 'field' in relation to this study, drawing upon more recent research which embrace more fluid conceptualisations of what constitutes a field. Having outlined the methodological approach, I then present my ethnography, detailing the methods I employed, before concluding with a discussion outlining the analysis procedures that I followed.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the analysis of this study. The focus of each of the three analyses chapters is underpinned by the theoretical framework of this research; each chapter emphasises one of the three elements (materials, meanings, forms of competence) that compose a practice, while the other two elements recede into the background of the discussion. In doing so, the three findings chapters work together to illustrate the relations between materials, forms of competence and meanings and the processes and practices embedded within or otherwise connected to the practice of allotmenting. Even so, each of the three chapters pays close

attention towards practitioners and their interactions with materiality; with nature and other material objects and resources.

Chapter 5, 'Nurturing Nature'; the first of three analysis chapters, explores *forms of competence* primarily as a means to examine processes of (what I have defined as), nurturing nature. Consistent with Shove and her colleagues (2012) and other proponents of practice theory (e.g. Truninger, 2011), different forms of competence and a sense of agency are understood to be distributed between different people, different things and nature. This chapter also begins to consider the ways in which the practice of allotmenting can become enmeshed with domestic practices (waste disposal practices) that take place within the home and encourages and supports more environmentally responsible consumption patterns.

Chapter 6, 'Domesticating Nature', places emphasis on *materials* and focuses on the routine interactions between allotmenters and different forms of nature. In particular, it considers how allotmenters attempt to manage different forms of nature that can intervene in the process of 'doing' allotmenting. In doing so, these processes of domesticating nature foreground the ways in which the practice can actually buttress more environmentally-damaging/ resource intensive consumption patterns.

In keeping with the structure of the previous two analysis chapters, chapter 7, 'Crafting the Meaning(s) of Allotmenting', gives more prominence to *meanings* and examines how allotmenters *physically* and *materially* construct the meanings of allotmenting through their engagement in various interconnected and overlapping practices. It demonstrates how the meanings surrounding the practice of allotmenting derive from two key aspects (1) the

allotment plot (i.e. the space through which allotmenters engage in processes of nurturing and domesticating nature) and (2) the produce (i.e. which materialises through processes of nurturing and domesticating nature).

The eighth and final chapter concludes this thesis. To begin with, this chapter brings together the key findings of this study. Following this, the theoretical and methodological contributions that this study has made are presented, before the practical implications are discussed. In bringing this thesis to a close, I reflect on the limitations of the study and highlight potential directions for future research.

Chapter 2. Understanding and Conceptualising Environmentally Responsible Consumption

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of academic research exploring environmentally responsible consumption, situated largely in the field of consumer research. Taken altogether, the literature exploring environmentally responsible consumption has embraced a range of theoretical approaches, perspectives and ways of conceptualising the 'consumer' and environmentally responsible 'consumption'. Reflecting the diverse approaches taken and the contributions that these studies have made, the literature explored in this chapter has been divided into three broad themes, namely, traditional consumer behaviour approaches to environmentally responsible consumption, the political, social and symbolic significance of environmentally responsible consumption and lastly, collective forms of consumption. Following a review of the literature, the final section concludes this chapter before introducing the theoretical approach that this research study adopts.

2.2 Traditional Consumer Behaviour Approaches to Environmentally Responsible Consumption

A wealth of academic research began to emerge in the 1970s, which draws our attention towards the individual consumer, in their pursuit of environmental sustainability. A considerable number of these early studies, within marketing and consumer behaviour disciplines, sought to profile the *socially conscious consumer* and determine whether they hold viable market opportunities (Kilbourne and Beckmann, 1998). Following a traditional marketing segmentation

approach, many of these studies attempted to establish a relationship between measures of *social responsibility*, *socially conscious consumption patterns* and/or *ecological concern* (for instance) and a number of individual consumer traits (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Antil, 1984; Balderjahn, 1988; Berkowitz and Lutterman, 1968; Hines, Hungerford and Tomera, 1987; Samdahl and Robertson, 1989; Webster, 1975). For instance, Anderson and Cunningham (1972) attempted to find a relationship 'social consciousness' and a number of consumers' demographic⁹ and 'sociopsychological'¹⁰ traits. Within another study, Balderjahn (1988) developed and explored a causal model of *ecologically concerned consumers*, which he used, to try and find a correlation between consumers' demographic profiles, socioeconomic and personality traits, attitudes and a number of environmentally responsible consumption patterns.¹¹ Similarly, with the intention of identifying and profiling the *socially conscious consumer*, Brooker (1976) used an instrument based upon Abraham Maslow's (1968) self-actualising personality (whereby individuals are considered be 'autonomous' and resist enculturation, for instance), which he developed in a previous study (Brooker, 1975). Using this instrument, he sought to find a positive correlation between consumers with a higher 'self-actualising' personality and environmentally responsible consumption patterns. However, many of these earlier studies exploring environmentally responsible consumption have been found to be 'frequently inconclusive and sometimes contradictory' (Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998, p.515),

⁹ Anderson and Cunningham (1971) administered a questionnaire to households, rather than individual consumers and sought the demographic traits (e.g. occupation, education and age) of the head of the household.

¹⁰ For example, alienation; referring to the feeling of being isolated in one's community, society or culture, and conservatism; referring to the degree to which one abides by traditional attitudes and values.

¹¹ For instance, he attempted to measure 'energy curtailment' by measuring the following two indicators; reduce use of heating and taking a shower instead of a bath, and the purchase and use of ecologically responsible products by measuring the following three indicators; 'buy less packaged products', 'use returnables' and 'use fewer detergents' (Balderjahn, 1988).

which leads us to question the possibility of defining *the environmentally responsible consumer* (Eckhardt, Belk and Devinney, 2010).

Nevertheless, in many of these studies, 'environmentally responsible' consumers have been conceptualised and operationalised in considerably different ways, incorporating measures ranging from relatively broad attitudinal measures concerned with general social responsibility issues (i.e. showing an interest in political events) to more precise types of environmentally responsible behaviour¹², often related to the purchase of specific products (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Balderjahn, 1988; Brooker, 1976; Kinnear and Taylor, 1973; Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed, 1974; Shrum, McCarty and Lowrey, 1995; Webster, 1975). Consequently, it could be argued that comparisons across studies may be *expected* to be contradictory (Straughan and Roberts, 1999).

Even so, these earlier studies have assumed that environmentally responsible consumers behave consistently across all of their consumption choices and that environmental concerns take priority in all of their purchasing decisions, which may not always be the case (Rettie, Burchell and Riley, 2012). In a fairly recent study conducted by Rettie et al. (2012), the findings reveal that whilst consumers' conceptions of what may or may not be characterised as an environmentally responsible behaviour correspond with 'prevailing views around sustainability'; whether they engage with these behaviours or not often depends upon the degree to which they are considered to be 'normal' (Rettie et al., 2012, p.438). Indeed, these findings may account for some of the inconsistencies found between earlier studies.

¹² Often self-reported behaviour (e.g. Kinnear and Taylor, 1973; Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed, 1974) which may not provide an entirely accurate account of consumers' behaviour.

Alongside this stream of research, a number of studies have placed emphasis on the relationship between consumers' knowledge, beliefs, values and/or attitudes and their environmentally responsible behavioural intentions and/or behaviour, with the goal of predicting environmentally responsible behaviour (Arbuthnot and Lingg, 1975; Berger and Corbin, 1992; Fraj and Martinez, 2006a; 2006b; Milfont, Duckitt and Wagner, 2010; Robinson and Smith, 2002; Stern, Dietz, Kalof and Guagnano, 1995). This body of research has tended to focus on the act of purchasing (Auger, Burke, Devinney and Louviere, 2003; Follows and Jobber, 2000; Grunert and Juhl, 1995; Homer and Kahle, 1988; Karp, 1996; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). For instance, Grunert and Juhl (1995) explored the relationship between consumers' values, knowledge and attitudes concerning environmental issues and the (self-reported) purchase of organic foods in Denmark. Similarly, Tanner and Kast (2003) conducted a study in Switzerland, which explored the influence of various factors including, attitudes and environmental knowledge on consumers' purchase of sustainable foods¹³. Other studies have placed emphasis on the relationship between consumers' values, attitudes, knowledge, psychological and/ or situational variables and reduce, reuse and/or disposal behaviours, particularly recycling (Barr, 2007; Karp, 1996; McCarty and Shrum, 1994; Thøgersen and Grunert-Beckmann, 1997) which reveal some inconsistent findings.

A number of these studies applied the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) or otherwise incorporated one or two measures from the model (i.e. consumers' beliefs about the consequences of their actions, otherwise known as, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms) to their research (Berger and Corbin, 1992; Robinson and Smith, 2002; Sparks and Shepherd, 1992; Thøgersen and Grunert-Beckmann, 1997; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Weiner and Doescher, 1991). The main principle of the theory presupposes that behaviour is

¹³ Tanner and Kast (2003) defined sustainable foods in terms of whether they have been/are; cultivated in Switzerland, *rather than imported*; grown organically; seasonal and fresh; packaged; and support fair trade.

influenced by a number of determinants (including those aforementioned) which are mediated by consumers' intentions. Therefore, by applying the theory (or otherwise, constructs from the theory), these studies are presumably able to understand and explore the factors influencing consumers' attitudes and behaviour more closely, compared to earlier research, and appreciate that there may be *additional* influences that shape consumers' attitudes and their behaviour (i.e. normative social influences).

2.2.1 The Attitude-Behaviour Gap Amongst Consumers?

Despite the rise of environmental concern (Prothero, 1990; Strong, 1996), a number of studies have drawn our attention towards a discrepancy between consumers' avowed concerns for the environment and their purchasing behaviour, otherwise described as the *attitude-behaviour* gap (Berger and Corbin, 1992; Roberts, 1996; Strong, 1996; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Young, Hwang, McDonald and Oates, 2010) or the intention-behaviour gap (Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2010; Hassan, Shiu and Shaw, 2016). Along these lines, Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) demonstrate how, whilst many consumers appear to express their concern for the environment and their willingness to purchase environmentally responsible products, whether an organisation is perceived to be environmentally responsible or not, does not appear to be a deciding factor for consumers when making purchase decisions.

Drawing upon previous research, Roberts (1996) identifies a number of factors that could potentially explain this discrepancy between consumers' environmental concerns/purchasing intentions and their behaviour, including; price sensitivity (environmentally responsible products are too expensive), consumer priorities (price, quality and convenience are still the most important considerations when making decisions) and scepticism towards organisations'

environmental claims. Consistent with Roberts (1996), other studies have also identified price as a *barrier* to purchasing environmentally responsible products, or have otherwise found that consumers consider price to be more important than environmental issues (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Robinson and Smith, 2002).

This somewhat mystifying phenomenon also induced a small wave of qualitative studies, which go beyond the purchase decision and attempt to understand, how consumers account for their behaviours or otherwise question the existence of the phenomenon itself (Black and Cherrier, 2010; Chatzidakis, Hibbert, Mitussis and Smith, 2004; Connolly and Prothero, 2008; Eckhardt, Belk and Devinney, 2010; Szmigin, Carrigan and McEachern, 2009). For instance, Chatzidakis, Hibbert, Mitussis and Smith (2004), show how consumers adopt cognitive strategies to cope with their seemingly contradictory behaviour. By applying the concept of neutralization, the authors suggest that consumers use five neutralisation techniques namely, *denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemning the condemners and appeal to higher loyalties*, to 'soften or eliminate' the internal tensions that consumers experience when their behaviour conflicts with their ethical concerns (Chatzidakis et al., 2004, p.529). Whilst these neutralisation techniques have '*some capacity to mitigate negative impacts on a person's self-image*', the authors demonstrate how they were unable to fully alleviate feelings of guilt (Chatzidakis et al., 2004, p.536). Whilst this study has thrown light on the attitude-behaviour gap, the authors have explored consumption as an individual act and in doing so, they have overlooked the social and cultural context of consumption.

In addition to the studies concerned with profiling the 'environmentally responsible consumer' or predicting environmentally responsible behaviour explored here, a number of other studies

reinforce the importance of informing consumers about environmental issues and the impact they have on the environment (Barr, 2007; Berry and McEachern, 2005; Frame and Newton, 2007; McEachern and McClean, 2002; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Roberts, 1996; Strong, 1996). For instance, Frame and Newton (2007) maintain that social marketing campaigns have the potential to encourage consumers to *change their behaviour*, based on the understanding that their *newfound* environmental consciousness will materialise in their consumption patterns. In a similar manner, Prothero and Fitchett (2000) suggest that a 'green commodity discourse' could be communicated through conventional marketing strategies, to encourage consumers to follow *alternative* consumption practices, through which, they might consume less. The underlying assumption here is that *if* policy makers and social marketers articulate environmental concerns/issues to consumers, they will undoubtedly change their behaviour so as to coincide with more environmentally responsible consumption behaviour. Yet, as indicated previously, consuming in more environmentally responsible ways is more complex than these studies suggests (Rettie et al., 2012).

Having reflected upon the stances and approaches taken within the research considered up to this point, there are a number of methodological issues that come to light, which are worthy of some exploration. In the main, the academic contributions discussed here have drawn our attention towards the individual consumer, following the often-implicit assumption that consumers are relatively autonomous, responsible individuals who have the ability to make consumption choices, which take society's global environmental issues into consideration and thus, consume in more environmentally responsible ways. Somewhat aligned with neoclassical ways of thinking, this fairly rational interpretation of consumer behaviour presupposes the idea of unfettered consumer agency.

Another assumption, which has already been mentioned and also one which forms the basis for many of these studies, is the understanding that consumption, not least environmentally responsible consumption or even environmentally responsible practices (e.g. recycling), is the outcome of a decision-making process founded upon consumers' individual, cognitive processes. That being so, these studies have essentially attempted to isolate certain consumer traits or variables, such as their beliefs, attitudes and values and identify causal relationships between these traits and environmentally responsible consumption patterns. In order to do so, these studies have attempted to measure consumers' values, attitudes and beliefs (amongst other traits) and determine their relative influence on their consumption behaviour. On the other hand, it could be argued that this body of research has tried to demystify what is essentially a complex phenomenon, at the expense of developing a rich, more detailed understanding of environmentally responsible consumption. On the other, it could also be argued that these approaches provide only a partial understanding of environmentally responsible consumption insofar that they have attempted to capture consumers', somewhat fluid qualities (which are always in flux) within a numerical form (Giddens, 1991). Perhaps the disparity found within and across studies attempting to identify *the environmentally responsible consumer* is (in part) testament to this.

Taking these points into consideration, it is fairly reasonable to suggest that these rational and individualistic approaches to understanding environmentally responsible consumption often lack a broader perspective. By foregrounding the relationship between consumers' attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and behaviours (for instance), these studies have explored consumers' behaviours (i.e. the purchase of a product or recycling) out of context and have therefore, largely dismissed

the social, cultural and historical processes that are ingrained within consumption practices (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006; Dolan, 2002).

Within the following section, my analysis moves beyond the rationalistic, information-processing, experimental paradigm underpinning the majority of studies considered here towards those which draw our attention towards the political, social and symbolic significance of consumers' environmentally responsible consumption behaviours and practices.

2.3 The Political, Social and Symbolic Significance of Environmentally Responsible Consumption

Moving away from traditional consumer behaviour approaches explored in the previous section, which (in part) assign responsibility for environmental issues to individual consumers), the range of academic studies explored within this section give prominence to the political, social and/or symbolic significance of consumption. These studies draw upon a constellation of theories and concepts around political consumption (Micheletti, 2003), consumer empowerment (Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson, 2006), flexibility (Szmigin, Carrigan and McEachern, 2009) and/or anti-consumption (Black and Cherrier, 2010; Cherrier, 2005) This area of research offers a broader view of consumption compared to the studies introduced in the previous section, insofar that they move beyond the exchange process, to consider the meanings inscribed within individuals' consumption choices. Over and above this, some of the contributions that fall within these debates broaden our understanding of consumption (and consumers) further, as they incorporate alternative forms of consumption into their analyses, to consider processes of reducing, limiting or abstaining from consumption. To begin with, the next section introduces a

politicised view of environmentally responsible consumption, before moving on to examine the social complexity of consumption and lastly, anti-consumption behaviours, in the context of environmentally responsible consumption.

2.3.1 Citizenship and the Politicization of Consumption

As debates around social responsibility and consumption have matured, notions of 'citizenship' and 'consumption' have become closely affiliated with one another and have been subsumed within discourses around political consumption and environmental sustainability. Prior to this, the dominant ideas around consumption and citizenship have long been held in opposition to one another (Bossy, 2014; Harrison, 2005; Soper, 2004).

From a neo-liberal perspective, consumption is often conceived of as *free choice* or *sacrosanct*; consumers are understood to have the autonomy to pursue their own interests and do so, with a view to 'maintaining individual living standards' (Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson, 2006; Soper, 2004, p.111). In line with this perspective, standard economic theory, views consumers as 'maximizes of 'utility'' (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005, p.27). These utilities, Dickinson and Carsky (2005, pp.25-26) inform us, are 'typically assumed to be created in the context of individual preferences and to be primarily evaluated in terms of his/her self-interest'. From this viewpoint then, consumption represents a means through which consumers can satisfy their own personal interests (Hansen and Schrader, 1997; Harrison, 2005; Soper, 2004).

On the other hand, citizenship or conventional citizen-orientated activities are usually understood to address broader societal and political issues and represent the interests of the common good and the communities that individuals are a part of (Dickinson and Hollander,

1991). In light of this new connection between the “consumer” and the “citizen”, the term *citizen-consumer*, that is, ‘a reflexive and relatively autonomous agent whose self-interested needs can also come to encompass collective goods’ was coined (Soper, 2007, p.215). In the process of integrating these previously irreconcilable domains of consumerism and civicism, academic research has drawn our attention towards the moral, virtuous and political aspects of consumption (Holzer and Sørensen, 2003), which frequently invoke the social and environmental issues embedded in consumption decisions (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007).

Within this politicised view of consumption, a number of authors contend that the marketplace represents a means through which citizen-consumers or otherwise ‘consumer citizens’ (Johnston, 2008; Lang and Gabriel, 2005), can critically reflect upon the wider implications of their consumption and express their societal and environmental concerns (Micheletti, 2003; Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson, 2006). Correspondingly, for these authors, the marketplace represents a space, or a medium through which consumers can engage in alternative forms of political participation (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005; Lang and Gabriel, 2005; Micheletti, 2003; Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson, 2006; Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005; Tormey, 2007).

Within the field of environmentally responsible consumption, research exploring the marketplace as an arena for political activity has, for the most part, examined boycotting; the avoidance of certain organisations (Harrison, Newholm and Shaw, 2005) and/or what has been defined as either positive buying (Clouder and Harrison, 2005) or ‘boycotting’ (i.e. the purchase of environmentally responsible products) (Friedman, 1996). For instance, Kozinets and Handelman (2004) show how their consumers made the decision to boycott genetically-engineered foods and crops because of their adverse effects on the environment. Alternatively,

consumers have been found to purchase organic foods because they are *not* treated with pesticides (Brennan, Gallagher and McEachern, 2003). Shaw and Clarke (1999) reveal how consumers purchase ethical products from the supermarket, (despite their aversion towards supermarkets) to encourage, retain and create demand for ethical products. These consumer strategies aim to harm an organisation by abstaining from the use of their product(s)/brand or in the case of the latter, support organisations through the deliberate purchase of their product(s)/brand for social, political and ecological reasons (Clouder and Harrison, 2005; Connolly and Prothero, 2003; Harrison et al., 2005).

Drawing more attention to the concept of positive buying, there are a number of studies that appraise the idea of consumer choice in the marketplace as a form of voting (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005; Dickinson and Hollander, 1991; Moraes, Shaw and Carrigan, 2011; Shaw, 2007; Shaw et al., 2006). This political ideology is not new; dating back to the early 1900s, an economist named Frank Fetter (1907, cited in Dickinson and Carsky, 2005, p.25) portrays consumers as political agents, for he asserts that, 'every buyer...determines in some degree the direction of industry. The market is a democracy where every penny gives the right to vote'. From this perspective, Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford (2006, p.1015) go as far as to suggest that *choice*, is construed as 'a manifestation of people's ability to exercise free-will'.

Within Shaw et al.'s (2006, p.1053) research, the authors set out to understand the meanings that consumers, who are 'likely to be aware of ethical concerns in consumption', ascribe to their consumption experiences. They demonstrate how their participants considered their actions in the marketplace; boycotting or positive buying, to be legitimate forms of consumer empowerment (Shaw et al., 2006). They also reveal how their consumers see the marketplace as

an effective political arena through which, they can act upon their societal and environmental responsibilities and bring about change. Indeed, they demonstrate how some of their consumers believed that their actions, directed towards *rewarding* and *punishing* organisations, could have more of an influence on organisational processes and practices compared with more conventional forms of political participation (Shaw et al., 2006). Whilst their participants felt empowered in the marketplace through their consumption choices, this feeling of empowerment was encumbered by the marketplace itself, due to the 'lack of effective labelling' and 'availability of alternatives' to choose from (Shaw et al., 2006, p.1051).

Interestingly, the Shaw et al. (2006) also consider the more sweeping issue regarding environmentally responsible consumption (as an act of purchase) and sustainable development, that is, whether consumption is a feasible solution to society's environmental problems. Yet, they revealed how their participants attributed buying *less* and therefore reducing their presence/visibility in the marketplace with a loss of power. These findings are consistent with Shaw and Clarke's (1999) research. In their work, they demonstrate how their participants feel torn between their ability to enact change and the implication this has on the environment; whilst they are concerned about current levels of consumption, they believe that moderating their consumption in the marketplace would affect their ability to vote via their 'purse strings' and bring about change.

In a similar manner, Connolly and Prothero (2003, p.284) demonstrate how consumers' strategies to deliberately avoid certain products and purchase other environmentally responsible products highlights the sign value of consumption for consumers; through its ability to convey a message and show 'where the real power lies...that is with the consumer'. Nevertheless, and

perhaps contrary to the research explored so far, Connolly and Prothero (2003) also demonstrate how, their participants' concerns for the environment are not necessarily based upon their desire to change organisational practices or reduce environmental degradation (generally speaking) but rather, a desire to construct an identity for themselves (which is not necessarily framed around the idea of environmental responsibility *per se*). In doing so, Connolly and Prothero (2003) show how consumers are still dependent upon the marketplace and the symbolic value of consumption, despite engaging in, what can be characterised as forms of non-consumption. In a similar manner, whilst Shaw et al. (2006) demonstrate how their consumers' actions in the marketplace intend to bring about change, they also show how their participants use forms of ethical consumption to present themselves as 'ethically concerned consumers' in the marketplace.

Drawing our attention back to the more politicised understanding of consumption, a number of studies (including some previously mentioned) have considered consumers' politically-charged actions in the marketplace, in a community context. Within Shaw's (2007) research, she explores the meanings underpinning ethical consumers' consumption experiences and demonstrates how her participants consider their actions in the marketplace (i.e. boycotting and positive buying) to be effective forms of consumer voting. Shaw (2007) revealed how her participants felt as though their citizen-orientated consumer actions form a part of a community of like-minded people, who share a common commitment and a responsibility to act upon social and environmental issues themselves. Somewhat related to this, Dickinson and Carsky (2005) reveal how in this context, people often influence other people and collectively, they have more potential to induce change for the better of society.

Like Shaw (2007), Shaw et al.'s (2006) and Shaw and Clarke's (1999) work (explored previously in this sub-section) also illustrates how their participants imagine their actions to reflect the actions of many other conscious consumers, who form a part of a broader collective engaged in communal activism. The sense in which consumers' actions are 'imagined' to be collectively carried out, encouraged and motivated their consumers to act upon and address environmental and social issues further (Shaw, 2007; Shaw et al., 2006). Consequently, the *feeling* of being a part of a collective is particularly meaningful in this respect.

Taking this concept of a political community further, Parigi and Gong (2014) explore the role of 'digital ties' (or online networks) in an online community mainly concerned with issues around environmental responsibility. Like Shaw et al. (2006) and Shaw (2007), they demonstrate how the emergence and awareness of a shared identity and a sense of belonging amongst participants reinforced their commitment and encouraged them to bring about change through their actions. Parigi and Gong (2014) show how the 'digital ties' formed between consumers in the online community transform private, individual actions, such as growing one's own food or driving the car less, into collective, public actions. Whilst these consumer actions are not overtly political in nature, compared with consumer 'votes' in the marketplace (for instance), the authors demonstrate how their participants' actions gained cultural and political significance through their 'digital ties' and the sense of being a part of a broader social movement (Parigi and Gong, 2014). Therefore, consistent with the consumers explored within Shaw et al.'s (2006) and Shaw's (2007) research, Parigi and Gong's (2014) participants also consider (societal) change as something that emerges from the individual level.

2.3.1.1 Reflecting on the capacity of the 'political consumer' to appeal for environmentally responsible consumption

As many of the studies explored here demonstrate, consumers make use of the 'dominant social paradigm' as a political realm to confront unethical/unsustainable organisational practices, support environmentally responsible (or ethical) products and re-shape organisational principles and practices.¹⁴ From this perspective, the *politicisation* of consumption is perceived to strengthen the citizen-consumer's ability to democratically influence and coerce organisations to engage in more environmentally responsible and sustainable practices (Dickinson and Hollander, 1991; Halkier and Holm, 2008; Shaw, 2007; Shaw et al., 2006). Although, it is important to note here, as Shaw et al. (2006, p.1062) do in their research, that participants do not necessarily seek the 'collapse of the capitalist system' through their politically-orientated consumer actions. Rather, they opt for more reformist approaches and make use of the marketplace and the 'power' it can provide as a political territory, to influence organisations' policies and practices and support more environmentally responsible ways of living (Shaw et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, there are a number of scholars who question the ability of individual consumers to bring about change through the marketplace. Shaw et al. (2006) point out a number of 'external constraints' in the marketplace (e.g. the lack of effective labelling and the lack of environmentally responsible products available), which inhibit individual consumers' actions. Along similar lines, Thøgersen (2005) believes that the government and/or industry can be held partly accountable for 'limiting an individual consumer's freedom to choose and act' owing to the '[limited] supply and relative prices of environmentally-friendly products, and the availability

¹⁴ With the exception of Parigi and Gong's (2014) research.

and use of eco-labelling schemes', which are controlled by them. Thøgersen (2005) also suggests that consumers are also limited by their own personal resources, such as their perceived time constraints and their financial resources. Indeed, as mentioned previously (in section 2.2.1), the price of environmentally responsible products is perceived to be 'more expensive than their conventional counterparts' (Johnston, Szabo and Rodney, 2011, p.294). Thus, Thøgersen (2005) is rather dubious about reducing consumer participation to forms of individualised action.

Consistent with Thøgersen (2005), Cherrier (2007, p.323) demonstrates how consumers are often presented with a profusion of information in a number of different forms (i.e. the media, environmental activists, leaflets, websites, blogs and magazines), which can 'overwhelm, disorient or even saturate' them. In doing so, she reveals how consumers do not always have the ability to make environmentally responsible and ethically informed consumption decisions.

Besides the points raised here, there are also a number of scholars who draw our attention towards the ideology of consumption itself and question the use of the marketplace as a means to address environmental issues. For instance, Maniates (2001), argues that this *consumerist-orientated* approach to environmental sustainability essentially reproduces society's dominant consumerist ideology. In this sense, consumers who are advocating for environmental sustainability through their consumption are perceived to be counterproductive insofar that the inherent problems lie in the issue of consumption *per se* (Connolly and Prothero, 2003). By placing emphasis on consumer choice and the development of environmentally responsible products, "living lightly on the planet' and 'reducing your environmental impact', he argues, becomes paradoxically a consumer-product growth industry' (Maniates, 2001, p.47) and thus reinforces the difficulties underlying approaches and perspectives which try to align

consumption with the growth of a sustainable economy, environment and society. As Connolly and Prothero (2003, p.288) point out, 'the more we use consumption to fulfil our inner needs, the more importance we apply to commodities and the process of consumption'.

Up until this point, environmentally responsible consumption has largely been explored as an individual phenomenon. In contrast, the following sections recognise and appreciate how consumers' social relationships and other priorities/influences shape their experiences of environmentally responsible consumption.

2.3.2 The Social Complexity of Environmentally Responsible Consumption

Like Chatzidakis et al.'s (2004) research explored in sub-section 2.2.1, Szmigin et al. (2009) also explore the apparent inconsistencies between consumers' environmental and social concerns and their consumption behaviour. Although, contrary to previous research (explored in section 2.2), which characterises environmentally responsible consumers as individuals who make *all* of their consumption decisions based upon a moral obligation to 'protect the environment' (for instance), Szmigin et al. (2009) propose a new concept; the conscious consumer, which provides us with an alternative way of exploring this phenomenon.

Conscious consumers, '*always* maintain a complex mix of behaviours' and adopt a 'flexible' approach to their consumption decisions, which are laden with a plurality of ethical concerns, 'competing priorities, paradoxical outcomes and...compromises' (Szmigin et al., 2009, p.225). As such, whilst conscious consumers integrate environmental and/or social concerns into their consumption decisions, other factors such as price, quality, convenience and the 'desires of those close to them' influence their decisions (Szmigin et al., 2009, p.228). It is in this sense that

Szmigin et al. (2009) show how consumers do not *always* have sole responsibility for their consumption decisions.

The authors also focus attention on how their participants openly revealed inconsistencies between their beliefs and their behaviours without the 'apparent need' to justify themselves (Szmigin et al., 2009, p.228). These findings lead us to question previous conceptualisations of *the environmentally responsible consumer* and research that presumes that consumers have the ability to 'steer or regulate their consumption in an instrumental way' (Connolly and Prothero, 2008, p.117). Moreover, this issue of consumers living with contradictions, seems to challenge (to some extent) the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and Chatzidakis et al.'s (2004) research, which suggests (and we would expect that) consumers would find ways to reduce inconsistencies.

Taking these debates around environmentally responsible consumption and individual responsibility touched upon in Szmigin et al.'s (2009) research further, Connolly and Prothero (2008) attempt to develop our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption by exploring how consumers who consider themselves to be environmentally responsible (in terms of making environmentally responsible purchases), engage with environmental issues in their everyday lives.¹⁵ Within their work, Connolly and Prothero (2008) demonstrate how underlying tensions emerge between consumers' moral beliefs and their social relationships, through their attempts at 'greening' specific practices. The authors reveal how consumers' relationships with their families, partners and friends, who are caught up in their own lives and may only share a

¹⁵ Whilst Connolly and Prothero's (2008) research does not set out to clarify the inconsistency between consumers' environmental concerns/intentions and their consumption behaviour *per se*, their findings are relevant to this discussion.

limited interest in environmental issues, would often put a strain on their moral beliefs (and vice versa). In doing so, they show how consumers would often compromise and negotiate their moral beliefs about the environment, to appease the needs/wants of others, consistent with the consumers explored in Szmigin et al. (2009) research. In this respect, both studies highlight the importance of distinguishing between environmentally responsible *purchasers* and *consumers*, groups which have generally been conflated in previous research (Peattie, 2001) as well as taking into consideration other obligations that consumers carry, as mothers or carers (for instance), which have an influence on their consumption.

Both of the studies introduced here, demonstrate the social and emotional complexity of environmentally responsible consumption; they demonstrate how consuming in more environmentally responsible ways, not only depends upon consumers' personal needs or a number of market-based factors, such as price, quality and convenience, but also how consumption in and of itself serves to 'facilitate interpersonal interactions' (Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm, 2005). In this sense, they show how more exploratory approaches (in the context of environmentally responsible consumption) are able to uncover (or at least in part), 'the meaningful coherence of arguably contradictory consumption behaviour' (Moraes, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2012, p.109). To reiterate a point made earlier (in sub-section 2.2.1), these two studies have shown how the fundamental premise(s) underlying the attitude-behaviour gap and many of the studies explored in section 2.2, preclude research from developing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Whilst both Szmigin et al.'s (2009) and Connolly and Prothero's (2003) research represent valuable contributions, they have adopted a rather narrowly defined view of consumption as an

act of purchase, which occupies 'a *particular* moment in the timeline of consumption' (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006, p.3, *my emphasis*). The following section examines research within the literature that explores and analyses environmentally responsible consumption more extensively.

2.3.3 Anti-Consumption for Sustainability

Consistent with some of the studies explored in the previous section (e.g. Connolly and Prothero, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2009), this section explores a small number of studies that situate environmentally responsible (or ethical) issues in the context of consumers' social and/ or everyday lives. As such, the studies reviewed in this section help to broaden our understanding of what we take to mean by 'environmentally responsible consumption' and illustrate the diverse nature of the phenomenon.

Whilst the field of anti-consumption is still relatively new (Lee, et al, 2009), it has begun to develop a reasonably strong association with consumer research concerned with environmental issues and sustainability (Lee, Cherrier and Belk, 2013). In an introductory editorial to a special issue on the topic of anti-consumption, Lee et al. (2013, p.187) denote that 'anti-consumption reaches out to transformative consumer research and pro-social and environmental disciplines such as social marketing and green marketing whereby proposed behavioural changes include the rejection of unhealthy or environmentally damaging acts, practices and lifestyles'. According to Lee et al. (2013, p.187), this emerging phenomenon embraces 'acts, practices and lifestyles...that go against prevailing norms' that shape consumerism.

Hence, there is a need to move beyond prescriptive definitions and normative views around the environmentally responsible consumer, not merely because of their relatively narrow and often improbable view of consumers, but also because of the limited focus on consumption as an act of purchase (Black and Cherrier, 2010). Within this normative framework, the consumer is portrayed as someone who *cares for the environment* and makes consumption choices with *the planet in mind* (Black and Cherrier, 2010). Contrary to this prescriptive idea, Black and Cherrier's (2010), Cherrier's (2005) and Evans' (2011a) work explored in this discussion provide us with an alternative view of consumption, which steps outside of the consumerist ideology and draws attention to the way consumers engage with environmental sustainability issues in their everyday lives.

In their exploratory study, Black and Cherrier (2010, p.438) explore the relevance of anti-consumption practices within the discourse of sustainability and focus on the meanings that their participants 'who are trying to live a sustainable lifestyle' ascribe to their anti-consumption practices. Questioning prescriptive ideas of *the environmentally conscious consumer*, the authors also consider whether self-interested, contextual motivations can steer anti-consumption practices for sustainability.

For Black and Cherrier (2010), anti-consumption represents a broad concept, which comprises diverse practices of rejection, reduction and the reuse of material goods. Some of the anti-consumption practices that the authors identify their participants engaging in, include; driving the car as little as possible, turning off lights, eating organic foods, growing vegetables, using public transport and refusing to purchase products containing pesticides (Black and Cherrier, 2010). They referred to their participants as 'sustainable bricoleurs', to reflect the way in which

sustainability is often negotiated within their everyday lives, 'using whatever is available to them' (Black and Cherrier, 2010, p.449).

Black and Cherrier (2010) highlight how consumers' anti-consumption practices are constructed through the collaboration of both their individual needs and preferences, and the demands for environmental preservation. Whilst their participants are aware of environmental issues, the authors reveal how their reasons for acting upon them, mostly relate to their self-interested concerns, a need for personal fulfilment and a means for social belonging or self-expression (Black and Cherrier, 2010). In this sense, their findings suggest that consumers do not necessarily need to purchase goods 'with the planet in mind' or otherwise make personal sacrifices, by 'giving up' or 'losing out', as some consumers may envisage (Connolly and Prothero, 2003). On the contrary, Black and Cherrier (2010) demonstrate how their consumers' anti-consumption practices did not require them to significantly compromise their values, who they are or their way of life but rather, enabled them to express their desired or existing identities. For instance, for one of their participants, who considers herself to be a 'saver', reducing her electricity consumption enabled her to save money on her electricity bill. Consequently, the ways in which their participants engage with environmental issues, does not revolve around a 'prescribed view of what sustainability is or what constitutes a sustainable practice' (Black and Cherrier, 2010, p.448). Rather, they subjectively construct these notions as they integrate them into their own core values and desires. In this sense, it appears as though anti-consumption practices enable consumers to embrace sustainability in their daily lives, without having to compromise their identities as a mother, wife and/or sister (for example). As such, acts of rejection, reducing and reusing are fundamental to their endeavour to live a more sustainable lifestyle.

Over and above this, Black and Cherrier (2010) also show how purchasing/using environmentally responsible products is not essential to their participants' pursuit of environmental sustainability. They argue the point that, whilst environmentally friendly products conform to a prescriptive idea of an 'environmentally conscious consumer', they do not necessarily conform to their participants' ideas of being a mother or a wife (Black and Cherrier, 2010). Indeed, such products are often found to conflict with consumers' core values and restrain their other identities (Connolly and Prothero, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2009). The authors demonstrate how, for one of their participants, using environmentally-friendly cleaning products (which she perceives to be of a lower quality), challenges her core values as a mother and a 'homemaker' where cleanliness is of utmost importance, as she believes that they do not 'clean well' (Black and Cherrier, 2010, p.443). In this regard, it could also be argued that *unsustainable* cleaning products are embedded in this particular consumers' principles of care and compassion and in her roles as a mother and a homemaker. In this respect, the authors draw our attention back to the social significance of consumption and demonstrate how environmentally responsible (anti-)consumption is intimately woven with our social relationships, our identities and our core values; how consumers love and care for others, for instance. In doing so, Black and Cherrier (2010) remind us that environmental concerns do not define consumers and their consumption choices entirely, but shape only a part (if any) of their identity.

These findings resonate with Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm's (2005) argument in their discussion on virtue ethics. In the context of organic food and related issues around genetically modified crops, they assert that consumers' motivations to purchase organic food are not directly related to universal concerns about the environment, or care and compassion for future generations, but are instead 'intimately bound up with the forms of care and concern that shape everyday

social relations of domestic family life (Barnett et al., 2005, p.19). To illustrate their point, Barnett et al. (2005, p.19) indicate how 'caring for others', manifests in a concern 'over the long-term health risks of the food that parents provide for their kids'.

In this sense, referring back to Black and Cherrier's (2010) work, rather than construe an idea of environmentally responsible consumers constructing a '*green*' identity through the purchase of environmentally responsible products, these authors argue that sustainability is interwoven into their *existing* or their *desired* identities. They suggest that their consumers' tendency to engage in anti-consumption practices, practices which enable them to engage with environmental sustainability in a pleasurable and self-fulfilling way and express 'who they are...or who they desire to be' could provide one explanation of the widely known 'attitude-behaviour gap' (Black and Cherrier, 2010, p.446). The authors also reveal how consumers' subjective idea of environmental sustainability and what constitutes an environmentally responsible practice lead consumers to embrace a flexible approach to environmental sustainability (Szmigin et al., 2009). They demonstrate how their consumers often 'overlooked' some of their more unsustainable practices (using the car, for instance), since these practices enabled them to engage in other more sustainable practices such as surfing and fishing (Black and Cherrier, 2010, p.449).

Black and Cherrier's (2010) research has provided us with an insight into a plurality of personal and environmental concerns that may underpin consumers' environmentally responsible (anti-) consumption behaviour/practices. Moreover, their research has begun to unpack some of the complexity inherent in environmentally responsible consumption by demonstrating how environmental concerns can manifest in a myriad of different practices/behaviours, only one of which is purchasing environmentally responsible products.

Like Black and Cherrier (2010), Cherrier (2005) also draws our attention towards the subjectivity of consumers' ethical concerns, which transpire through myriads of ways. Within her work, Cherrier (2005, p.126) explored the meanings that consumers, 'who have reduced and simplified their consumption and adopted ethical consumption practices', derive from their ethical consumption behaviours/practices. For Cherrier (2005), ethical consumers can be defined as, 'reflexive...or emancipated individuals...who question their consumption choices...based on various humane, religious, personal, or environmental concerns' (Cherrier, 2005, p.126). Within her work, she demonstrates how consumers experienced an 'uncontrollable' and 'unpredictable' event which 'destabilised' their meanings in life and in turn, led them to identify with ethical concerns, values and principles (Cherrier, 2005, p.131). Cherrier (2005) describes how the destabilising events that took place in their lives prompted them to 'search for control' and question their values, ethics or consumption practices. For instance, for one of her participants, material possessions became, 'a precursor for unhappiness, complexity, anxiety, frustration, and emotional conflict' (Cherrier, 2005, p.132). Reflecting upon her participants' own experiences, the author demonstrates how their newfound ethical concerns provided them with the means to gain a sense of control over their consumption choices and above all, their life.

Cherrier (2005, p.133) also demonstrates how, again, in response to a destabilising event that took place in their lives, some participants espoused the ethical principles and views of others (e.g. a new partner, or a new group of friends) to 'find meanings in life' and 'belong to a meaningful community'. One of her participants was found to simplify her consumption by eschewing 'the pre-packaged experiences provided by restaurants, movie theatres or television' (Cherrier, 2005, p.133).

Besides Cherrier's (2005) participants' efforts to gain some control in their life or belong to a community, the author also reveals how some of her participants' experiences of a destabilising event induced them to engage in ethical consumption behaviour as a means to express their inner, authentic self (Cherrier, 2005). Contrary to previous conceptions and definitions of the environmentally responsible consumer, Cherrier's (2005) findings, suggest that ethical consumption behaviours are subjectively interwoven in consumer's everyday lives, as in Black and Cherrier's (2010) work. Moreover, she demonstrates how engaging in ethical consumption, provides her participants with the ability to satisfy their self-interested needs and desires, rather than an underlying ideological concern (solely) for the environment, consistent with Connolly and Prothero (2003) and Black and Cherrier's (2010) research. More specifically, within Cherrier's (2005) work, ethical consumption provides consumers with the means to gain control of their life, belong to a community and align their behaviour with their authentic sense of self.

This idea of stepping outside of mainstream consumer culture and simplifying one's lifestyle as a means to find *new* meanings in life, as demonstrated within Cherrier's (2005) work resonates with Kate Soper's (2007) notion of 'alternative hedonism'. According to Soper (2007), consumers are beginning to question ideas about 'the good life' and are becoming sensitive to the adverse environmental effects and by-products of consumption and living a consumerist lifestyle, including stress, over-work and ill-health. From her perspective, both the environmental consequences of and consumers' general dissatisfaction with consumerism prompt consumers to pursue alternative ways of living, which are not preoccupied with extravagant levels of consumption. In the process of doing so, Soper (2007) suggests that consumers form their own idea of 'the good life', which embrace concerns around environmental sustainability.

Nevertheless, reflecting back on both Black and Cherrier (2010) and Cherrier's (2005) work, these authors presuppose that consumers have the autonomy to take control over their consumption behaviour, consistent with some of the studies exploring environmentally responsible and/ or ethical consumption behaviour as a form of political participation, considered previously in sub-section 2.3.1. Indeed, Cherrier's (2005) definition of ethical consumers portrays them as 'emancipated' individuals. However, contrary to research exploring environmentally responsible consumption in a political context, in Black and Cherrier (2010) and Cherrier's (2005) work, consumers' environmentally responsible and ethical consumption behaviours are not always underpinned by environmental or ethical issues *per se*. Rather, they demonstrate how consumers subjectively construct their own versions of ethical/ environmentally responsible consumption, which manifest in a multitude of different behaviours/practices *outside* of the marketplace. For these consumers, ethical consumption provides a means through which consumers can satisfy their personal needs and express their *personal* identities.

Like Black and Cherrier (2010) and Cherrier (2005), Evans (2011a) explores the ways in which environmentally responsible consumption transpires in ways *other* than consumers' consumption choices. Within his work, Evans (2011a, p.552) explores the practice of frugality, which he defines as, 'a moral restraint on consumption and a form of resistance to the alleged excess and profligacy of consumerism' and considers how the ways in which consumers practise frugality align with ideas around environmentally responsible consumption. Defining sustainable consumption as, 'a matter of consuming differently by consuming less, in order to reduce environmental impacts', he illustrates how his participants' efforts to consume less correspond

with their care and compassion for 'distant strangers', 'future generations', 'vulnerable contemporaries', 'biodiversity', 'non-human species' and the environment in general (Evans, 2011a, pp.552-553). Even so, Evans (2011a) points out how his participants' efforts to consume less were not always motivated by their environmental concerns to begin with. Rather, he demonstrates how consumers' long-standing commitment to practising frugality, which places emphasis on 'careful consumption' and the 'avoidance of waste' led consumers to engage in 'sustainable consumption', which seemed to 'make sense' for some of them (Evans, 2011a, p.552). Despite the notable differences between the moral positions of *asceticism* and *environmentalism*, underpinning practices of frugality and sustainable consumption (respectively) according to Evans (2011a), they both orientate consumers towards practices that help to reduce consumers' environmental impacts. Interestingly, Evans (2011a, p.553) points out how, for one of his participants, practising frugality, which had previously been construed as 'tight', can be legitimised when such practices are framed in terms of environmental sustainability. Consequently, this suggests that 'sustainable consumption' appears to be more socially acceptable than practices of frugality.

Whilst consumers' practices of frugality appear to align with practices of sustainable consumption, in terms of consuming less to reduce one's environmental impact, Evans (2011a, p.551) also demonstrates how consumers also engage in practices of thrift, which he defines as, 'the art of doing more (consumption) with less (money)'. In this sense, Evans (2011a) reveals how the 'moral convergence' between practices of frugality and sustainable consumption does not extend as far as to include thrift. On a more important note, Evans (2011a) indicates how the 'moral positions' underlying practices of frugality and thrift underlie these *practices*, rather than depict individual dispositions towards consumption. As such, he claims that consumers are not

defined by notions of frugality or thrift, but rather that these are practices which consumers engage in. In this sense, it could also be argued that his participants, like those explored in Szmigin et al. (2009) and Black and Cherrier's (2010) research, embrace flexibility in their approach to 'sustainable consumption'.

Reflecting upon the different meanings that consumers ascribe to their ethical/sustainable consumption behaviours/practices and the ways in which they engage with ethical and environmental sustainability issues in both Cherrier's (2005) and Evans' (2011a) work, alongside other research explored previously (Black and Cherrier, 2010; Connolly and Prothero, 2003; Shaw et al., 2006), environmentally responsible, 'ethical' and 'sustainable' consumption behaviour/ practices appear to be characterised by a plurality of subjective meanings, grounded in consumers' personal experiences. That being so, it is not surprising why there is 'no clear definition' of environmentally responsible consumption and other terminology alike (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997, p.410).

The studies explored here have highlighted some of the diverse ways through which consumers engage with societal and environmental issues. Like some of the research explored previously regarding the political significance of environmentally responsible consumption, the consumers explored within these studies appear to adopt more reformist approaches in their approach to environmentally responsible, 'ethical' and 'sustainable' consumption, as opposed to more radical approaches.

Taken altogether, the studies examined in this entire section exploring the political, social and symbolic significance of consumption encourage us to question prescriptive ideas of the

'environmentally conscious consumer' and more towards more flexible conceptualisations that embrace the political, social and cultural context of consumption *per se* and examine consumption in a more comprehensive manner, embracing everyday activities and everyday contexts.

Still, these studies place considerable emphasis on the individual consumer; on *their* quest for environmental sustainability (so to speak) or how they use environmentally responsible practices to express their identities or find new meanings in life. In doing so, they (some more explicitly than others) grant agency to individual consumers. Moving away from an emphasis on individual consumers, the following section examines research which calls attention to, what has been defined as consumption communities, taking forward some of the themes raised in this section, concerning sociality and the politicised nature of consumption, albeit more subtly, and introduces the more participatory nature of consumption.

2.4 Collective Forms of Consumption

A small body of research has focused on consumption communities, which have formed to draw connections between people, nature and issues broadly relating to environmental conservation and sustainability (e.g. Forno and Graziano, 2014). Somewhat different from the overtly-politicised individual and to some extent collective practices introduced in the preceding discussion (e.g. boycotts, positive buying), these consumption communities represent new forms of organisation; they attempt to pursue alternative forms of consumption and challenge existing institutions, which are 'less able (or willing) to mediate new demands for social justice and equality emerging from various sectors of society' (Forno and Graziano, 2014, p.145). Examples of these consumption communities include; alternative food systems (La Trobe, 2001; Sage,

2014), the Fairtrade movement (Forno and Graziano, 2014) and New Consumption Communities (Szmigin, et al., 2007). These sustainable consumption communities/systems/movements vary both in terms of their approach/strategies and the scope of their actions (Forno and Graziano, 2014).

2.4.1 Ethical Consumption Communities

Moraes (formerly Bekin) and her colleagues, Carrigan and Szmigin (Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes, et al., 2012) examine six or seven 'environmentally conscious' consumption communities, otherwise referred to as New Consumption Communities, which are based in the UK. Previous research carried out by Szmigin et al. (2007) highlight the considerably diverse nature of New Consumption Communities. For instance, they may vary in terms of their reconnection to production processes, underlying values and philosophies and their interests ranging from those that concern themselves with one issue (e.g. Fair trade) to those that embrace multifarious issues (e.g. environmental degradation, animal welfare and social welfare). Aside from their different concerns, there are New Consumption Communities that address such issues solely through making positive choices (e.g. buying fairly-traded products) to those that completely change their lifestyles (e.g. by living and working in eco-villages). Within their work, the authors characterise New Consumption Communities in terms of their ability to 're-enable the consumer', based on the understanding that they offer consumers 'alternative ways to engage in consumption and negotiate with the marketplace', rather than strategies of consumer resistance (Szmigin et al., 2007, p.297).

Moraes and her colleagues (Bekin et al., 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012) research focus on what could be described as more radical forms of New Consumption Communities, in

the sense that consumers' engagement in various entrepreneurial and 'production-engaged' consumption processes in the communities have an influence on many aspects of their everyday routine behaviours.

Rather than merely focusing on what people say and what people say they do (like many of the studies examined previously in this chapter), these authors adopt a multi-locale ethnographic approach and focus predominantly on what people actually do, incorporating visits to the communities; working, engaging and interacting with members of the communities as a full-time volunteer, interviews, life stories and an analysis of documents (e.g. leaflets and monthly newsletters) and/or community websites (Bekin et al., 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012). By physically immersing themselves in, and providing detailed accounts of the everyday activities of these communities, the authors help to develop our understanding of ethical consumers' waste-reduction strategies and behaviours (Bekin et al., 2007), their entrepreneurial production-engaged consumption processes (Moraes et al., 2010) and/or the ways in which environmental and ethical forms of consumption become established and normalised (Moraes et al., 2012) in New Consumption Communities.

Within their work, the authors demonstrate how consumers participating in the communities channel their concerns around food mileage, animal welfare, the distant relationship between producers and consumers and/or what they perceive to be the shortcomings of corporate practices and market systems through their alternative production-engaged consumption processes (Bekin et al., 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012).

To varying degrees, the New Consumption Communities explored in Moraes and her colleagues (Bekin et al., 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012) research, re-engage with food production processes; they cultivate their own fruits and vegetables, rear livestock for meat, eggs and milk and process some of their own foods. For instance, Bekin et al. (2007, p.277) illustrate how the communities they explored produced their own 'butter, cheese, cream, yoghurts, jams, honey and tofu' depending upon their level of commitment to self-sufficiency. These ecological strategies enable consumers to reduce the 'food miles' and the amount of waste they produce, insofar that their produce is 'packaging free' (Bekin et al., 2007, p.277; Moraes et al., 2010, Moraes et al., 2012). Bekin et al. (2007) also suggest that consumers living in these ethical communities can reduce the amount of packaging procured, compared to individual consumers, when foods are bought in bulk from their local wholesalers. Adding to this, re-engaging in food production processes also enables consumers to become less dependent on commercial food production and distribution systems and gain control over the ways in which fruits/vegetables are cultivated (Moraes et al., 2010).

Alongside the communities' efforts to re-engage in food production processes, New Consumption Communities also carry out repairs (e.g. on products, communal buildings and caravans) engage in DIY and often creatively re-use different materials, which prevent these products/materials from otherwise finding their way into the waste stream (Bekin et al., 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012). For instance, Bekin et al. (2007) show how some consumers have transformed old whiskey barrels into homes for community residents. Although, Bekin et al. (2007) do point out that the repairs carried out often require members with specialist knowledge, which reinforces the importance of 'community' and working collectively; using the diverse skills of each member to facilitate these production-engaged processes.

Other production-engaged consumption processes that the New Consumption Communities engage in, include producing their own sewage systems, water collection systems, wind energy and/or building their own 'ecologically sound, energy-efficient, earth-sheltered' housing (Moraes et al., 2010, p.279). These infrastructural adaptations to mainstream services; electric, gas or water, provided by public/private utility companies have influenced how the consumers living in these communities consume. For instance, owing to the water systems that the communities have in place; rainwater (which is dependent on the weather) collected in their own wells is considered to be 'precious' and so water wastage (e.g. 'unnecessary toilet flushing') is often discouraged (Bekin et al., 2007, p.277). Similarly, one community has 'eliminated the need for heating' owing to the highly insulated, 'energy-efficient' housing that they built, with indoor temperatures varying between 18 and 23 degrees throughout the year (Moraes et al., 2010, p.289). Consistent with Cherrier's (2005) and Black and Cherrier's (2010) work explored previously (in sub-section 2.3.3.), consumers do not necessarily need to 'sacrifice' in order to live in more environmentally responsible ways. Indeed, 'these consumption restraints do not portray suffering or "colder and darker places" (Connolly and Prothero, 2003); their altered consumption practices seemed to liberate them from mainstream norms and create joy through the achievement of goals' (Moraes et al., 2012, p.289).

Whilst these studies show the various ways through which the ethical consumption communities encourage and facilitate more environmentally responsible ways of living, they resist the temptation to romanticise community-living and draw our attention to some of the conflicts and internal power struggles amongst members of these communities. These come about as a result of their 'alternative culture' which places emphasis on 'environmental goals' through their

consumption activities and meanings, which often conflict with consumer's personal desires (Bekin et al., 2007; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012). This tension; between consumers' personal desires and the shared interests and values of the communities (focused around environmental sustainability) resonate with the concept of the traditional neo-liberal consumer and the citizen, mentioned previously in sub-section 2.3.1. insofar that some of consumers' personal desires run counter to collective community-orientated codes of behaviour. However, in relation to these communities, it could be argued that the role of the citizen is strengthened by the 'alternative culture' established within the communities.

Taken together, these studies have called attention towards the ways in which 'environmentally conscious' consumers can redress their environmental and ethical concerns through their engagement in 'production-engaged' processes. Besides this, these studies also shed light on a number of other issues.

Firstly, it becomes apparent that place is fundamental to the success of these communities, both in terms of their ability to engage in more productive forms of consumption and the strength of their communal ties and norms (i.e. water is considered to be 'precious') (Moraes et al., 2010, p.290). In addition to this, Moraes et al. (2010, pp.290-291) reveal how community life in the New Consumption Communities, built around shared interests, social relationships and their collective efforts facilitate the communities' 'situated and ethically-inclined production-consumption'. Defining the New Consumption Communities as 'ethical spaces', the authors also illustrate how living within a supportive, collaborative community encourages members to consume in ways that align with their 'ethical self-concepts' and refrain from consumer temptations in the marketplace (Moraes et al., 2010, p.291).

Taking these ideas around the importance of place further, Moraes et al. (2012) illustrate how consumers' practical experiences of living and working within New Consumption Communities work to displace them from the ordinary workings of everyday life. More to the point, They demonstrate how the communities are organized and designed in such a way (i.e. as co-housing cooperatives, with their own water spring, sewage systems, wind energy, eco-housing and/or water collection systems, for instance) that they propel consumers to break away from previously held routines and habits, and in the process, form new behaviours, habits, routines that are more in line with their ethical and environmentally responsible attitudes/beliefs.

for new routines and habits to form in ways that align with their ethical attitudes. These authors assert that many everyday behaviours occur with 'little cognitive deliberation' (Moraes et al., 2012, p.110). More specifically, they consider how repeated behaviours gradually form into habits over time and how through this process, consumer decision making diminishes to the extent that, 'such behaviours tend to become mechanically prompted by contextual and environmental factors' (Moraes et al., 2012, p.110). Following this point of view, Moraes et al. (2012) go on to argue that consumers may not always be able to act in accordance with their environmental attitudes/beliefs, despite having a positive attitude towards environmentally responsible behaviours, since consumers are often locked into certain behaviours (Shove, 2003). Consequently, in order for change to take place, the authors believe that such behaviours need to be 'unfrozen' so to speak, from their situated environments.

A similar conclusion has been made for those that visit the communities insofar that they have had the opportunity to experience the communities' environmental practices and norms. The

authors argue that whilst the community visitors did not always change their habits, they became more aware of their ordinary routines at home and their impact on the environment; thus, bringing them into discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984; Moraes et al., 2012).

Secondly, consumers' entrepreneurial efforts to re-connect with different forms of production reinforce the participatory, social and fluid nature of the communities (Moraes et al., 2010). Alongside these production-engaged practices, the authors also draw our attention towards the cooperative businesses that the communities run, to educate and involve the local community and serve as a source of income. One community offered a range of services including, 'consultancy services, workshops, publications and information packages on the technicalities of eco-building and setting up sustainable communities' for the local community and visitors (Moraes et al., 2010, p.285). It is in this sense that the authors portray the communities as, 'at once economic actors and enactors of productive alternatives' (Moraes et al., 2010, p.285). Moreover, they emphasise how the communities engage with marketing practices as a means to improve their business offerings and involve the local community. As such, New Consumption Communities are said to be engaging within the marketplace rather than acting against it (Moraes et al., 2010). Indeed, the authors point out how members living in the communities construed their production-engaged consumption practices as 'positive ways of living' (Moraes et al., 2010, p.283), rather than forms of anti-consumption practices. In doing so, they encourage us to question the notion of 'anti' consumption or 'anti' market(ing) and the idea of framing consumers' practices as 'anti' *per se*.

Moving beyond the dualistic notion between pro- or anti-consumption (or market(ing)), alongside other binary divisions; 'power or resistance', 'passivity or creativity', and 'producer or

consumer' (for instance), these studies draw our attention towards 'the changing nature of consumption', or what Moraes et al. (2010, p.277) refer to as a 'participatory, collaborative and productive process' of consumption.

Whilst these studies demonstrate that more radical New Consumption Communities have the ability to '*re-enable* the consumer' (Szmigin et al., 2007) to engage with alternative forms of consumption to redress perceived shortcomings of existing market systems, these studies focus on what could be characterized as atypical or marginal consumers, in the sense that these New Consumption Communities are considered to be '*less* mainstream in their outlook and approach to life and *more* independent from the marketplace than the average consumer' (Hadley and Cheetham, 2015). Thus, as Bekin et al. (2007) indicate, it would be 'difficult' for individual consumers to consume in these 'production-engaged processes' to the same extent as consumers living within New Consumption Communities.

Taking the emphasis on community and sociality forward, the following section explores alternative modes of food provisioning. However, these alternative modes of food provisioning, provide local consumers and farmers *collectively* to 'gain control over, and the re-creation of, preferred modes and practices of consumption' (Moraes et al., 2010, p.289). Although, unlike the New Consumption Communities explored in this section, these alternative food systems are more geographically dispersed insofar that consumers who participate do not live within 'commune-spatial environments' (Moraes et al., 2010, p.291). They are also less radical, in the sense that consumers' engagement in these food systems appears to 'fit' within their everyday routines and practices.

2.4.2 Alternative Food Systems

There are a number of fairly recent studies that draw our attention to alternative, more sustainable and localised ways of consuming food, which reinforce the idea of shortening of the food supply chain (Bossy, 2014; Forno and Graziano, 2014; McEachern, Warnaby, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2010). As Forno and Graziano (2014, p.140) point out, these 'alternative' systems, 'promote a political vision of consumption and mobilise consumers, emphasising solidarity and the use of 'alternative' forms of consumption as means to re-embed the economic system within social relations'. Despite their similarities, these alternative food systems/ movements manifest in different ways; they are characterised by different internal structures and founded upon different ideologies and principles. Such examples include; farmers' markets (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000; La Trobe, 2001; McEachern et al., 2010; Szmigin, Maddock and Carrigan, 2003); community supported agriculture (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a); organic food co-operatives (Seyfang, 2006; 2007) and the Slow Food movement (Bossy, 2014; Sassatelli and Davilio, 2010) and provide consumers with a means to redress some of the social and ecological issues that prevail in conventional production-consumption modes of food provision. Within this section, three studies are examined in turn, each of which, explores a distinctive alternative food system/movement, firstly the Slow Food Movement, followed by an organic food cooperative and lastly the community-supported agricultural system, as a means to draw attention towards the unique ways in which these alternative food systems address food-related environmental issues.

2.4.2.1 The Slow Food Movement

Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) explore the Slow Food movement within the broad context of critical, political and ethical consumption. Slow Food was first established in 1987, in Italy, as a

means to defend traditional Italian dishes in response to the opening of the first McDonalds in Rome. The phenomenon has since gained international recognition and presence in about 130 countries. This globally dispersed organisation is composed of a multitude of local divisions referred to as 'convivia', which are organised from the international headquarters in Bra, Italy and through national executive committees. This unique arrangement has enabled the organisation to conserve the principles that lay the foundations of the Slow Food movement and broaden the scope beyond the *initial* convivia in Italy, to different parts of the world. The Slow Food organisation conveys their ideas and supports issues concerning gastronomy, biodiversity and the environment through their different projects (referred to as Presidia), gastronomic guides (translated into a number of different languages), events and an array of different activities (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010).

According to Sassatelli and Davolio (2010), this grassroots movement, founded upon an aesthetic appreciation for fine quality, regional, traditional and often artisan foods, and initiated by a group of cooks and gastronomes, has evolved into a movement which combines the pleasures of food with an allegiance to the environment and local communities. Increasingly, core members of the movement have shown their antipathy towards standardised foods and the industrialised nature of food production (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010).

Acknowledging the political profile of the Slow Food movement, the authors claim that Slow Food's notion of consumption must be placed in the broader context of the politicization of consumption and question how both *consumption* and the *consumer* are conceptualised within the Slow Food movement. More specifically, they question how the 'refinement of taste', a particularly important aspect of Slow Food, carries political significance. They employ a variety of

primary and secondary qualitative approaches; interviews, observations, official documents, publications and public speeches gathered over a six-year period, to develop both a cultural and an institutional analysis of the Slow Food movement. Within their findings, the authors inform us that the organisation has undergone a transition, from a classical gastronomic focus with emphasis placed on the aesthetic qualities of food, towards a politically enhanced 'eco-gastronomic' focus; embracing ecological and ethical issues associated with food production and consumption (e.g. preserving vegetable varieties from disappearing). Quoting Carlo Petrini, the founder of Slow Food, Sassatelli and Davolio (2010, pp.204-205) highlight that the movement has grown to take an interest in 'protecting traditional foods, primary ingredients, conserving methods of cultivation and processing and defending the biodiversity of cultivated and wild varieties' alongside their original interests.

Within their work, the authors give prominence to the unique sense in which the Slow Food movement carries political meaning. In contrast with other activist movements, which promote a universalistic rhetoric about global justice or environmental conservation (for instance), Slow Food promotes a *humanistic* rhetoric of pleasure. According to Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) *pleasure* takes precedence amongst Slowfoodists and environmental issues and ideas around 'fairness' have become subsumed within their pursuit of pleasure in consumption. In doing so, the movement has situated *food* and *consumption* within a much broader context, which encompasses the moral and political politicization of food (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010).

Moreover, unlike conventional politics, whereby concerns are voiced through campaigns and events, the authors suggest that Slow Food members approach the political complexity of consumption in a more practical, 'pragmatic' and 'down-to-earth process of negotiation to distil

ingredients that may conduce to a better quality of life for all' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010, p.220). This practical everyday action ensues from Slowfoodists' *sensory* approach (i.e. savouring, smelling and cooking) to food quality (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010). Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) inform us that Slowfoodists consider food quality as something that is subjectively interpreted and so they are required to undergo training or taste education, to aesthetically appreciate fine quality foods. For consumers, this sensory training, can be described as a process of enlightenment, as it is recognised as being 'a major device for consciousness raising' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010, p.219). This idea of consciousness raising is closely connected to Slow Food's evolving concept of food quality, now embracing various different meanings; 'from taste and pleasure as indication of cultural traditions, to conviviality as indication of healthy community/human relations, to landscape and environment protection and diversity as a way to guarantee food safety and security' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010, p.219).

The notion of aesthetic pleasure, grounded in food 'training', is also considered to be a *political act*; an expression of environmental citizenship. In this light, Slowfoodists engage in a distinctive form of political participation, through which they can address environmental issues and notions around 'fairness' (for instance) through 'practical appropriation', instead of 'confrontation' like other forms of political participation (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010, p.220).

Like other consumers who engage in politically-infused practices; boycotts or buycotts (Shaw et al., 2006), the Slow Food movement characterises consumers as important agents for social change through their concerted efforts to close the gap between producers and consumers and 'protect' local food producers that are 'marginalised by global standardised commodity circuits' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010, p.212) through various Slow Food initiatives including, 'earth

markets' (otherwise referred to as farmer's markets), 'taste workshops', 'school gardens', 'food culture training courses for teachers' and 'ethical purchasing networks', for instance. It is important to note here, that whilst the members of the Slow Food movement show an aversion towards the standardised food production-consumption processes embodied in the workings of the capitalist market economy, many Slow Food initiatives work through the capitalist market economy. In this sense, the Slow Food movement could be characterised as an 'alternative' market system that works alongside, rather than against conventional production-consumption systems, and places emphasis on local production and the consumption of seasonal, artisan, fresh and fine quality foods.

Whilst the Slow Food movement encourages and enables individuals to consume environmentally responsible and sustainable food, it does not cater for all sectors of society. Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) draw our attention towards the 'latent elitism' underlying the Slow Food movement; with its emphasis on 'better quality food', that is, local and organic foods, which are perceived to be more expensive than most produce bought in supermarkets (Johnston et al., 2011), Slow Food is limited to those who can afford to pay higher prices for their food. These findings are consistent with earlier research, which identified price as a barrier to more environmentally responsible or ethical forms of consumption (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). These findings also resonate with Johnston et al.'s (2011) research exploring 'ethical eating' and everyday food-related consumption practices, by which local and organic foods are considered to be too expensive for low-income consumers. Although, in their research Johnston et al. (2011, p.302) show how their participants embraced different strategies for 'eating 'ethically' on a budget', which enabled them to approach 'ethical eating' in a more flexible manner, by purchasing *either* local *or* organic, or growing some of their own food, for

instance. Nevertheless, as Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) point out, Slow Food places emphasis on *consuming in moderation*; consuming fine quality foods in small amounts and draws attention towards other influences which influence consumption patterns such as ‘foodstuff provisioning’ and ‘cooking routines’. In doing so, Slow Food maintain that consumption patterns can be organised and coordinated in such a way that quality food becomes more affordable for consumers (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010).

Nevertheless, as outlined within this brief discussion, the Slow Food movement has become a fundamental resource through which consumers can identify with and address broader environmental and societal issues, through their everyday food-related consumption practices. With an emphasis on local (and thus small-scale), seasonal and fine quality foods, the Slow Food movement advocates an alternative, politicalised form of consumption.

2.4.2.2 Organic Food Cooperatives

Consistent with Sassatelli and Davolio (2010), Seyfang (2007) also explores the emerging interest and connection between grassroots initiatives, the production and consumption of local food and sustainability. Within her research, Seyfang (2007) examines the potential of an organic food cooperative based in Norfolk, UK to encourage more sustainable forms of food consumption and alleviate environmental and societal problems in society. Like the Slow Food movement, organic food cooperatives represent an ‘alternative’ market system, which deviate from conventional production and consumption systems and create opportunities for consumers to support local farmers.

In light of the perceived inadequacy of individual consumers to 'transform markets' through their consumption decisions, Seyfang (2007, p.121) draws our attention towards the need to address issues around sustainability from a 'systems' perspective. Based upon the understanding that systems of provision, that is, a vertical commodity chain, comprising 'production, marketing, distribution, retail and consumption in social and cultural context', lock consumers into certain patterns of consumption, the author argues for the need to develop our understanding of systems of provision to bring about change within them (Seyfang, 2007, p.121). In order to facilitate this, the author designed an 'evaluation framework' for 'sustainable consumption', comprised of a set of five indicators (based upon New Economics theory), namely; 'localization', 'reducing ecological footprints', 'building communities', 'acting collectively' and 'building new institutions', which embrace more of a holistic approach to sustainability. This evaluation framework then provided the basis through which the author examined the organic food cooperative, through a mixed methods approach, combining visits to the market stall, one visit to the cooperative's headquarters, semi-structured interviews with members working at the cooperative, document analysis and questionnaires, completed by the cooperative's consumers.

The local organic food cooperative was established in 2003 with financial support from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Rural Enterprise Scheme (Seyfang, 2007). It was initiated by a number of local growers who sought more control over their businesses, having suffered financial losses since the economic recession in the 1990s and who (generally) depended upon one buyer (often supermarkets) for their source of income.

According to Seyfang (2007), the cooperative, made up of nine local growers and a cooperative in Padua (Italy), supplies seasonal fruits/vegetables through various different modes; market

stalls, box schemes, shops, farmers' markets and through small-scale food provisioning initiatives in different public sectors (e.g. primary schools and the local hospital's visitor centre). The organic foods grown locally are supplemented with organic fruits/vegetables from the Italian cooperative and other cooperative and fair trade producers with whom they have formed an alliance. Thus, whilst the organic food cooperative supports the development of local food networks, they also support transnational food networks.

Based upon the five criteria through which the organic food cooperative was appraised, Seyfang (2007) demonstrates how the cooperative represents a form of civic mobilisation through which both farmers and consumers can collectively realise their shared interests. In terms of the first indicator; *localisation*, the cooperative has enabled regional growers to support and strengthen their own livelihoods (the principle aim of the cooperative) and the local economy, through serving local markets as opposed to large supermarket chains. In doing so, the cooperative has also enabled consumers to support regional farmers who 'care about the land' and contribute to the local economy (Seyfang, 2007, p.127). In terms of *reducing ecological footprints*, the cooperative is committed to sustainable farming practices and enables consumers to purchase organic, (predominantly) local, seasonal produce, in keeping with their concerns for the environment. With regards to *community-building*, the cooperative encourages and stimulates the growth of personal relationships between farmers (producers) and consumers, through face-to-face contact (at the market stalls or box deliveries, for example); newsletters (which share recipes, stories and news about the farms) and farm visits, (which also enables consumers to gain a sense of connection to food production processes). In terms of the fourth indicator, Seyfang (2007) portrays the cooperative as an 'expression of *collective action* for sustainable consumption' based on two accounts. Firstly, through the structure of the cooperative. For

instance, by working in collaboration with one another, rather than against each other (competing for profit) regional growers have been able to establish secure and sustainable livelihoods (as I have mentioned previously) and achieve the yield necessary to sustain the cooperative. Secondly, through the cooperative's small-scale initiatives; working in unison with catering managers in different public sector organisations (e.g. primary schools and local hospital's food quarters), the cooperative has extended the provision of local, sustainable food beyond domestic household food provisioning and has become more 'socially embedded' within the local community (Seyfang, 2007). Lastly, in terms of *building new institutions*, Seyfang (2007) reveals how, on a local scale, the organic food cooperative, comprised of regional (and Italian) farmers, consumers and different public sectors, lays the foundations for an alternative system of food provision (compared to conventional systems of food provision) based upon ecological, societal and cooperative values. As such, in this context, and consistent with the Slow Food movement, sustainability is something that is collectively achieved amongst the network of growers and consumers, together with the support of the public sector. Like the Slow Food movement, the organic food network operates within the capitalist market economy, yet diverges from it, insofar that it places emphasis on other values; social relationships and local geographic ties to the community. Seyfang (2007) has drawn our attention towards the ability of 'alternative' food networks to collectively change the distribution of power within current systems of provision, through their collective efforts to work in collaboration with each other. Nevertheless, the author informs us that the cooperative does not represent an 'all-or-nothing choice' for the majority of its customers; rather, they embrace a more pragmatic perspective, which enables them to adopt a 'plurality of approaches' (including purchasing from supermarkets) through which they compromise between ethics and convenience (for instance). Thus, contrary to the idea of an 'environmentally conscious consumer', the multiplicity of

sustainability issues (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014) and diverse ways through which consumers engage with these issues encourages us to think about the boundaries between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' forms of consumption (Eden, 2017) and embrace more fluid conceptualisations of consumers and move away from trying to define consumer identities.

Unlike the Slow Food movement, Seyfang (2007) demonstrates how the cooperative provides local, organic foods to a high proportion of low-income customers. Thus, contrary to previous research, which indicates that price is a barrier to ethical and environmentally responsible forms of consumption (Roberts, 1996) or has otherwise criticised the high prices of organic and local food (Johnston et al., 2011), these findings show how affordable organic foods can be produced and distributed to appeal to consumers who are less economically-privileged.

Whilst Seyfang's (2007) work has shown how an organic food cooperative facilitates more sustainable food consumption patterns, her research focuses predominantly on the production and provision of organic foods. In doing so, it is unable to consider how consumers manage and integrate this alternative system of food provision into their everyday food-related consumption practices and routines or otherwise assumes a smooth transition from more conventional modes of production-consumption towards integrating alternative modes of production-consumption into everyday food-related consumption patterns. Indeed, (as mentioned earlier on in this discussion) within her work, Seyfang (2007) highlights how systems of provision lock consumers into certain patterns of consumption. That being so, exploring how these systems 'work' in practice, within consumers' lives on an everyday practical level is extremely important. The author does hint at some of these issues by touching upon consumers' experiences of participating in the cooperative (e.g. how receiving a box of fruits/vegetables each week, chosen

by the farmers rather than themselves has challenged their cooking skills), however, these issues are largely overlooked.

2.4.2.3 Community Supported Agriculture

Like Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) and Seyfang (2007), Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) provide us with further insights into an unconventional market system; community-supported agriculture, in the context of ethical consumption. Like the Slow Food movement (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010) and organic food cooperatives (Seyfang, 2007), community supported agricultural systems are 'market-mediated' communal connections forged between farmers and consumers, which pivot around the production and consumption of local, seasonal and organic fruits and vegetables.

Within their work, these authors provide an understanding of the ways in which both consumers and farmers ideologically frame the meanings of the community supported agricultural market system in relation to conventional food production and distribution systems. Like both Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) and Seyfang (2007), Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) demonstrate how food (alongside food preparation and provisioning) is placed in a wider context, embracing the politicization of food.

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) show how consumers participating in the Community Supported Agricultural scheme pay a share price ranging from \$200 to \$600, which entitles them to a weekly subscription of fruits/vegetables for five to seven months of the year. Members have the choice to participate in the scheme as 'worker members', which requires them to devote 5-10 hours each week to working on the farm, which in turn, substitutes a proportion of the share

cost. Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a, p.278) revealed that a number of their participants became worker members as a means to make their share more affordable and immerse themselves in the 'world of organic farming'.

Through consumers' ideological framings of community supported agricultural farms and critique of global, de-territorialised commercial farming and distribution systems, the authors illustrate how consumers construe their experiences and often the shortcomings of community supported agriculture as enchanting experiences, characterised by a sense of 'surprise' and 'wonderment' (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p.294). For instance, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a, p.282) demonstrate how members of the community supported agricultural system praise the system as a 'potent source of stimulating variety and differentiation' owing to the assortment of organic produce that they receive each week, which is juxtaposed with industrial agricultural systems that produce 'bland and predictable goods'.

Similarly, the authors demonstrate how participating in the community supported agricultural system introduces a degree of unpredictability into their food-related consumption practices and routines, since consumers' weekly assortment is mainly determined by the farmer and other influences (e.g. weather conditions) which can have an impact on the success/failures of the produce. According to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a, p.283), members of the community supported agricultural system construe this degree of unpredictability as an enchanting experience that facilitates the 'creative development of their culinary skills and knowledge'. Again, the authors reveal how their participants compare the community supported agricultural system (and the practices associated with the system) with the 'de-skilled' modes of consumption 'typical of a McDonaldised food culture' (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a,

p.283) to highlight the 'culturally significant contrast' between the community-supported agriculture's ideology and global, institutional food processes (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p.284).

Like Sassatelli and Davolio's (2010) and Seyfang's (2007) research exploring the Slow Food movement and an organic food cooperative (respectively), Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a, p.276) show how the community supported agricultural system encourages consumers to form close, personal relationships with local farmers and indeed with other consumers who participate in the scheme. For instance, the community supported agricultural system has set up a number of different initiatives, including 'potlucks' (social gatherings wherein members are expected to prepare and bring dishes for others to try), 'watermelon tasting events' and 'farm tours' which cultivate a sense of community. These personal relationships are further diffused between farmers and consumers alike. According to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a, p.287), the 'irrational volume of goods' that consumers receive in their weekly boxes has encouraged members to trade their unwanted or excess produce with other members. Likewise, local farmers trade some of their vegetables for meat and share machinery with other farmers. The authors also show how the community supported agricultural system is based on the understanding that both farmers and consumers participating in the scheme share the risks (i.e. crop failures) and rewards (e.g. bountiful harvests) (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a), which reinforce the sense of unity between them.

Consistent with the previous two studies, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) interpret the localized and 're-territorialized' market connections, which provide consumers with the means to distance themselves from unsustainable farming and agricultural practices embedded in

global 'de-territorialised' market systems, as a form of ethical consumerism in itself. Indeed, their consumers consider the community supported agricultural system as an alternative mode of food provision which enables them to distance themselves from and have an impact on global corporate capitalism and conventional agricultural systems, which are perceived to cause harm to the environment and society. For consumers then, ethical consumption is realised through their local, personal and enchanted connection to local food and local food producers.

Interestingly, the farmers who participated in the study did not perceive themselves as 'engaging in a grand struggle to radically reform the capitalist system' (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p.290). Indeed, whilst the farmers were aware that their participation within the scheme provided consumers with a 'politically, culturally and economically important alternative to corporate dominated agriculture', they merely see their involvement as part of a larger 'farmer-citizen' association which reconnects consumers with natural foods (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p.291).

Like other unconventional market systems discussed here, community supported agricultural systems work within, but at the same time diverge from the capitalist system insofar that they give precedence to sustainability, in terms of both the local community, local economy and the environment and value the personal relationships between farmers and consumers.

As these three studies have shown, alternative modes of food provisioning create the opportunities for consumers and farmers to engage in local, sustainable and communal forms of production and consumption, thus, allowing them to at least partially escape from global, de-territorialised, food production systems. Consistent with New Consumption Communities, they

present and encourage alternative forms of consumption that 're-enable' the consumer (Szmigin et al., 2007). Of course, as highlighted within each study discussed, these alternative forms of consumption necessarily depend upon shared interests and commitment of both consumers and farmers, to work in cooperation with one another.

2.4.3 Consumption, Production or 'Prosumption'?

Having introduced and explored research in this section (section 2.4) which has (in part), shown us the potentialities of embracing more fluid conceptualisations of, what we have generally taken to mean by the terms 'consumer' and 'consumption', it is worth drawing attention towards a growing body of literature that challenges these concepts, in their traditional sense, and helps us to reformulate our thinking about the social world (Ritzer, 2017).

As I have already alluded to in the introduction of this thesis (see section 1.3.1), recent research in the social sciences has called attention to, what has been defined as, 'prosumption', that is, the 'interrelated process of production and consumption' (Ritzer, 2014, p.3). The coming together of these two previously distinct concepts/processes, allows us to move away from production-consumption binaries and appreciate the active, participatory, playful and creative nature of consumption (Beer and Burrows, 2010; Burroughs and Mick, 2004; Campbell, 2005; Moreau and Dahl, 2005; Ritzer, 2017). As such, the very concept of 'prosumption' challenges the classical idea that consumers are merely passive recipients who *use* and *use up* products from the marketplace (Ritzer, 2014).

Even so, this phenomenon is not new. As Ritzer (2017) boldly points out, all production activities have 'always' involved some form of consumption (i.e. labour, tools, materials and time) and

equally, all consumption activities have 'always' involved some form of production (i.e. the work involved). Rather, he informs us, it is the emergence of concepts like 'prosumption', that allow us to acknowledge and appreciate that *prosumption* is intrinsic and interlaced within what we have conventionally taken to be distinct processes (Ritzer, 2014; Ritzer and Jurgensen, 2010).

Within a fairly recent article, Ritzer (2014) has made us aware that consumers are increasingly carrying out certain activities that were previously carried out by paid employees. One example includes customers scanning their own food shopping as they walk around the supermarket or at the self-service check-outs provided. Beyond the marketplace, this idea of 'prosumption' also allows us to embrace the ways in which consumers modify objects (i.e. by making alterations) and re-use objects in ways that were otherwise intended by their 'producers'.

Alongside 'prosumption' (Ritzer, 2014; 2017), there are other similar concepts, which correlate with/corroborate Ritzer's theoretical developments in this area (some of which I have already mentioned in section 1.3.1). For instance, Campbell (2005) introduced the concept of the 'craft consumer' to refer to someone who is directly and physically involved in both the design and the creation of a product, that they typically consume themselves. Similarly, Watson and Shove (2008) utilise the concept of 'Do-It-Yourself' to explore the processes through which consumers draw upon their own skills, knowledge, judgement and certain tools/materials in the process of DIYing, which may involve repairing, transforming or building, for instance. Alternatively, Vargo and Lusch (2006) use the term, 'service-dominant logic' which purports that consumers are inherently involved in processes of value creation.

This shift away from 'production' and 'consumption', towards 'prosumption' is also advocated by Shankar, Cova and Kozinets (2007). Within their book, they reveal how conventional conceptualisations of the 'consumer' are incapable of representing the diverse nature and forms of (productive)consumption that are illustrated within their book; *Consumer Tribes*. Instead, they use four different concepts; 'activators', 'double agents', 'plunderers' and 'entrepreneurs' to draw attention to the active role that consumers play in the marketplace and capture the sense in which they are actively and passionately involved in the process(es) of reproducing the meanings associated with objects/brands and/or the process(es) of changing, repairing, assembling or crafting objects, spaces or experiences.

As I have already indicated within this section (section 2.4), some studies within the field of environmentally responsible consumption have embraced this more fluid way of conceptualising the consumer/ consumption, allowing them to capture the richness of consumption and appreciate that 1) consumption is not necessarily tied to the marketplace and 2) that consumers are always producing, albeit in different ways and to different extents. Consistent with these studies, this thesis' use of the terms 'consumption' and 'consumer' appreciate that different forms of consumption are inherently bound up with different forms of production. The following section concludes this chapter.

2.5 Towards a Practice Theoretical Approach to Studying Consumption

This chapter has explored the theoretical development of environmentally responsible consumption, outlining the different approaches, perspectives and assumptions that academic research has embraced, in the field of consumer research. Three broad themes, namely; traditional consumer behaviour approaches, the political, social and symbolic significance of

environmentally responsible consumption and collective forms of consumption provide a means to draw attention towards the key directions that research has taken within the discipline, without losing sight of the more nuanced understandings of the phenomenon. Taken together, these three streams of research present different conceptualisations of the 'consumer', 'consumption' and 'environmentally responsible consumption', highlighting the inherent complexity of environmentally responsible consumption. These differences are summarised briefly below.

Implicit within traditional approaches to environmentally responsible consumption, the consumer, or rather the *environmentally conscious* consumer has been constructed as an active agent for social change who makes morally-informed decisions based upon their attitudes and beliefs. Within this view, consumers are assigned some responsibility for the environmental problems that society faces and are assumed to 'steer or regulate their consumption in an instrumental way' (Connolly and Prothero, 2008, p.117), so as to contribute towards 'solving' environmental problems.

The second stream of research, exploring the political, social and symbolic significance of environmentally responsible consumption, examines research which focuses on the ways in which consumers *themselves* assume individual responsibility for society's environmental problems and seek to address such problems through their consumption practices. Within this stream of research, some consumers are characterised as somewhat liberated, reformist consumer-citizens that have the ability to change broader institutional policies and practices for the betterment of society, through 'voting' in the market place (Micheletti, 2003; Shaw 2007; Shaw et al., 2006). Other research in this theme characterises consumers as social beings with

social relationships. In this regard, research has drawn our attention towards the social and cultural complexity of environmentally responsible consumption; how everyday consumption patterns are intermingled with consumers' social relationships (and thus other priorities), which in turn, raises questions regarding the agency of individual consumers to make *morally informed decisions* on the basis of their environmental values. This stream of research also portrays the consumer as an expressive somewhat empowered individual, who uses forms of non- or anti-consumption as a means to construct their 'self' or multiple selves, in relation to their existing or desired identities. In this sense, environmentally responsible and sustainable forms of consumption represent a personal, emotional and subjective means through which consumers can achieve their own goals/desires.

The third stream of research draws our attention towards *more* 'fluid' conceptualisations of the consumer; more radical, creative, social and participatory 'prosumers' (in the case of those consumers who participate in New Consumption Communities) and the more social, collaborative consumer (who becomes more engaged in food production processes through alternative food provisioning systems). These more fluid conceptualisations of the consumer allow us to break away from traditional binary divisions (e.g. the producer and the consumer) and appreciate the 'changing face of our (new consumer) culture' (Moraes et al., 2010, p.276). Furthermore, in this context, consumption is characterised as a social phenomenon, through which more environmentally responsible, 'ethical' and 'sustainable' forms of consumption can be realised.

Within each of the three themes identified above, the *scope* of what we have taken to mean by 'consumption' has varied considerably, ranging from more narrow conceptualisations (i.e. the

process of acquiring consumer goods), towards slightly broader conceptualisations, embracing the ways in which consumers appropriate and dispose of (as well as acquire) consumer goods, towards an even more encompassing view, which situates consumption within the context of everyday life, activities and routines.

Whilst some of these *earlier* perspectives/studies that I have drawn attention to (i.e. traditional approaches to environmentally responsible consumption) have helped shape our thinking about environmentally responsible consumption, I feel that these approaches are *now* of limited value, in terms of moving forward and advancing our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption. This is primarily due to the ways in which many of these studies have conceptualised and thus explored environmentally responsible consumption. Consonant with the way in which, what it means 'to consume' was commonly understood at the time (Halkier, Keller, Truninger and Wilska, 2017), for the majority of these (particularly early) studies in the field, consumption is entangled with the marketplace. As such, our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption is bounded by consumers' purchases/ buying activities. On a further note, this perspective has generally prompted studies to explore/profile consumers on an individual level, largely ignoring the socially and culturally significant aspects of consumption.

Beyond this narrow understanding of consumption, studies that fall within the second theme; the political, social and symbolic significance of consumption, do allow for a greater understanding of the ways in which consumer goods (and consumption activities!) are socially and politically significant to consumers. That is, they begin to illustrate the ways in which consumption can be meaningful to consumers, as they go about their everyday lives (i.e. in

terms of what it means to be a good mother, belonging to a social group or satisfying self-interested desires) (Black and Cherrier, 2010; Cherrier, 2005; Connolly and Prothero, 2008), and thus help us to develop our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption beyond isolated moments of consumption that transpire in the marketplace. Nevertheless, they do so, at the expense of developing an understanding of mundane, everyday contexts in which consumption occurs.

When we begin to think about consumption in this sense, particularly given the understanding that mundane, everyday activities including: showering (Hand, Shove and Southerton, 2005; Shove, 2003) laundering (Jack, 2013; Shove, 2003; 2017), gardening (Chappells, et al., 2011), cooking (Shove, 2017; Truninger, 2011), and heating the home (Shove, 2003) and eating rely on domestic technological, heating or water systems or are otherwise tied to large complex networks (i.e. global food chains) that consume 'environmentally critical resources' (Jack, 2013, p. 406; Shove and Southerton, 2000), it becomes necessary to take a broader, more pragmatic view of consumption that opens up the possibilities of exploring the mundane aspects of everyday life. Thus, rather than homing in on isolated acts of consumption as studies that fall within the first two themes do, it becomes more appropriate to adopt a more comprehensive view of consumption or at least, more fluid ways of understanding and making sense of consumption, as some of the studies within the third theme identified have done (Moraes et al. 2010; 2012). Taking this approach is crucial if we are to gain an insight into the ways in which we can envisage wider change and naturalise more environmentally responsible ways of living into routine, everyday consumption practices.

As such, the current research project engages in and contributes to these 'theoretical conversations' (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014, p.1203), by exploring the phenomenon through a practice theoretical lens, placing emphasis on everyday performances, routines and processes. By exploring environmentally responsible consumption from a practice theoretical approach, the current research study encourages us to look beyond the 'individual consumer' towards everyday practices, wherein consumption takes place. In doing so, it allows us to depart from traditional ways of understanding the consumer/ consumer behaviour (i.e. attitude-behaviour approaches), in terms of 'action', 'reasoning', 'thinking', 'motivation' and 'individuality' and to draw our attention towards 'performances', 'doing', 'practical competence', 'shared understanding' and the 'flow' of everyday life (Warde, 2014). In doing so, it also allows us to embrace the active, participatory, creative nature of consumption (or rather prosumption) that has been overlooked in studies that presume a narrower view of consumption (Moraes et al., 2010; 2012)

Furthermore, it allows us to move beyond the (common) understanding that consumers are responsible (or at least partly responsible) for the environmental problems in society and place emphasis on practices, within which environmental sustainability is implicated.

Whilst practice theory has been found to challenge existing approaches in consumer research (Warde, 2014), there are a number of limitations to using practice theory. Within a fairly recent paper, explicating the current developments and insights into practice theory in the field of consumer research, Warde (2014) draws our attention towards a number of limitations that have been raised in the literature. One major, yet mistaken criticism that he reflects upon concerns the ability of practice theory to account for social change. Yet, as Warde (2014, pp.294-

295) points out, 'change has been convincingly described in empirical studies of the emergence, transformation, differentiation and decline of specific practices'. Adding to this, he goes on to say how, 'collective practices almost inevitably must be analysed as conduct evolving unevenly over time and in space' (Warde, 2014, p.295). Indeed within Shove, Watson and Pantzar's (2012, p.64) book exploring the dynamics of social practice, they reveal how, 'the contours of *any one* practice – where it is reproduced, how consistently, for how long, and on what scale – depend on changing populations of more or less faithful carriers or practitioners'.

Another significant criticism that Warde (2014) calls attention to, relates to the scope of practice theories, in terms of what can and cannot be explained (e.g. the macro-level aspects of consumption). Whilst there are theories such as field theory and conventions theory, which have been used to address this issue, this is not a concern for this study (Evans, 2011b; Truninger, 2011; Warde, 2014).

Moving debates around practice theory forward, Hui, Schatzki and Shove (2017) recently published a book entitled, *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations and Practitioners*, which, in part, challenges these often-heard criticisms about practice theory. For instance, Morley's (2017) work focuses on the connections within the nexus of practices and demonstrates how this is important for representing and analyzing social change. She adopts a systems of practice approach, through which she explores the dynamic relationships between practices and technology, specifically 'digitally automated' and 'autonomous' technologies (Morley, 2017). Following this approach, Morley (2017) demonstrates how the use of such technology, has lessened or otherwise, reconfigured the role that humans play in. In doing so,

she shows how such technology can be important for how practices persist and change (Morley, 2017).

Alternatively, Shove's (2017) work provides us with a means through which we can analyse and explain large scale phenomena. Like Morley (2017), Shove (2017) draws our attention to a series of material relations. Although in her work, she demonstrates how distinctions between different material relations, and how they each relate to and are interconnected to different practices help us to understand and make sense of global energy demand (Shove, 2017).

Reflecting upon these studies, the advantages of using practice theory as an alternative theoretical approach to explore consumption and develop our understanding of environmentally responsible consumption outweigh the disadvantages. This becomes more apparent in the following chapter, which explores this theoretical perspective in more detail.

Chapter 3. Practice Theory

3.1 Origins of Practice Theory

Practice theory (or practice *theories*), represents a body of diverse works that, whilst still in its infancy, has gained momentum within and across a number of disciplines including education, geography, anthropology, sociology, strategy and organisational studies and has undoubtedly shown potential for the analysis of consumption. This theoretical framing can be traced back to the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger, and later, Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu, which have (in varying degrees) come to form the philosophical groundings for the work of Theodore Schatzki, Andreas Reckwitz and Elizabeth Shove; other important proponents of practice theory.

One of the most common explanations for the emergence of and theorists' preoccupation with practice theory, concerns the difficulties arising from the social structure / human agency duality, which has sustained the attention of social theories for decades. This fundamentally ontological debate, concerning *what is* or *what exists* within the social world brings to the fore some of the most pre-eminent and classical accounts (or ideas, theories) which have influenced a wealth of research in the social sciences. Social theories/theorists that prioritise social structures over human agency allege that society consists of dominant *structures*¹⁶ or *strata*, which govern and shape the behaviour of individuals (Émile Durkheim, 1982; Karl Marx and Engels, 1967; Talcott Parsons, 1951). Therefore, from this standpoint an understanding of social phenomena essentially rests on an analysis of the various social structures and systems (such as social institutions, social classes and norms) embedded in society. Conversely, social

¹⁶ The term *structure* is polysemic here and is used broadly to capture the diverse meanings used in the various structuralist theories.

theories/theorists, which endorse individualism, assume that individuals have the freedom to act independently from social structures (e.g. Max Weber, 1979) and thus give primacy to individuals' thought processes (i.e. attitudes, intentions and concerns) and their behaviour, in their explanations of social reality.

Practice theory, however, overcomes (in one respect) or reconciles (in another respect) the social structure/ human agency duality; it de-centralises the individual from the centre of an investigation without succumbing to a structuralist approach. Nevertheless, that is not to say that social structures and individuals are ignored in practice theory. Rather, they are understood in terms of the performance and reproduction of social practices. That being the case, people's identities, beliefs and desires are shaped through their engagement in social practices. Therefore, practice theory can to be situated amongst other theoretical propositions that move away from these dichotomous ways of conceptualising human behaviour and social order as outlined below.

3.1.1 Reckwitz

Within Reckwitz's (2002) account of practice theory; *Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing*, he outlines three forms of social theory; norm-orientated theories, purpose-orientated theories (both of which underpin the two classical forms of social theory mentioned; structuralist and individualist respectively) and cultural theories. For Reckwitz (2002), practice theory falls under the umbrella of cultural theories, alongside three different forms of cultural theory that he defines as 'mentalism', 'textualism' and 'intersubjectivism'.

Whilst positioning practice theory alongside other forms of cultural theories, he also draws a number of distinctions between them. Predominantly, he draws attention to and differentiates between where they each locate the social; in the minds of human beings (mentalism), symbols and discourse (textualism), interactions (intersubjectivism) and practices (practice theory). Thus, it can be said that practice theory also displaces human minds, discourses and interactions from the centre of an investigation (Reckwitz, 2002) and awards *practices* an ontological status amid the broad spectrum of social ontologies.

Reckwitz distinguishes cultural theories from the two classical forms of social theory on account of their distinct way of understanding social phenomena. That is, 'by reconstructing the symbolic structures of knowledge which enable and constrain the agents to interpret the world according to certain forms, and to behave in corresponding ways' (Reckwitz, 2002, pp.245-6). In relation to this, he informs us how both structural and individual –orientated theories fail to take into account 'the implicit, tacit or unconscious layer of knowledge which enables a symbolic organisation of reality' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.246).

3.1.2 Giddens and Bourdieu

Both Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu address the primary individual/structural *oppositions* in their writings, as they attempt to form coherent accounts of social life that capture and understand these seemingly divergent concepts as somewhat correlative/reciprocal of each other.

The origins of Giddens' work in *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979) and *The Constitution of Society* (1984), through which he developed the theory of structuration, stemmed from his

yearning to develop a new approach to understanding social activities that disengages with the two classical oppositions. He attempted to do this through his conception; the 'duality of structure', which purports that 'social structures are both *constituted by* human agency and yet at the same time are the very *medium* of this constitution' (Giddens, 1979, p.121). Giddens also develops the notion of 'structuration' within his work as a means to capture this sense of a 'mutually constraining and [yet] mutually generative' relationship between social structures and agency/agents (Nicholini, 2012, p.45).

Like Giddens', Bourdieu's work within an *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1980) developed his theory of practice against individualist and structuralist ways of thinking, although Bourdieu developed his thesis on the basis of empirical research. He presents two key notions within his theoretical formulation of *praxis*¹⁷, namely 'habitus' and 'field'.¹⁸ In his own words, habitus is, 'a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions' (Bourdieu, 1977, pp.82-83). Therefore, for Bourdieu, habitus is a form of knowing, composed of 'bodily and mental dispositions' (Nicholini, 2012, p. 55) that are both deployed and transpire by virtue of taking part in practices. His concept of *champs* (French for fields) corresponds to various social arenas in society, including science, education, religion and politics. It is within these various fields that people draw upon and reproduce their habitus, according to certain rules that govern that field and compete for one or more forms of capital; symbolic, economic

¹⁷ The German term *praxis* denoting 'the whole of human action' has been wielded by a number of theorists as a way to distinguish between action and theory (Reckwitz, 2002, p.249).

¹⁸ *Capital* represents another key concept within Bourdieu's work, which is represented in three forms: 'cultural', 'social' and 'economic' (Bourdieu, 1986).

and social. As Nicholini (2012, p.60) succinctly puts, 'fields are...structured spaces of both social and power positions in which the distribution, and legitimacy, of capital is constantly disputed'.

3.2 Key Tenets of Practice Theory

Moving slightly away from Giddens and Bourdieu, within what follows, I explore some of Schatzki's work, as a means to provide a fruitful starting point for exploring the key tenets that practice theorists share. Both Schatzki and (perhaps to a lesser extent) Reckwitz have provided us with more concrete formulations of practice theory that bridge abstract ideas together within a more operative and analytically appealing form for conducting empirical research.

Within one of Schatzki's (2012) fairly recent publications; *A Primer on Practices: Theory and Research*, he outlines three general tenets shared amongst practice theorists that can be used as a way to mark the boundaries for defining what *is* and what *isn't* a part of a practice theory approach.

The first is the understanding that 'a practice is an organised constellation of different people's activities' (Schatzki, 2012, p.13). Within this broad definition, Schatzki (2012) demonstrates that practices comprise multiple activities. Therefore, it can be argued that an analysis of a social phenomenon from a practice-based approach, should embrace the numerous activities that compose a practice in order to understand it, in its entirety. Within this definition, Schatzki (2012) also informs us that practices are composed of *different people's* activities. In doing so, he marks 'practice' as a social phenomenon, for he maintains that anything relating to human coexistence *is* social.

On one level, this notion of an *organised* constellation draws an analogy with some forms of individualist social theories, which recognise that social phenomena are composed of people's activities, which in turn, form configurations. Nonetheless, Schatzki (2003, p.179) argues that while 'individualists do acknowledge that actions form configurations...the identities of these actions as actions do not derive from those configurations', instead they are seen as emanating from the individual. Thus Schatzki (2003) drives a wedge between forms of individualism and practice theory. The second tenet shared amongst practice theorists, that Schatzki (2012, p.13) explains is:

...the idea that important features of human life must be understood as forms of or as rooted in human activity – not in the activity of individuals, but in practices, that is, in the organised activities of multiple people.

Besides reinforcing the *social* nature of practices here, Schatzki (2012) also foregrounds practice as the smallest unit of analysis. Whilst this is one commonality that practice theorists share, the conception of *practice* appears to vary slightly amongst theorists. This shall become apparent as my discussion unfolds. The third tenet that he draws our attention to, reflects what practice theory offers, that is:

...an account of human activity that, in emphasising that human activity rests on something that cannot be put into words, counters the subject-object split that has defined much philosophical thought in the modern era. (Schatzki, 2012, p.14)

This 'something that cannot be put into words' (Schatzki, 2012), represents the knowledge that enables social actors to go about their daily lives, that they are unable to give an account of. This understanding, of *knowing how to go on*, concerns the human body, hence the term embodied knowledge. This idea of *embodied* knowledge also appears in the work of other practice theorists including, Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Giddens' concept of practical consciousness. It is

also worth noting Schatzki's own conception of 'practical understanding' here, which bears a resemblance to the concepts of habitus and practical consciousness (Schatzki, 2002).

These three general tenets shared by practice theorists introduced here, have begun to demarcate practice theory from other leading social theories and illuminate what practice theory has to offer. From this brief discussion, it can be argued that, like other forms of social theory, practice theory provides a set of ideas (or concepts) relating to the basic nature of social entities, from which interpretations about a certain social phenomenon can be formulated. That is, practice theory offers 'contingent systems of interpretation which enable us to make certain empirical statements (and exclude other forms of empirical statements)' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.257). Thus, practice theory places the notion of practice as central to analyses of social phenomena and it draws attention to the human body and bodily activities as the basis of human activity/activities, which through various ways link to form practices.

However, this is not to say that the merits of practice theory only manifest through the common principles that practice theorists share. These three tenets have been laid out merely as a useful starting point for introducing practice theory. Within the following section(s), I shall evaluate the concept of practice, before moving on to consider the potential of practice theory for the study of consumption. As the discussion develops, it will be possible to see how the differences found within practice *theories* can be valuable to researchers adopting a practice theoretical approach.

3.3 What is a Practice?

Within one of Schatzki's (1996) earlier publications, introducing his interpretation of practice theory; *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*, he defines

a practice using two distinct notions; *practice-as-entity* and *practice-as-performance*. He defines *practice-as-entity* as: ‘a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings’ (Schatzki, 1996, p.189). Therefore, *practice-as-entity* *defines* a practice in its current state. These *doings and sayings*, in general terms, broadly represent the *activities* that compose a practice at a specific point in time. Examples of the most basic doings and sayings¹⁹ may include activities such as sitting on a chair, turning the page of a book or responding to a question.

He purposively uses the term ‘nexus’ within his definition here, as a way to place emphasis on the relations between the activities that compose a practice. Schatzki (1996, p.89) claims that the doings and sayings form a nexus through relations, or “forms of linkage”, as he describes them, which represent the ways in which practices are organised; how actions are coordinated and orchestrated. He outlines three major forms of linkage involved, each of which I shall elaborate on now:

(1) through understandings, for example, of what to say and do; (2) through explicit rules, principles, precepts, and instructions; and (3) through what I will call “teleoaffective” structures embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions, and moods. (Schatzki, 1996, p.89)

Schatzki’s (1996) first form of linkage, otherwise referred to as *action understandings* (Schatzki, 2003), *possible intelligibilities* (Schatzki, 2003) or *practical understandings* (Schatzki, 2002; 2012) which I have referred to previously, reflects a shared understanding of how to go about daily life and they tie together, ‘the doings and sayings composing the relatively simple activities’ (Schatzki, 1996, p.100).

¹⁹ For Schatzki (2012, p.15), sayings form a ‘subclass of doings’, in the sense that they are all ‘doings that say something about something’.

The second form of linkage suggests that when participating in a practice, people follow certain rules, which are embedded within and govern a practice. For example, people engaged in the practice of driving a motor vehicle in the UK are required to drive on the left-hand side of the road.

Schatzki's (1996) final form of linkage, described as a teleoaffective structure, comprises both teleology and affectivity. For the purposes of describing what Schatzki (1996) means by a teleoaffective structure more clearly, I shall talk about it in these separate terms: 'teleology' and 'affectivity'. Teleology reflects the purposive relations between activities. Together, they form what Schatzki (1996) refers to as 'hierarchical orders'. He claims that in performing certain activities, people are almost always performing other activities (Schatzki, 2012). This can be demonstrated, in a simpler manner, using the example of driving again; for an individual may drive his/her motor vehicle as a means to reach their destination. Thus, actions comprised within a practice are *hierarchized* in the sense that, certain actions are performed in the interest of achieving other projects or ends. When the performance of a certain activity does not help form another activity, this activity is understood to be a person's end; 'it is that for the sake of which she acts' (Schatzki, 2012, p.15). Affectivity embraces the emotions and feelings that people express in their performance of a practice. That being so, emotions and feelings are understood to arise by virtue of a person taking up and carrying out a practice as opposed to being inherent qualities of individual people. This points to another significant difference among practice theory and the dominant individualist way of thinking; something which I have already alluded to in section 3.2.

Within Schatzki's (2002) second book, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*, he develops the forms of linkages that organise practices further, by introducing a fourth organising feature of practices; general understandings. As Welch and Warde (2017, p.183) argue, 'the concept of general understandings promises to deal with broad cultural concepts which transcend the boundaries between 'integrated practices'²⁰. For instance, general understandings may incorporate 'collective concepts, such as nation, state, economy or organisation' or 'membership categories, such as ethnicity or gender' or values (Welch and Warde, 2017, p.183). As Schatzki (2002, p.86) demonstrates in his book, a community of Shakers 'viewed labour as a sanctification of the earthly sphere' that condition the manner in which labouring practices were performed.

Lastly, by suggesting that the activities that compose a practice are *temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed*, within his definition of practice-as-entity, Schatzki (2012) locates practices at some point in or over a period of time and somewhere in space.

Coming back to Schatzki's (1996) two distinct notions of practice, his second notion, that is, practice-as-performance signifies the actual *do-ing*; the *performance* of the practice (Schatzki, 1996). He informs us that practices exist and are sustained through their continual performance: 'practice in the sense of do-ing...actualises and sustains practices in the sense of nexuses of doings' (Schatzki, 1996, p.90). This understanding also features heavily within Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. Within his work, Giddens' (1984, p.2) emphasises the recursive nature of

²⁰ Within his work, Schatzki (1996, p.98) differentiates between what he refers to as 'integrated' and 'dispersed' practices. Integrative practices, appertain to practices that are established within 'particular domains of social life', including cooking, gardening, playing/watching sports, shopping and working. The concept of 'dispersed' practices, however, applies to practices that are 'widely dispersed amongst different sectors of social life', including 'describing, ordering, following rules, explaining, questioning, reporting, examining and imagining' (Schatzki, 1996, p.91). Such practices are also understood to be constituent of 'integrated practices' (Schatzki, 1996).

human social activities and tells us that 'in and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible'. The *interconnectedness* between the notions of practice-as-entity and practice-as-performance is particularly important for thinking about practices in terms of being both partially stable and continuously evolving entities, something that is briefly touched upon later in this chapter.

Moving onto Reckwitz (2002, p.249) in his often-cited definition, he defines practice as:

A routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

Within his definition, Reckwitz (2002) marks a practice as a *routinized type of behaviour*. His choice of words appears to be somewhat ambiguous here, as Shove et al. (2012, p.6) suggest, 'this phrase is potentially misleading in that it risks equating practices with the habits of individuals'. Yet, he removes any ambivalence, when he goes on to suggest that practices are comprised of 'a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice...' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.250). Schatzki (2010) concurs with Reckwitz (2002, p.29) as he writes; 'routine is then seen not as unconscious patterns simply repeated in different situations, but as recognisably recurrent forms of behaviour that nonetheless vary in each occurrence'.

Moreover, within his definition, Reckwitz (2002) gives emphasis to both *bodily* and *mental* activities as basic elements of a social practice and thus does not give primacy to one form over another. He claims that, 'social practices are sets of routinized bodily performances, but they are at the same time sets of mental activities' and in this manner, he overcomes the *mind over body* and the *body over mind* theses (Reckwitz, 2002, p.251).

Comparable to Schatzki's (1996) concept of practice, Reckwitz (2002, p.250) argues that practice 'necessarily depends upon the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements'. That is to say, that practices exist in their performance whereby, the *interconnectedness* between the elements is sustained. Consequently, like Schatzki (1996), Reckwitz (2002) supports the claim that practices need to be regularly performed in order to sustain over time.

However, the ways in which the activities that compose a practice are *linked* vary slightly between the two authors; whilst Schatzki (1996) defines four organising features that link *doings* and *sayings* together (practical and general understandings, explicit rules and teleoaffective structures), Reckwitz (2002) incorporates such features (or much the same) as the defining elements of practices.

As already mentioned, Reckwitz (2002) brings to the fore both bodily and mental activities within his definition. He informs us that routinized *bodily* activities signify the 'regular, skilful 'performance' of (human) bodies' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.251). Moreover, he goes on to suggest that we *train* the body to perform and use certain materials in particular ways; the human body becomes intricately intertwined with various forms of understanding and skills. In this regard, a practice can be understood to be an *embodied* performance. Routinized *mental* activities, as Reckwitz (2002) has defined them, encompass a way of understanding/ interpreting the world, know-how, levels of competence, a way of feeling and of desiring something. That being so, consistent with Schatzki (1996), Reckwitz (2002) interprets mental states, which are typically understood to derive from the human mind, as key ingredients of practices.

Besides these elements, Reckwitz (2002, p.249) also includes “things’ and their use’, within his definition of practice. In doing so, he accentuates their *necessary role* within the performance of practices. This point holds significant implications for analyses of consumption for a number of reasons, which will be explored within the following sections. Yet, it is worth highlighting one significant point here; recognising the *necessary role* of objects in the performance of practices sets practice theory apart from long standing theories of consumption that often portray consumer products as “objects of knowledge’ or ‘symbolic objects” (McCracken, 1986; Reckwitz, 2002b, p.196). However, this is not to dismiss the social and cultural significance of consumer products completely (Warde, 2005). Rather, it allows researchers to appreciate and explore the ways in which practitioners draw upon and engage with ‘things’ (Reckwitz, 2002) in the performance of everyday life, rather than merely treat objects or things as ‘carriers and mediators of semiotic meaning’ (Watson, 2008, p.5).

Having considered what a practice is and how a practice has been defined, from both Schatzki’s and Reckwitz’s perspective, the following section explores the connection between materiality and practices in greater detail.

3.4 Materiality in Practices

Not all practice theorists contend that material entities are integral elements of practices (Giddens, 1984). Nonetheless, both theoretical and empirical research supporting the centrality of materiality has developed (and strengthened this argument) over the past decade across a number of disciplines, including philosophy, economics, human geography, sociology and consumer behaviour (Arsel and Bean, 2013; Chappells, et al., 2011; Hitchings, 2007; Maciel and Wallendorf, 2017; Magaudda, 2011; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017; Ropke, 2009; Schatzki, 2001;

2010; 2012; Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren, 2011; Warde, 2005; 2014; Watson and Shove, 2008). The more materialised versions of practice theory have taken hold within consumer research and have been applied within a number of key topical areas surrounding the environmental sustainability agenda (Chappells et al., 2011; Evans, McMeekin and Southerton, 2012; Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Hand, Shove and Southerton, 2005; Hargreaves, 2011; Moraes, Carrigan, Bosangit, Ferrira and McGrath, 2015; Paddock, 2015), food preparation, consumption and/or waste disposal (Cappellini, Marshall and Parsons, 2016; Evans, 2011c; 2012a; 2012b; Halkier, 2009; Halkier, 2010; Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Southerton, Díaz-Méndez and Warde, 2012; Truninger, 2011; Warde, 2016) and (value creation within) brand communities (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009), for instance. This section therefore explores the foundation of the relationship between material objects and practices and the implications this has for consumer research.

First and foremost, I shall return to Schatzki's (1996) writings. Within his earlier work, Schatzki (1996) overlooked the role of material entities within his theoretical development of a practice. However, he acknowledged this shortfall within his second book *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*, wherein he developed the concept of 'arrangements' (Schatzki, 2002), otherwise referred to as 'material arrangements' (Schatzki, 2003; 2010), as a way of recognising the importance of material entities in the performance of practices. Referring back to one of his most recent publications; *A Primer on Practices*, he not only appreciates the connections between them but argues that they are both 'ontologically and dynamically fundamental to human life' (Schatzki, 2012, p.16);

The activities that compose practices are inevitably, and often essentially, bound up with material entities. Basic doings and sayings, for example are carried out by embodied human beings. Just about every practice, moreover, deals with

material entities (including human bodies) that people manipulate and react to. And most practices would not exist without materialities of the sorts they deal with, just as most material arrangements that practices deal with would not exist in the absence of these practices. (Schatzki, 2012, p.16)

Within his work, he also uses the word 'bundle' to emphasise the interrelation between practices and arrangements, for he argues; 'to say that practices and arrangements bundle is to say (1) that practices effect, use, give meaning to, and are inseparable from arrangements while (2) arrangements channel, prefigure, facilitate and are essential to practices' (Schatzki, 2012, p.16). These developments are both philosophically and theoretically important; by equating the ontological concept of practices, (the way in which social phenomena transpire), with arrangements, in this manner, is to suggest that 'bundles are central to social analysis' (Schatzki, 2012, p.17).

Following Reckwitz's (2002) account of practice theory, Warde (2005) illustrates the merits of applying a practice theoretical approach to analyses of consumption in his article *Consumption and Theories of Practice*. Within his paper, he introduces practice theory as a fresh way of analysing different forms of consumption, set against existing theories of consumption, which often emanate from individualistic or 'expressive' perspectives. He argues that, existing theories/approaches frequently focus on a 'highly autonomous' view of the consumer and frame research around the symbolic meanings of consumption and its role in the formation of consumers' identity and alleges that these approaches provide only a 'partial understanding of consumption' (Warde, 2005, p.132). Rather than assign consumers with a sense of agency and claim that consumption is something that lies at the discretion of individual consumers, he asserts that it takes place as a result of their engagement in practices. Consequently, this view

broadens our understanding of consumption and acknowledges it as an 'integral part of most spheres of daily life' (Warde, 2005, p.137).

A number of implications can be drawn from this view. Firstly, it naturally shifts the focus onto modes of '*doing* rather than *having* in relation to consumption, and to the use rather than the display of products' (Ropke, 2009, p.2495). Secondly, it takes the focus away from *moments* of acquisition, to consider the *processes* through which material goods are appropriated, put to use and convey value in social practices. While these particular aspects of consumption are still important, a practice perspective helps us to gain an understanding of the reality of consumption as it occurs within the performance and flow of everyday life, and in doing so, moves beyond the presumption that consumption is an end in itself. Thirdly, it enables researchers to explore the more *ordinary forms* of consumption that are embedded within everyday social life and that have perhaps been overlooked in research overly concerned with the social and cultural significance of consumption. It is important to recognize here though, that this way of looking at consumption and products/objects is inherently tied to the ways in which *consumers* are perceived. Having explored consumption/objects from a practice theoretical perspective, the following section addresses how consumers are viewed from a practice perspective.

3.5 Consumers; Bodies/Minds; Practitioners

From a practice theoretical perspective, traditional concepts of the consumer, as a purchaser of goods and as a 'user' are reconceptualised as 'active and creative practitioners' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005, p.45) or 'carriers' (or Tragers) of practices (Reckwitz, 2002).

Reflecting back on my earlier discussion in section (3.2) above, relating to the various elements that compose a practice, practitioners *qua* people are, in this sense 'bodily and mental' agents or 'body/minds' who 'carry' and 'carry out' social practices' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.250). Drawing further attention to this notion of a *carrier*, Reckwitz (2002, p.250) informs us that, a carrier 'is not only a carrier of patterns of bodily behaviour, but also of certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring'. He then goes on to argue that these *mental* qualities, are 'necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, not qualities of the individual' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.250).

Consistent with this view, Warde (2005) also argues that motivation and desires to *consume* derive from practices, rather than consumers *own* desires, values and goals. He draws upon the practice of motoring and uses the example of a hot rod enthusiast, to illustrate this point further:

...modified vehicles, manuals and magazines, memorabilia, 'records of auto-racing sounds'...are more directly the consequence of engagement in the practice of a particular motor sport than they are of individual taste or choice. (Warde, 2005, p.137).

By suggesting that practitioners *carry out* certain doings, know how, desires and moods, which are inherent qualities of practices, however, it is not to say that they carry out practices in a prescriptive way. As Warde (2005, p.141) argues, 'people in myriad situations adapt, improvise and experiment' in their performance of practices. Thus, whilst there are a number of activities that are performed as part of a practice that demonstrate a sense of familiarity and regularity, there are also a great number of activities within the practice that exhibit irregularities, perhaps in the form of shortcuts, tips or improvisations (for example). For instance, using the practice of

cooking as an example, knowing how to and applying the poaching or the roasting method as a simple way to remove the skins from tomatoes.

Furthermore, as a matter of course, the performance of a practitioner will depend on their 'past experience, technical knowledge, learning, opportunities, available resources, previous encouragement by others, etc.' (Warde, 2005, p.138). At any one time then, a single practice consists of a number of practitioners, who are diverse in their understandings, ability to perform and ways of doing. Two interesting points arise from this.

Firstly, is the understanding that practices are socially differentiated (Warde, 2005) even to the extent that different versions of the *same* practice may exist within social life at one time (Watson and Shove, 2008). Secondly, the performance of practitioners holds significant consequences for the future of the practices that they are performing (Pred, 1981). This is crucial for thinking about and reflecting back on the nature of practices as intrinsically dynamic entities. Recognizing that a diverse number of practitioners reproduce the practices that they are engaged in, it becomes more pertinent to understand that what *defines* a practice, is *temporarily* held in place through the discrete performances of practitioners.

In their analyses of digital photography and floorball²¹, Shove and Pantzar (2007) were concerned with the dynamic relationship between (what they referred to as) the 'careers' of individual practitioners and the evolution of practices (as entities). Within their findings, they reveal how the trajectories of photography are partially shaped *both* by existing practitioners'

²¹ Within their research, the authors describe floorball as, 'a team game in which players use plastic sticks to hit a small ball into a goal' (Shove and Pantzar, 2007, p.156).

past experience and engagement in prior conventions of photography and the emerging ways of *doing* photography that unfold in arrays of materials, meaning and forms of competence.²² This way of thinking also resonates with the arguments made within Shove and Pantzar's (2005) earlier study, focused on the practice of Nordic walking. For them, 'what Nordic walking 'is' and what it becomes depend, in part, on who does it and on when, where and how it is done' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005, p.61). It is in this sense, that consumers/ practitioners are understood to lie at the intersection between many practices (Shove and Pantzar, 2005).

A number of authors have misconceived theories of practice in their ability to account for change in social practices (Warde, 2014). However, as Shove and Pantzar (2005) have demonstrated in their work, and as it has been indicated earlier on in section 3.2, practices are inherently dynamic (Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2005). Reflecting upon my previous discussions, what *defines* the practice, necessarily depends upon the interrelations between the practitioners' performance (their *doings*), the material arrangements, and where the practice stands in relation to other practices within the spatial-temporal unfolding of daily life (Shove and Pantzar, 2007). The following section, which draws attention towards practitioners and different forms of competence, develops the idea that practices are inherently dynamic a little further.

3.5.1 Practitioners and Competence

Until now, competence has been discussed as an element that practitioners carry, bring into being and develop in their performance of practices; it is understood as a form of embodied knowledge and expertise that practitioners learn from experience and convey in the form of

²² For Shove and Pantzar (2007), materials, meaning and forms of competence depict the elements that compose a practice.

bodily and mental dispositions (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996). Within the literature on practice theory, consumers have been conceptualized as both 'competent practitioners' (Warde, 2005, p.145) and 'knowledgeable actors' (Watson and Shove, 2008, p.71), both terms drawing a connection between forms of competence and practitioners, in their performance of a given practice.

Recently, a small number of studies have started to delve into this relation between practitioners and forms of competence a little further (Truninger, 2011; Watson and Shove, 2008). For instance, Watson and Shove (2008) explore this connection in their research on do-it-yourself (DIY) home projects. Following Colin Campbell's (2005) understanding of a craft consumer, Watson and Shove (2008, p.69) view consumers as knowledgeable actors who are 'actively and creatively engaged in integrating and transforming complex arrays of material goods'. In the context of DIY home projects, they suggest that 'competence' can be better understood as a fluid concept, embracing the understanding that knowledge is both *embodied* in practitioners and *embedded* within consumer products, rather than something that transpires through the experience of practitioners alone.²³ From this perspective, the authors argue that both the skilful practitioner and consumer products actively come together in the 'effective accomplishment and performance of everyday life' (Watson and Shove, 2008, p.71).

Within one example, Watson and Shove, (2008, p.78) consider how new technologies, such as 'fast-drying non-drip water-based paints' essentially redistribute the necessary forms of competence between practitioners and technology; 'the paint having effectively absorbed

²³ Within their research, the notion of *embedded* knowledge extends across a number of consumer products, including; DIY manuals, power tools, Speedfit plumbing, non-drip water based paints and the Internet (Watson and Shove, 2008).

capacities previously embodied in the individual wielding the brush'. Building on this point, they introduce the concept of a 'human-non-human hybrid, drawing from the work of Latour (1993), to help strengthen their argument, and show how competence is distributed between both practitioners and materials.

Similar ideas are also evident in Truninger's (2011) work, based upon a commercial demonstration of a kitchen appliance. Within her research, Truninger (2011, p.38) examines the links between cooking practices and a portable multi-food processor, which contains 'more than 10 functions allowing for multi-functionality and convenience in the kitchen'. Drawing on Shove, Watson, Hand and Ingram's (2007) research on DIY practices, she demonstrates how, during the commercial demonstration, forms of competence are distributed between the multi-food processor, which 'absorbs capacities previously embodied in the individual' and the demonstrator (or skilled professional) who recursively draws upon the use of perceptual skills (i.e. hearing) necessary to operate the food processor and accomplish cooking tasks.

So far, this chapter has put forward a general understanding of practice theory, set against other (dominant) social theories and presented an ontology of 'practices' which moves beyond dualistic notions of agency/structure, body/mind and social/material, before exploring both Schatzki's (1996; 2002; 2003; 2010; 2012) and Reckwitz's (2002) concept of practice. This led onto a detailed discussion of materiality, from a practice theoretical approach, which considered the implications of a materialized account of practice theory for both the study of consumption and how consumers are conceptualized. The final section of this chapter outlines a practice-theoretical framework that is considered to best serve the purpose of the present study, focused on developing an understanding of the practice of allotmenting.

3.6 Using the Practice Theoretical Lens for a Study of Allotmenteeing

Drawing upon the work of various proponents of practice theory, both Shove and her colleagues (2005; 2012) present a practice-theoretical framework, composed of the active integration of three elements; materials, (forms of) competence and meanings. Within their book, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes*, Shove and her colleagues (2012) demonstrate how their practice theoretical framework, subsumes the elements of a practice, previously outlined by Reckwitz (2002) and ideas articulated by Giddens (1984), Schatzki (1996; 2002), Warde (2005) as I have illustrated in figure 3.1 below.

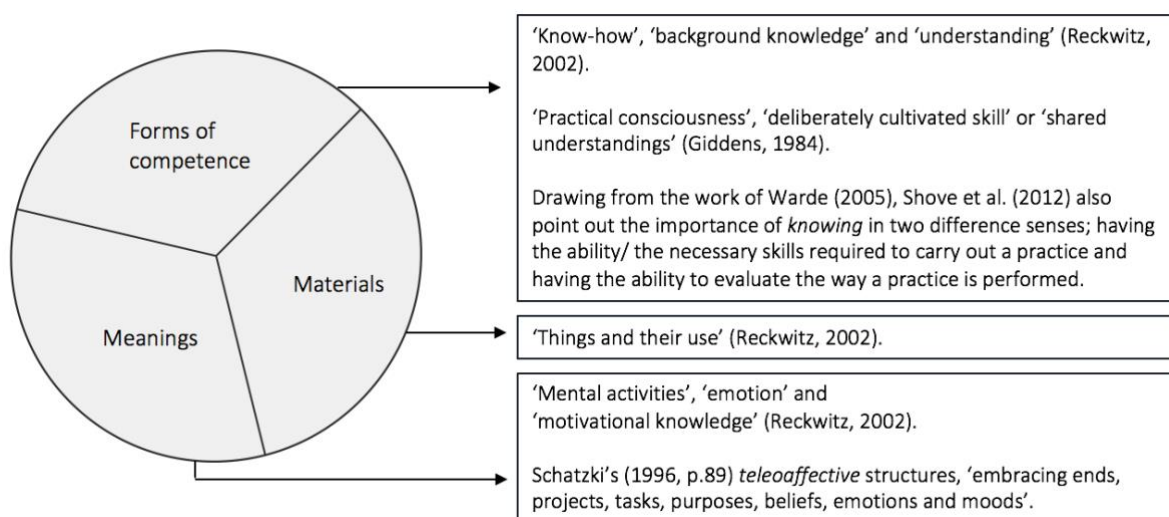


Figure 3.1 My theoretical framework.

The basis of this theoretical framework set out by Shove et al. (2012) is employed within the present study primarily because it clearly demarcates the elements that compose a practice (primarily according to Reckwitz (2002)) into three distinctive categories. Consistent with Reckwitz (2002), Warde (2005) and Schatzki's (2001; 2010) more recent work, this theoretical framework recognizes that materials are co-constitutive elements of a given practice and thus, it

enables my research to provide a fresh perspective to the study of consumption and push the boundaries, in terms of what is defined as the social. As Reckwitz (2002, p.253) argues;

...The social is...located in practices in which single agents deal with objects...and in this sense also the objects – television sets, houses and brownies – are the place of the social insofar as they are necessary components of social practices.

Drawing attention to the 'materials' element further, Shove et al.'s (2012, p.23) concept of 'materials' builds upon Reckwitz's (2002) general understanding of 'things and their use' (which encapsulate 'objects', otherwise referred to as 'resources') outlined within his definition of practice, to encompass 'objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware and the body itself'. It is also worth noting here that this thesis is consistent with the idea that competence is actively distributed between both practitioners and products/tools, recognizing that objects are actively implicated in the accomplishment of certain activities, in the performance of a given practice (Shove et al., 2007; Watson and Shove, 2008). Reflecting back on Watson and Shove's (2008, p.78) research examining DIY home improvement projects and the dynamics of competence, they draw attention towards a simple example which illustrates the plausibility of this idea;

Put simply, a human with a tool – whether it is a rock, a hammer or a power drill – is an entity with different capabilities and capacities for engaging with the world than is a human without a tool (or a tool without a human). It therefore makes sense to see the agent involved in hammering not as a discrete human subject but rather as a hybrid of person and tool.

Alongside Shove et al.'s (2012) understanding of the concept of 'materials', this thesis also draws heavily on Schatzki's concept of materiality. Within his article, *Materiality and Social Life*, which recognises the growing importance of incorporating materiality in social theories, Schatzki (2010, p.133) elaborates on his ontological perspective, which (as previously established) takes into account both social and material entities;

My ontology...recognizes that anything, property, or event can be at once both social and material-natural. Something is social if it is part of the nexus of practices and arrangements as part of which human coexistence inherently transpires. Something is material if it is physical, biological, or natural (by "natural" I mean that it happens or changes on its own, perhaps subject to principles or laws not of human making). The somethings involved can be objects, things, properties, events, or processes. Any material entity that is an element of the arrangements as part of which human coexistence transpires is also at once a social entity.

Besides Schatzki's (2010) interest in suspending the boundaries between society and 'material-nature', what is of particular interest here, is his appreciation of physical, biological and natural entities that come to form a part of social life. By drawing attention towards physical, biological and/or natural entities, this understanding of materiality allows this thesis to appreciate first and foremost that nature changes, which is particularly important, since this study rests on people's engagement with nature and the natural environment in a substantial way. Furthermore, it offers a means to capture and embrace what Schatzki (2010, p.137) refers to as the 'physical manifestations of physical events,' (including disease, deterioration and decay) and the biological and physical flows, such as organisms, (invasive pests and beneficial insects) which flow through allotment 'practice-arrangement nexuses' (Schatzki, 2010). As such, it allows for the current research to consider, the manner in which agency is distributed between practitioners and materials in the process of doing allotmenting, to a great extent.

The following chapter introduces, explores and justifies my ethnographic methodological approach.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and outline the methodological basis upon which this study has been conducted. First, there will be a discussion focused around the philosophical stance that is assumed within this research study, presenting the ontological and epistemological assumptions that are naturally brought into the research design. Following this, the research design is outlined and an account of the data collection and analysis processes are detailed. Finally, the three key themes, each of which, in turn, form the basis for the subsequent three findings chapters are explored.

4.2 Philosophy

It is my understanding that all *meaningful* reality is socially constructed. That is to say, that meanings are constructed and reconstructed through people's interaction with other people and their world and in this sense, as Crotty (2015, p.64) succinctly posits, 'what is said to be 'the way things are' is really just 'the sense we make of them''. Furthermore, the *way things are* for some people may very well differ from *the way things are for other people*, at different times and in different locales. In other words, 'the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific' (Burr, 2015, p.4). In this regard, norms and socially acceptable ways of behaving in one culture may differ from those of another culture or even from those of the past, in the same culture.

This perspective proposes a relatively complex and dynamic understanding of reality, comprising diverse ways of knowing and multiple constructions of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

Consequently, it takes issue with an empiricist, positivist philosophical way of understanding the world that postulates an objective, single reality; owing to the realisation that 'different people may well inhabit quite different worlds' (Crotty, 2015, p.64). Thus, as Burr (2015) argues, the contention that what we know about the social world reflects a valid and accurate representation of reality is nonsensical to say the least.

In this regard, I therefore disagree with the understanding that meanings are inherent within objects, waiting to be discovered by someone; a view compatible with an objectivist epistemology (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). I also disagree with the understanding that meanings are foisted upon objects by people; a view compatible with the subjectivist epistemology (Crotty, 2015). Rather, I concur with the understanding that meaning is borne out of people's engagement in the social world; a view compatible with a social constructionist epistemology (Creswell, 2013). This view, which clearly delineates a perspective that is 'at once realist and relativist' (Crotty, 2015, p.63), is illustrated within Humphrey's (1993, p.17, cited in Crotty, 2015, p.43) account offered below;

You may object that you cannot imagine a time when nothing existed in any phenomenal form. Were there not volcanoes, and dust-storms and starlight long before there was any life on Earth? Did not the sun rise in the East and set in the West? Did not water flow downhill, and light travel faster than sound? The answer is that if you had been there, that is indeed the way the phenomena would have appeared to you. But you were not there: no one was. And because no-one was there, there was not—at this mindless stage of history—anything that *counted as* a volcano, or a dust-storm and so on. I am not suggesting that the world had no substance to it whatsoever. We might say, perhaps, that it consisted of 'worldstuff'. But the properties of this worldstuff had yet to be represented in the mind.

This is to say, that whilst the natural world may exist independently from our consciousness, it *only* becomes meaningful when human beings engage in it.

Whilst this ontological position is consistent with a practice-theoretical perspective (outlined within the previous chapter), it is missing one crucial point, that of material culture (i.e. buildings, bridges, roads, cars, furniture, clothing and tools). As I have outlined within the previous chapter, Schatzki (2010, p.129), one of the most influential practice theorists, contends that the social world is made up of *both* practices and what he refers to as ‘arrangements’ or ‘material arrangements’, embracing entities that he classifies under four distinct categories; ‘humans, artefacts, organisms and things of nature’. From this perspective then, our understanding of the social world (composed of practices) is a product of interactions between different people *and* both natural phenomena and material culture, over time. Within his article, *Materiality and Social Life*, he argues;

Human coexistence is inherently tied, not just to practices, but also to material arrangements. Indeed, social life...always transpires as part of a mesh of practices and arrangements: practices are carried on amid and determinative of, while also dependent on and altered by, material arrangements.

(Schatzki, 2010, p. 130)

Consistent with my ontological assumptions about the nature of the social world, my epistemological assumptions about what constitutes knowledge (Creswell, 2013) rest on the idea that knowledge can be best understood through studying the processes, through which people engage with other people (in the social world) and with the material world. In this sense, knowledge about the social world can be produced by exploring what people say (capturing their subjective experiences) and what people do in specific contexts (observing activities, how material things are handled, used and consumed (for instance)), acknowledging that material things (alongside interactions with other people) play a fundamental role in how people make sense of their world and their consumption practices.

Having already recognised that meanings emerge through people's engagement with the social world, it is important to appreciate that my own personal, cultural and historical experiences influence the way I go about conducting research and my interpretations of the data. That being so my data and my findings are constructions of the realities that they describe (Atkinson and Coffey, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Adding to this, I am also aware that my involvement in the research process is likely to have an influence on the people that I am studying. Therefore, I consider, what has been called, 'the reflexive character of social research' or reflexivity to play a significant role in the research process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.14). This idea, according to Hammersley and Atkinson, (2007, p.15) renounces the view that, 'social research is, or can be carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher, in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics'. Consequently, my perspective, consonant with social constructionist/interpretive perspectives is irreconcilable with positivist and post-positivist assumptions about the nature of reality and what counts as knowledge.

Having outlined my philosophical stance, the following two sections outline and provide a rationale for the research design, which supports the philosophical underpinnings of this research.

4.3 Ethnographic Research

This research is based upon an ethnographic research methodology. Originating in the field of cultural anthropology, ethnography has long been associated with research conducted by anthropologists such as Boas, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Mead in the early 20th century

(Creswell, 2013). Early ethnographic research was particularly concerned with exploring exotic cultures, somewhere far afield and anthropologists were often found to spend a considerable amount of time living with the cultural group under study (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Spradley, 1980). Malinowski (1922) for instance, lived in the Trobriand Islands; an archipelago off the East Coast of New Guinea, where he carried out his fieldwork over a period of two years. Likewise, Radcliffe-Brown (1933) conducted his fieldwork over the course of two years during which time he explored tribes of the Great Andaman in the Andaman Islands.

Within his book; *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, Malinowski (1922, p.25) succinctly outlines, that the 'goal' of the ethnographer is 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision, of *his* world'. From an ethnographic perspective then, developing an understanding of a culture from the *native's point of view*, otherwise known as an *emic* perspective, requires an ethnographer to immerse herself within the culture under study and discover the social meanings and the learned and shared activities of *that* culture (Brewer, 2000). In this process, the ethnographer *typically* observes what is happening, listens to what is being said, asks questions, studies the use of language and participates in the everyday life of that culture (Creswell, 2013). Broadly speaking, ethnography is concerned with gaining first-hand experience of what people in specific cultures, do and say, in their natural settings (Mason, 2002).

In the 1920s and 1930s, sociologists working at the University of Chicago, such as Mead, Dewey and Park, who were later joined by Blumer and Hughes (amongst others), adapted such

anthropological practices to explorations of cultural groups and everyday life within their native country; the United States of America, as opposed to more distant countries and cultures (Creswell, 2013; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Until this point, the value of conducting ethnographic research to understand cultures within one's own society was generally overlooked (Spradley, 1980). Gradually, ethnography caught the interest of other disciplines including, psychology and human geography and became absorbed within many theoretical orientations, including anthropological and sociological functionalism, symbolic interactionism, feminism, Marxism, phenomenology, hermeneutics and postmodernism (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Now, there are a number of different ethnographic approaches that exist, including; realist ethnography, critical ethnography, auto-ethnography, feminist ethnography and visual ethnography (Brewer; 2000; Pink, 2013; Van Maanen, 2011a; Wolcott, 2008). Consequently, what we take to mean by *ethnography*, has been '*reinterpreted and recontextualised* in various ways, in order to deal with particular circumstances' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.2, *my emphasis*). As such, there is no clearly defined or prescribed way of *doing* ethnography. This applies to both, the manner in which one conducts an ethnography in the field and also, the way in which the ethnographer compiles her ethnographic texts, or what has otherwise been referred to as the 'product' of ethnography. (Van Maanen, 2011a; Wolcott, 2008). Even so, it is widely understood to be the study of culture (Van Maanen, 2011b).

For many proponents of ethnographic research, ethnography *may* comprise a repertoire of research methods including; non-participant observation, participant observation, *in situ* or casual conversations, formal interviews, questionnaires and collecting documentary evidence, such as; biographies, autobiographies, letters, visual recordings, photographs and diaries (Brewer, 2000; Burgess, 1982; Fetterman, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Pink 2013;

Spradley, 1980). Although, there are cases where ethnography is based entirely on participant observation (Hammersley, 2006; Walsh, 1998).

Whatever the methods an ethnographer may employ in her research, Spradley (1980, p.5) outlines three 'fundamental aspects of human experience' that ethnographers *must* deal with when they explore other cultures; 'what people do, what people know and the things that people make and use'. Each of these three aspects, in turn, correspond to, what is referred to as cultural behaviour, cultural knowledge (both explicit and tacit, which are often hidden from view) and cultural artefacts (Spradley, 1980). Elaborating on his concept of cultural knowledge a little further, Spradley (1980) points out that whilst cultural knowledge can be communicated through language and is therefore explicit, most of what we see and observe is performed without any awareness that this is something that people actually do, for he argues; 'informants always know things they cannot talk about or express in direct ways' (Spradley, 1980, p.11). In this regard, he goes on to say, 'the ethnographer must then make inferences about what people know by listening carefully to what they say, by observing their behaviour, and by studying the artefacts and their use' (Spradley, 1980, p.11).

Whilst this emphasis on developing a cultural understanding, dependent upon the context of the study is critical to ethnographic research, there has been a call for research to locate consumers' everyday life experiences within broader social, cultural and political contexts (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Within Askegaard and Linnet's (2011, p.389) rather thought-provoking article; *Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: Phenomenology and the context of context*, they appeal for an epistemological position that extends beyond the lived experience of consumers, to include systemic and structuring influences (cultural, societal and historical

structures, for instance) that 'condition practices of consumption', what they have otherwise referred to as the *context of context* (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p.389). In line with their argument, they suggest that;

There is a *need* for bridging the analytical terrain between the anthropological search for thick description and deep immersion in the field, and the sociological inclination towards broad social theories and movements often quite remote from emic illustrations of everyday life experiences.

(Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p.382)

By means of pursuing this approach, Askegaard and Linnet (2011, p.397) call for an analytical shift that moves away from individualist epistemologies towards one which views *consumption as practice* and offers 'insight into the complex intertwining of the individual and the social in consumption contexts as it manifests itself in consumer lives and life conditions'. As such, the authors refer to notions of 'practice' afforded by Giddens' (1979) and Bourdieu's (1984) work, which they understand to be consistent with their 'epistemological apparatus' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p.388) as potential theoretical perspectives which allow researchers to pay increased attention to the *context of context*.

Reflecting upon the context of this research (which situates the practice of allotmenteeing within the broader discourse of environmental sustainability) and the practice-theoretical approach taken (which collapses the agency-structure duality), an ethnographic methodology is considered to be perfectly apt for this study. By taking an ethnographic approach, I am able to move away from an individualistic understanding of behaviour, explore the social, cultural and performative processes of everyday life and observe and participate in sites of embodied social action. Taking this as my point of departure, the following section goes on to explore further why an ethnographic approach is most suited to this research study.

4.4 Why Ethnography?

A critical review of existing literature together with the decision to adopt a practice theoretical approach set the scene for a research strategy based upon ethnography. The context of this research, framed around the *practice* of allotmenteeing, aims to develop an in-depth understanding of the practice and the ways in which it interrelates and overlaps with conceptualisations around environmental sustainability. By taking an ethnographic approach, I am able to pay close attention to routine mundane and often taken-for-granted aspects of the practice. Furthermore, an ethnographic approach facilitates a focus on both the processes and practicalities of allotmenteeing and it is sensitive to the dynamic, material and embodied nature of practices.

Drawing upon a practice-theoretical approach, which places emphasis on *processes of doing*, it is also important to capture the practice of allotmenteeing as it unfolds temporally, throughout the different seasons and to be able to appreciate the role of various materials, resources and artefacts that are embraced throughout such *processes*.

4.5 Doing Fieldwork

Despite *fieldwork* being, perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of an ethnographic study, there is little consensus with regards to *how long* an ethnographer should actually engage in the field. Rather, commentators tend to give some indication, which suggests that fieldwork involves a *lengthy* and *sustained* contact within the culture under study, whatever *lengthy* and *sustained* contact may be. Fetterman (1998, p.35, *my emphasis*) argues that '*ideally*, the ethnographer

lives and works in the community for 6 months to 1 year or more'. Although in a seemingly contradictory way, he also proclaims that 'long-term continuous fieldwork is neither possible nor desirable' (Fetterman, 1998, p.9).

In the field of consumer research, both the length of time and the degree of one's involvement in the field vary considerably. For instance, in Arnould and Price's (1993) 'River Magic' research exploring white water rafting, the authors engaged in participant-observation activities with 'outfitters', guides, and those practising water rafting intermittently, over the course of a two-year period. In Canniford and Shankar's (2013) research exploring a surfing culture, one of the authors carried out their fieldwork during 3 week to 2 month periods, over the course of 6 years. Conversely, Kozinets' (2002) ethnographic research exploring the Burning Man involved six days of intense participant-observation at a Burning Man event. Therefore, it appears as though terminology such as *lengthy* and *sustained* classifying one's time in the field are used rather loosely. The present study involved 12 months' fieldwork, which largely took place at two different allotment sites; the Fairhaven Road allotment site and the Winstead Avenue allotment site.²⁴ Before detailing my experiences of gaining access to the two (main) allotment sites, collecting and analysing data and leaving the field, the following section explores the concept of the field more closely.

4.6 Conceptualising 'the Field'

Over the past 30 years or so, ethnographers from various scholarly disciplines (including anthropology) have increasingly embraced more 'contemporary' notions of 'the field'. As such, 'the field' is not always conceived as *a* geographically-bounded place, as it perhaps was

²⁴ The names given to the allotment sites I visited are pseudonyms.

traditionally in cultural anthropology (Amit; 2000; Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995; Strauss, 2000; Van Maanen, 2011b; Wulff, 2000). Rather, ethnographic research has evolved to form a *more or less* definite understanding of what constitutes a field, in terms of both its spatial and temporal dimensions, frequently defined as ‘multi-local’ or ‘multi-sited’ ethnography (Amit, 2000; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995). In doing so, a number of recent studies embrace spheres or networks of socio-cultural activity that are not necessarily anchored within one place. In relation to her ethnographic research on the subject of yoga as a transnational practice, Strauss (2000, p.172) contends that, ‘a field site can no longer be seen merely as a geographical location, but rather may be viewed as an intersection between people, practices and shifting terrains’. She goes on to say, ‘the ability to observe ideas, images and practices, and pursue a network of personal and institutional leads makes any location the field’ (Strauss, 2000, p.172). In this sense, diverging from the classical conception of the field, Strauss (2000) proposes that *the field*, is something that gradually takes shape during the course of fieldwork, as ethnographers trace people or practices (for instance) between different sites. As such, it is the relationships between the different sites that define the field.

Certainly, in the discipline of consumer research, a number of authors have undertaken a multi-sited ethnographic approach. For instance, in Schouten and McAlexander’s (1995, p.47) article; *Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of New Bikers*, the authors disclose how their research design unfolded to become multi-sited over the course of their fieldwork comprising; annual rallies, their informant’s homes, ‘motorcycle swap meets’, ‘dealerships’, ‘club meetings’, ‘runs’ (road trips) and bars and restaurants, as they developed their insights into the New Biker subculture. Other authors have adopted a multi-sited ethnographic approach in order to analyse ‘practices’ (Moraes et al., 2010), ‘assemblages’ (Canniford and Shankar, 2013), ‘brand

communities' (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) and 'high-risk leisure activities' (Celsi, Rose and Leigh, 1993), which are not necessarily geographically bound to one place or site. As the discussion below will indicate, the present study comprises multiple 'sites', including a visitor centre at a local park, a social club, a local pub, allotment sites and some participants' homes, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the practice of allotmenting.

4.7 My Ethnographic Study of Allotmenting²⁵

Over the course of 12 months, I became involved primarily with two allotments, a locale that I was initially unacquainted and unfamiliar with (alongside the practice itself). I have observed and participated in the practice within its natural settings and recorded extensive field notes based on my participants lived experiences. The following sections detail my entry into the field, data collection methods, leaving the field and the process of analysing the data generated.

4.7.1 Gaining Access to the Field²⁶

4.7.1.1 Winstead Avenue Allotment Site

I was given the opportunity to visit the Winstead Avenue allotment site (approximately 22 plots) and potentially meet other plot-holders with Hayley (who is a plot-holder herself), who I first came into contact with, through a mutual friend. Hayley and I arranged for me to visit the allotment site on Sunday 22nd November 2015. Prior to this meeting, I had informed Hayley

²⁵ I have chosen to write the following four sections relating to the data collection and analysis processes in first person (partly), not only as a means to illustrate my personal involvement in the data collection process, but also as a means to demonstrate an understanding of how my role as a researcher directly influences and informs the research process.

²⁶ Whilst my 'field' consists of multiple sites, as discussed in the previous section, this section focuses primarily on my *entre* into the two allotment sites where I spent most of my time. The other 'sites' that form a part of my 'field' are introduced later in this chapter, as the discussion develops.

about my research interests (in a broad sense) via e-mail, which she seemed fairly inquisitive about. Although, Hayley had offered me her support and willingness to help, I was quite wary about telling Hayley about the (rough!) time scale of my fieldwork lest she considered it to be too much of a burden, owing to the issue of me gaining *physical access* to the site. Whilst I felt the time scale was a particularly pressing concern, I decided that I would raise this issue with her when we meet face-to-face.

Leading up to my first visit, I felt both excited and apprehensive; despite Hayley showing her willingness to help me, I was aware that our first meeting could potentially mark the beginning or indeed the end of my fieldwork on this particular site. Needless to say, I was not only seeking the approval of one individual, but of a community of plot-holders. I arrived at the allotment site on the Sunday morning and waited eagerly for Hayley to meet me at the entrance gate, which was padlocked shut. I felt a sense of exclusion, owing to the metal gates surrounding the allotment site, which I felt, gave *even more* prominence to my 'outsider status' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), before I had even stepped foot onto the site.

Nevertheless, this sense of exclusion²⁷ and the uneasiness that I felt initially, gradually passed as I was warmly welcomed by Hayley, her husband and the three other plot-holders that I met that day. When I arrived at the allotment site and again, when we were later joined by two other plot-holders, I introduced myself as a PhD researcher and expressed my interest in allotmenteeing and issues around sustainability, which seemed to spark off a lengthy conversation about sustainability and the allotment site in general. Nevertheless, I was wary

²⁷ I later learned that the physical barriers attested to the vulnerability of the allotment site, which had been subjected to a number of 'break-ins' involving vandalism and theft.

about asking too many questions at this point because I did not want to interfere with the natural flow of the conversation (Burgess, 1984) and of course (presuming that I would be able to carry out my fieldwork on this allotment site) there would be ample opportunities to explore these issues at a later date.²⁸

Before leaving, Hayley offered to contact me ahead of her next visit to the allotment, so that I could go along to the allotment site with her. However, the following month or so did not go as smoothly as I had anticipated. After several weeks of no communication, (Hayley later informed me that on several occasions, she had forgotten to get in touch with me prior to her visits to her allotment) I hesitantly got in touch with Hayley, to ask whether she would be visiting her allotment that weekend. Much to my dismay, she explained that she would only be visiting briefly (to feed her chickens) from now until next year, when the weather starts to improve a little.

Mid-January arrived and I tentatively contacted Hayley about going to the allotment. Once again, she explained that she would only be going to her allotment for a fleeting visit. Although, on this occasion, she put me in contact with Jean; one of the other plot-holders that I met briefly on my first visit in November, and who later turned out to be one of my 'key informants', that is, 'someone who helps to 'develop a picture of the beliefs and practices of a community' during the course of my fieldwork on this allotment site (leCompte and Schensul, 1999, p.86). I think it is safe to say that over the next three to four months, I managed to gain the trust of my participants at the Winstead Avenue allotment site as I was invited by Jean (with the permission

²⁸ Consent forms were handed to allotmenters upon meeting them for the first time, which informed them of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and of their anonymity. See appendix A for a sample consent form.

of others) to attend their Annual General Meeting (AGM), which took place in the evening on 13th April, 2016 at a local pub!

4.7.1.2 Fairhaven Road Allotments

Unlike my *entrée* into the Winstead Avenue allotment site, I didn't know of anyone, nor anyone who knew of anyone that had an allotment at the Fairhaven Road allotment site (approximately 80 plots) and so I set about gaining *physical access* rather than *social access* (Cassell, 1988). Whilst I was aware of the location of this particular site (near my hometown), similar to the Winstead Avenue allotment site, the perimeter of this site is also surrounded by metal fencing with the entrance gates padlocked shut. Moreover, there were privet hedges running alongside the metal fencing making it difficult to catch sight of anyone on the site. Eager to gain access, I impulsively visited the allotment site on 23th April, 2016 hoping to catch a glimpse of *any* plot-holder entering or leaving the site, whom I could introduce myself to. Coincidentally, the final gate I came across leading into the site was propped open. Up until this point, I had been so concerned with how I might gain physical access to the site, that it had not occurred to me how I would introduce myself, given the opportunity.

Through the entrance, I noticed a porta-cabin to the right with the door left open. I peered in and knocked on the open door and was greeted by Tony, whom I later came to realise was the allotment site manager. I introduced myself as a *research student* and talked briefly about the nature of my research and my interest in allotments. Without much hesitation, he offered me his contact card, so that we could arrange for me to visit the allotment site via phone call or email, over the course of the next week. However, he then offered me the chance to meet another plot-holder, there and then, called Linda. Upon meeting Linda and introducing myself, she

readily gave me her phone number and asked me to call her on the following Thursday evening to arrange a visit. With great anticipation, I called Linda as we had arranged. However, in light of the weather conditions forecast for that coming weekend, we agreed it would be best to place my visit on hold. Then, unexpectedly, I received a phone call from Linda on the Saturday inviting me to visit the allotment site the following day, after their AGM that would be taking place that morning. She made it clear to me that I wouldn't be allowed to attend the meeting, (which was completely understandable, having only met Linda briefly once before!) but that I was welcome to come by afterwards, to which I agreed. We both felt that this would be an opportune moment for me to introduce myself and meet and talk to a number of the plot-holders face-to-face who had attended the AGM meeting that morning. Although, much like my first visit to the Winstead Avenue allotment site, I was quite aware at this point that, the fate of my fieldwork essentially rested on the kindness of people who I had never met before.

As I entered the porta-cabin (on the allotment site), following the AGM on Sunday 1st May, I was taken by surprise; there were rows of seats, all taken by plot-holders, facing my direction. Linda, candidly introduced me to the plot-holders sat before me, before giving me the opportunity to elaborate. After I had blurted out that 'I didn't expect an audience' which seemed to 'break the ice' a little, I began to talk generally about my research. I *strategically* informed them that I had already been frequenting an allotment site nearby for the past five months or so, with the aim of trying to assure them of my sincerity, as another allotment site had already put their trust in me and neither Linda nor Tony could vouch for my integrity at this point. Shortly after my

introduction, two plot-holders ushered me to their plots, where we talked about allotmenting, which, for me, marked the beginning of my fieldwork on this allotment site.²⁹

Drawing upon Cassell's (1988) distinction between gaining physical access into the field; 'getting in' and gaining social access in the field; 'getting on', (which I feel are particularly relevant in terms of my access to the field), I felt that my presence in the field was warmly welcomed by the allotment-holders, granting me *social access*, whilst gaining physical access into the field was highly restrictive (as the gates leading in and out of the sites were usually padlocked³⁰) and quite troublesome at times, reinforcing the established notion that, as a fieldworker, you never *fully* belong to the field under study.

4.7.2 Collecting Data

During the first few months of my fieldwork, much of my time was spent 'hanging about', observing, listening to, assisting and engaging in casual conversation with Jean (at the Winstead Avenue allotment site), who is a particularly dedicated allotmenteer. I found these first few months invaluable, as Jean helped me to develop my understanding of the practice and to make sense of the technical language around gardening and growing-your-own food, which proved to be useful during the remainder of my fieldwork. Equally, I felt that this initial period enabled me to feel more comfortable in my role as a 'researcher' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

²⁹ Consent forms were handed to quite a few allotmentees on this visit (or otherwise handed to them when I first became acquainted with them), assuring them of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and their anonymity.

³⁰ Although on occasions; the plant sale and the open day event, the gates were left open and the public were invited to visit the allotment site.

Nevertheless, I started to feel that my visits to the Winstead Avenue allotment site and consequently my field notes were too confined; at any given time, there might have only been 2-3 other plot-holders on the site during the first few months of my fieldwork. Furthermore, my visits to the Winstead Avenue allotment site were bounded by my 'gatekeeper's'³¹ (Jean's) own personal schedule or arrangements (in the sense that I would go to and leave the allotment with Jean) and so the prospects of meeting, talking to and observing other plot-holders was limited to the time of the day and days of the week that Jean visited, who for me literally held 'the key to entry' into the field (Brewer, 2000, p.83; Burgess, 1984).

Owing to the limited activity that I was able to observe during this time and my limited ability to visit the allotment site on other occasions (aside from when Jean was visiting), I reconsidered my single-sited ethnographic approach on the grounds that I felt that basing my research on this allotment site alone might not be sufficient to facilitate an in-depth study on the practice of allotmenting. In retrospect, I later became aware that January and February were particularly 'quiet' months in the year, with little or no activity on the site. Nevertheless, these first few months on the Winstead Avenue allotment site prompted me to explore the second allotment site; Fairhaven Road allotments (as discussed in the previous section).

Whilst I was unaware of the exact number of allotments on the Fairhaven Road site precisely, owing to the sheer size of the site, I was under the impression that, my involvement in this allotment site would provide me with more opportunities to see 'allotmenting in action'. Indeed, whilst my involvement in this allotment site altered the very nature of my fieldwork, as my time was now divided between two sites, which may have disrupted 'conventions of 'being

³¹ According to Brewer (2000, p.83), 'gatekeepers are those individuals that have the power to grant access to the field'.

there'' (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 2007) and influenced the extent to which I could *immerse* myself³² in the field somewhat (Hannerz, 2003), I felt that my 'multi-sited' (Marcus, 1995; 2007) ethnographic approach enabled me to develop a greater understanding of the practice of allotmenting.

Indeed, whilst not to the same extent as the Winstead Avenue allotment site, the Fairhaven Road site still presented some challenges in relation to conducting fieldwork. Much the same as my visits to the Winstead Avenue allotment site, allotmenters would come and go at their own pace and my visits to the site were limited to the times of the day and days of the week that my gatekeeper (predominantly Linda) would visit, particularly during the first few months on this site.

Furthermore, apart from the occasions where plot-holders would stop by other plot-holder's allotments to talk or have a cup of tea, I would often be unaware as to how many plot-holders (beyond the close neighbouring plots) were on the site, due to the number of greenhouses, sheds and foliage from trees, crops and fruit bushes (for instance), which limited my view. From this standpoint, allotmenting *can be* perceived to be a fairly solitary practice. Nevertheless, I would often make arrangements to visit the Fairhaven Road allotment site with Linda, who was accommodating in the sense that she was happy for me to roam the allotment site alone and spend time with other plot-holders. Suffice to say, I found my fieldwork more challenging than I first expected it to be.

³² Within his work, Hannerz (2003) raises a potential concern that can arise within a multi-sited ethnographic study; he draws attention towards the length of time in which relationships evolve. He goes on to state how the researcher's presence in multiple sites could influence the way relationships with participants develop.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I became aware that some of my participants were interested in 'showing' their produce in horticultural shows and so, given the opportunity, I attended two horticultural shows; one in Liverpool (which I discovered on the internet) and one locally (only open to allotmenters whose allotment site is a part of the local allotment federation, which included the Fairhaven Road allotment site). During my visit to the local horticultural show held at the visitor centre at Stanley park (a local public park), I spoke to one allotmenter; Nigel, about my research. This led on to an informative conversation concerning 'showing' produce, as well as allotmenting in general, as we walked around the tables, looking at the produce on display. I had noticed that he seemed fairly well acquainted with some allotmenters (that I was familiar with) at the Fairhaven Road allotment site, who were also walking around, taking a look at the produce on display. Yet, as Nigel pointed out to me, he occupied a plot from another allotment site close by (which was also a part of the local Federation of allotments). Upon leaving, he invited me to visit his allotment site there and then, to which I agreed! Towards the end of my visit to his allotment site, he entrusted me with his allotmenting book (which had been passed on to him from his father), to 'flick through' for the next few months, which I was particularly surprised about, considering that I had only known him for a few hours! Following the local horticultural show, I was also invited to attend the presentation evening held at a local social club where food was served, live music played and allotmenters within the federation were awarded prizes for produce entered into the horticultural show.

My visits to the Winstead Avenue and Fairhaven Road allotment sites (my main research sites) lasted between 1 to 9 hours, although on average, I would spend, approximately 2 and a half

hours at the Winstead Avenue allotment site and 4 hours at the Fairhaven Road allotment site.³³

My time at the Winstead Avenue allotment site was often cut shorter than I had intended, on account of the lack of toilet facilities available at the site! Although, I was aware that, on *rare* occasions, other members at this site would discreetly use a bucket and the privacy of their shed to relieve themselves, I didn't feel like I was in a position to do so; it seemed inappropriate to ask since this was a rather private and discrete affair that only happened on rare occasions!

I came across a broad range of allotmenters over the course of my fieldwork, ranging from those who had only started allotmenting months or even weeks before my fieldwork began to those who had been allotmenting for years. One allotmenter (who was an exception!), had tended to an allotment for over 55 years, having previously helped his father tend to his allotment when he was younger before eventually getting two(!) of his own. Furthermore, there were allotmenters ranging from those who were experienced and particularly knowledgeable on the subject of 'growing your own' to those who had very little experience and some who would tend to their allotment alone, to others who would tend to their plots alongside their husbands/wives and/or even their children/grandchildren.

As demonstrated within the following sections, my fieldwork, embedded within an open, exploratory approach, consisted of a number of ethnographic methods; participant-observation, 'spontaneous, informal conversations' in the field and photo-elicitation combined with semi-structured interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.108).

³³ Apart from my first encounter with the allotment manager and Linda at Fairhaven Road allotment site, which was relatively brief.

4.7.2.1 Participant – Observation

My time at both the Winstead Avenue and the Fairhaven Road allotment sites was often spent engaging in long conversations with one, two or several allotmentees about allotmenting and growing-one's-own fruits and vegetables more generally and about what they were currently doing on their allotment and assisting them in 'doing' allotmenting. I felt that talking to allotmentees *in situ* enabled our conversations about the goings-on at their allotment to flow quite naturally (Burgess, 1984). Furthermore, I often found that in 'doing' allotmenting with my participants, whether we were planting onion sets, harvesting soft fruits, sowing peas, building a greenhouse, planting 'chitted' potatoes, 'potting on', 'thinning out' seedlings, watering, weeding or drinking tea (for instance), there was a relatively relaxed atmosphere which helped to take the focus away from my 'researcher' status. Equally, I was particularly aware of my need to maintain a 'professional distance' from my participants, so that I could adequately observe and make a mental note of what was happening (Brewer, 2000, p.60). Such experiences; embracing both the role of the 'participant' and the 'observer' (Burgess, 1984), where the ethnographer moves between the role of the 'insider' and the 'outsider' (Brewer, 2000); identifying and sharing the everyday experiences of their participants and simultaneously taking a step back to make sense of what is happening, are clearly illustrated within Hayano's (1978) research, which he carried out in poker parlours (cited in Spradley, 1980, p.57);

Hayano played many thousands of hours of poker, listened to people talk, and observed their strategies for managing the game. As an *insider* he shuffled cards, dealt hands, made bids, bluffed, and both won and lost hands. As an *insider*, he felt some of the same emotions during the course of the game that the ordinary participants felt. At the same time, he experienced being an *outsider*, one who viewed the game and himself as *objects*...he was part of the scene, yet outside the scene.

The process of moving back and forth between *insider* and *outsider* (or otherwise experiencing the insider/outsider roles simultaneously, as exemplified within Hayano's case presented above), foregrounds the ethnographer's active role in the field and their personal involvement in the production of knowledge. Van Maanen (2011b, p.219) clearly illustrates this point when he suggests that;

Fieldwork is a technique of gathering research materials by subjecting the self – body, belief, personality, emotions, cognitions – to a set of contingencies that play on others such that over time, usually a long time, one can more or less see, hear, feel and come to understand the kinds of responses others display (and withhold) in particular social situations.

Brewer (2000, p.59) supports this point of view as he argues, 'data are...not external stimuli unaffected by the intervention of participant observers, for their autobiographical experiences in the field are a central part of understanding it'. Consonant with my understanding and experiences of doing ethnographic research, both Brewer (2000) and Van Maanen (2011b) maintain that there is no 'divide' between the ethnographer and processes of *observing, listening, recording* and *writing up*, for her own subjectivity becomes intertwined in her understanding of what people say and do in the field. In this sense, in terms of the ethnographer's efforts to produce knowledge, ethnography can be understood as both a productive and an 'interpretive craft' (Van Maanen, 2011b, p.219). Building on this, it is important to recognise that at any one time in the field, there is more than one focal point; the ethnographer must decide where to go (in the case of multiple sites) what to observe and who to talk to, which can also have an influence on the research. In relation to the present study, making such decisions in practice seemed rather chaotic to begin with, since I was unfamiliar with both the practice and the site (generally speaking) where allotmenting takes place

(Fetterman, 1998). Yet, as time passed and I became more familiar with my surroundings, the allotmenters and the practicalities of the practice, this sense of chaos started to fade.

The role of the ethnographer as a 'human instrument' (Burgess, 1982; Fetterman, 1998); i.e. as being closely involved in the production of knowledge, has been disputed amongst scholars emanating from different philosophical and ethnographic traditions. Those who champion the natural science model in social research maintain that the researcher should be precluded from the research, in order to prevent any resulting influence on the data collected (Brewer, 2000). From this perspective, the role of the ethnographer who chooses to build a rapport and empathize with her participants in the field is rendered *unscientific*. Consonant with the natural science perspective, there are a number of ethnographers who have 'refined and improved their procedural rules' incorporating more rigorous, objective and scientific standards to their research with the intention of minimizing their effects on what the people under study do and say (Brewer, 2000, p.21; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; leCompte and Schensul, 1999).

However, this seems to suggest that it is possible to 'isolate a body of data uncontaminated by the researcher' *if* they can assume a distant, neutral, detached and non-obtrusive role in the field (Hammersley, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.15; leCompte and Schensul, 1999). This seems implausible given that the very presence of the researcher exerts an influence on what people say and do in the field, interviews or otherwise (Atkinson and Coffey, 2001; Van Maanen, 2011a) and that it is impossible for the researcher to separate herself from the social world she is exploring. More to the point, striving to adopt objective and rigorous methods within research, consonant with more positivistic approaches, seems to suggest that by doing so, we can be certain (or at least reasonably certain) that our data represents 'true' knowledge and

therefore have confidence in the validity of our data (leCompte and Schensul, 1999). Nonetheless, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.102) maintain, 'the aim [of social science research] is not to gather 'pure' data that are free from potential bias. There is no such thing. Rather, the goal must be to discover the best manner of interpreting whatever data we have, and to collect further data that enable us to develop and check our inferences'.³⁴

4.7.2.2 Data Recording Strategies in the Field

I decided not to audio-record my encounters with my participants, despite the many occasions that I would have liked to capture our conversations 'in full'. I felt that the idea of audio-recording participants *in situ*, brought an *un-natural* element to the experience that may have interrupted the dynamics of the researcher/participant relationship. This is not to say that I felt that my experience of collecting data in the 'field' was completely natural. I was particularly aware that my presence in the field had an influence on the events/occurrences that took place there, as mentioned briefly in the previous section (Burgess, 1984; Van Maanen, 2011b). Nevertheless, time after time, I faced the difficulty of trying to engage in conversation with my participants whilst simultaneously making a mental note of what was being said. Given the chance to be alone at any site, I would often try to record my observations and parts of conversations that had taken place as much as possible, in my notepad. Due to the size of Fairhaven Road allotment site, my journeys to and from different plots on the site were often prime opportunities for me to make brief notes on my observations and interactions with plot-holders, whilst on my own. Otherwise, I would record everything (I could!) from memory in note-form in my car, after my visits to the Fairhaven Road allotment site (and type them up 'in full' as much as I could once I returned home that same day), or at home, after my visits to the

³⁴ Although Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) make this point in relation to interviewing, I believe that this point is highly relevant to data collected through participant-observation too.

Winstead Avenue allotment site (5-minute drive away), so that I could provide as detailed an account of the events of that day as possible. In the process of writing up my notes that I had recorded earlier that day, I took the opportunity to think about the events that had taken place that day and make a note of anything of interest, or anything worth exploring further. To begin with my observations and recordings were relatively broad, embracing (but not limited to) the three elements; materials, meanings and forms of competence that compose a practice (Shove et al., 2012). Gradually, my observations and recordings became more focused as some analytical categories started to emerge during my preliminary analysis of the data.

On numerous occasions, during my fieldwork, some participants would ask if I could keep part of our conversations, (often about the tensions between various members on the site) between ourselves, 'off the record'. That being the case, I made the decision to exclude these conversations from my field notes and data analysis.

Alongside the more 'conventional' recording strategy of jotting down and writing up field notes, I also took a number of still photographs of the allotment sites or (aspects of) allotmenters' plots myself, as a means to capture visually and thereby represent aspects of the allotment throughout the different seasons, to help document field observations and to support arguments within my findings chapters, where necessary (Coffey, Renold, Dicks, Soyinka and Mason, 2006; Fetterman, 1998; Pink, 2013).

4.7.2.3 Incorporating Semi-Structured Interviews and Photo-Elicitation

Whilst my time at these allotment sites provided extremely rich data, I felt that the representation of the practice that I was developing was somewhat bounded within the context

of the allotment space and as such, it did not allow me to pay appropriate attention to the ways in which the practice may have an influence on, or otherwise overlap with other practices.

Within Shove et al.'s (2012) book; *The Dynamics of Social Practice*, the authors take what they refer to as an 'element-based' approach to explore and understand the dynamics of social practice and they maintain that the links between the elements that compose a practice (materials, forms of competence and meaning), which are integrated in the performance of a given practice, can be made or broken. Following this stance, Shove et al. (2012, p.35) consider the possibility that the elements which comprise a given practice 'have an existence beyond' that practice. Although, within their work, they draw attention towards the elements that are understood to comprise a practice at a given time and how these provide a connection to other practices.³⁵ For instance, drawing upon previous work, they point out how concepts of masculinity draw a connection between practices of driving and repairing. Whilst this is important, it is also useful to pay attention to the making and breaking of links between elements of a practice and related practices that transpire in the performance of a given practice.

In relation to the present study, fruits and vegetables (in various stages of growth) constitute fundamental (material) elements that compose a part of the practice of allotmenting at any one time. Yet, in the process of doing allotmenting, such fruits and vegetables, which transform from seeds to seedlings to fruits/ vegetables and are later harvested, hold 'different fates' (Shove et al., 2012, p.34), which extend into practices of showing or competing (in

³⁵ This relates to Schatzki's (1996) notion of 'practice-as-entity' which encapsulates the elements that comprise a practice at a given time.

horticultural shows), preserving, conserving, storing or cooking (for instance).³⁶ In this sense, they take on 'a new lease of life within and as part of other practices', which is considered to be important to an understanding of the practice of allotmenting (Shove et al., 2012, p.35). Due to the ways in which such 'materials' that constitute (a part of) the practice of allotmenting travel to related practices, it could be argued that the activities involved in doing allotmenting do not necessarily stop at the allotment, but rather extend into allotmenters' homes, among other places.

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I experienced some difficulty in trying to capture these aspects through my conversations at the allotment sites. Often, conversations around these issues seemed to divert back fairly quickly to *the allotment* and what was happening there. Therefore, in order to appreciate the interconnectedness between practices, I *had* intended to extend my fieldwork sites to include a number of my participants' homes. This processual approach would allow me to trace their allotment-grown produce back to their homes and explore what takes place there. I first approached Hayley and expressed my interest in what happens once produce has been harvested, since she readily welcomed me onto the Winstead Avenue allotment site from the onset of my fieldwork (on this site). Without hesitation, Hayley agreed for me to visit her in her home and conduct an informal interview. Whilst I did get the opportunity to visit Hayley in her home, another one of my participants, Jean who I felt relatively comfortable with, expressed her unease with me visiting her in her home. I was a little cautious that I might get this response but nevertheless I became more aware about the levels of privacy between one's private and personal space on the allotment and the privacy within their homes. At this point, I decided to revise my approach because I didn't want to risk the possibility of

³⁶ This became apparent through conversations at the allotments in which such processes and practices were mentioned and in the allotmenting magazines that I was given by allotmenters during my fieldwork.

being turned down by other allotmenters had I asked them about visiting them in their homes and so I came to discover first-hand, how research strategy and design is an ongoing process, grounded in the practice of research itself.

I therefore decided to provide a small number of my participants with disposable cameras and asked them to take photographs in their homes with loose themes around; *ways of storing, preserving and conserving their allotment-grown produce, home composting, meal planning and cooking*, reflecting some of the topics that had been raised in conversation at the allotment or in the allotmenting magazines that I had previously been given by allotmenters. My participants' photographs then formed the basis for an in-depth semi-structured interview (Mason, 2002), or an 'ethnographic interview' with them (leCompte and Schensul, 1999). In this sense, the interviews conducted with my participants (apart from Hayley) were to some extent guided by them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). By revising my strategy to incorporate both visual methods and interviews, it provided me with a way of gaining access to the processes and practices (to a certain extent) that take place in their homes that I felt I might not have been able to readily observe (Seale, 1998), thus providing me with further insight into the phenomena under study.

Having decided that I would supplement participant observation at the allotment sites with in-depth semi-structured interviews incorporating photo-elicitation (Collier and Collier, 1986; leCompte and Schensul, 1999; Pink, 2013; Rose, 2012), I set about contacting my informants. At this point during my fieldwork, I had no direct contact with any of my participants (apart from my initial contacts and my *gatekeepers*), and as I have mentioned previously, my access to the

allotment sites was fairly limited, governed by the times and dates of those who I was in direct contact with.

As a means to get in touch with participants, regarding this aspect of my research, I wrote a brief letter (see appendix B for a sample of the letter), addressed to each of my participants asking whether they would be willing to participate in this part of my research. I put each letter, together with a disposable camera inside a waterproof bag (to prevent any damage from the rain) and left each bag in what I considered to be a visible place near the entrance to each of their allotments during one of my visits, unless they were on their allotment, tending to their plots, in which case I had the opportunity to ask them in person. All of the participants I had selected apart from one (whom I never heard back from and actually never saw during the remainder of my fieldwork on that allotment site) got in touch with me via e-mail, text message or a telephone call to let me know that they would be willing to take part. It is worth noting here that once my participants had agreed to take part in this aspect of my research, we would often keep in touch via our mobile phones; text messages or phone calls and this provided me with a greater level of 'physical' access (Cassell, 1988) to the allotment sites for the remainder of my fieldwork, particularly at the Fairhaven Road allotment site.

During one of my visits to the Fairhaven Road allotment site, Arianna mentioned some of the photographs that she had taken for my research in conversation with both Stanley and myself, to which, in a friendly tone, Stanley had asked 'what I was after?' before offering to take some photographs of his produce himself and as such, he incidentally became another participant in this part of my research. Some of my participants preferred to use other means of taking photographs besides the disposable camera that I had provided and one of my participants even

went to the trouble of compiling a CD of his photographs, each labelled according to what he had photographed! Once I had developed/collated the photographs that my participants had taken, we arranged a date and a place for the informal interview; often at their allotments in their sheds or otherwise in their homes.

Before each interview began, I explained to my interviewees that I had a number of themes/topics that I wanted to discuss with them, (the themes that I had presented to them previously, alongside the disposable cameras) and assured them of the informal nature of the interview (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mason, 2002). All of the interviews (see appendix C for a sample interview transcript) began with questions around participants' past experiences and 'what usually happens on their allotments during the winter months' before drawing attention towards the photographs they had taken, with the exception of Hayley, who gave me a 'guided tour' around her home; going through the contents of her kitchen cupboards/ shelves, her fridge/freezer and her shed, where I was able to raise various topics of interest (around the themes mentioned above).

During one of my interviews, I came to realise that, some of the photographs (taken by one of my participants on one of the disposable cameras I had provided) had not developed properly, which, I felt, had an effect on the atmosphere of the interview, as she seemed quite upset about it. All of the interviews were audio-recorded, with my interviewees' prior consent and then later transcribed.

I conducted seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews altogether; four on an interviewer-interviewee basis and three "multiparty interviews", that is, interviews with two or more

interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). I decided to conduct a small number of “multiparty interviews” with some of my participants, since they gave me the opportunity to gather more in-depth and detailed responses about my participants’ experiences of allotmenting (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). For instance, by conducting an in-depth “multiparty interview” (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) with both Tim, an allotment holder, and his sister; Kirsty, (who receives a high proportion of the fruits and vegetables that Tim harvests from his allotment) I was able to gather “complimentary information”, as they each talked about different aspects of the practice (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Equally, conducting in-depth, “multiparty interviews” with both Adrian and Sophia, a married couple, and good friends Arianna and Catherine (later joined by Lynn), who share their allotment and the duties, responsibilities and activities involved in the practice helped to improve interpersonal dynamics of the interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2012), capture their different perspectives and add to the richness of my data.

My interview with Arianna, Catherine and Lynn, had originally been arranged to take place between Arianna, Catherine and I in their allotment shed. Although, part-way through the interview, we were greeted by Lynn, who casually and unknowingly interrupted the interview to talk to Arianna and Catherine about the confrontation that she had just experienced with three other allotmenters, as she entered the allotment site. Once Lynn, Arianna and Catherine had finished their conversation, I informed Lynn about the interview that I was conducting and assured her that I would not relay their conversation about the confrontation to anyone else. Lynn then asked Arianna, Catherine and I if she could also participate in the interview, to which

she did. Whilst Lynn's visit was unexpected, her involvement in the interviewee, created another opportunity to enrich my data.

Alongside participant-observation and informal conversations, in-depth semi-structured/ un-structured interviews are understood to be a principle method of data collection in ethnographic research (Fetterman, 1998; Hammersley, 2006; Spradley, 1980). Nevertheless, they have been highly discredited as an ethnographic research technique in the past, owing to a number of concerns about whether we know the interviewee is telling the truth or not, the 'incompleteness' of interview data' when compared with participant-observation and the difference between what people say they do and what people actually do (Atkinson and Coffey, 2001; Becker and Geer, 1957; Hammersley, 2003, p.119; Hammersley, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Seale, 1998). Such critiques, which reflect practical and methodological issues that appertain to the *value* of interview data (Hammersley, 2003) seem to suggest that ethnographers should only gather 'observational data collected in naturally occurring situations' (Hammersley, 2006, p.10). Yet, as Hammersley (2006, p.10) points out, this ignores the 'traditional ethnographic commitment to understanding people's perspectives'.

Putting these issues which, ultimately concern the validity of interview data (based on the subjectivity of participants' accounts) to one side, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.108), suggest that participant accounts derived through interviews, can be used as a resource, for they argue that;

The 'artificiality' of the interview, when compared with 'normal' events in the setting, may allow us to understand how participants would behave in other circumstances, for example when they move out of a setting or when the setting changes...while it is true that the perspectives elicited in interviews do not provide direct access to some cognitive and attitudinal base from which a

person's behaviour in 'natural' settings is derived in an unmediated way, they may still be capable of illuminating that behaviour.

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, pp.108-109)

In agreement with Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) I found that using my participants' photographs, which, as Collier and Collier (1986, p.10) argue, represent 'precise records of material reality'; snapshots of what was there, present useful reference points to elicit and stimulate discussions framed around their personal experiences, (in relation to the visual content of their photographs and the key themes mentioned previously) (Pink, 2013), and as previously stated, as a way of gaining access to what my participants say they do in other circumstances (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The following table (figure 4.1) outlines the various sources of data that I collated throughout the course of my fieldwork. I have provided all of my participants with pseudonyms so as to preserve their anonymity, as I have mentioned previously.

Figure 4.1 My Fieldwork.

Participant-observation and 'spontaneous,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Winstead Avenue allotment site (22 visits – from November 2015 – October 2016) in Blackpool.- Including a BBQ one afternoon.
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<p>informal conversations' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.108)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fairhaven Road Allotment site (19 visits – from May 2016 – November 2016) close to Blackpool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Including a BBQ one evening and 2 events held at the site (the plant sale and the open day). - Maple Crescent Road allotment site (1 visit).
<p>Semi-Structured Interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducted 7 in-depth, semi-structured interviews (3 of which can be described as “multiparty” interviews) with the following participants, lasting between (approximately) 1 hour to 2 hours 45 minutes. With respect to the order shown below, the first 5 interviews listed were conducted with allotmenters from Fairhaven Road allotments and the last two listed were conducted with allotmenters from Winstead Avenue allotments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stanley (53 years old) - Arianna (65 years old), Catherine (65 years old) and Lynn (Lynn did not disclose her age, but my guess would be approximately early 60's) - Keith (66 years old) - Adrian (64 years old) and Sophia (63 years old) - Helen (67 years old) - Tim (64 Years old) and Kirsty (52 years old) - Hayley (44 years old)
<p>Photographic evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photographs taken (in their homes or at their allotments) by my interviewees listed above (except Hayley). - Photographs taken by myself at different stages throughout the growing season at the allotment sites.
<p>Additional Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blackpool Federation of Allotment Association (BFAA) horticultural show held at the visitor centre at Stanley park. - BFAA presentation evening held at a local social club. - Annual General Meeting (for the Winstead Avenue Allotment association) held at a local pub. - Horticultural show, held at an allotment site in Liverpool.
<p>Documentary Sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 allotmenting magazines given to me by 2 members during my fieldwork.

4.8 Leaving the Field

From the outset of my fieldwork, I decided to conduct 12 months' fieldwork, so that I would be able to capture the practicalities of the practice of allotmenting over the course of one growing season. As I drew closer towards the end of my fieldwork (around October/ November

2016), plot-holders were visiting the allotment sites to a lesser extent and so it brought my fieldwork to a natural end; I began to say my goodbyes to allotmenters at both sites (as I was unsure if I would see them again during my last few visits) and thank them for their huge generosity, hospitality and often bountiful harvests that I took home with me.

Nevertheless, I did start to get the impression, towards the end of my fieldwork that I was becoming somewhat of an inconvenience for Linda, which may perhaps be expected in that I often relied on her for my (physical) access into the Fairhaven Road allotment site.

As a token of my gratitude, I gave both Linda (Fairhaven Road allotment site) and Jean (Winstead Avenue allotment site) a bottle of wine. Following the end of my fieldwork in November, I have since met up with some of my participants from the Winstead Avenue allotment site (in December 2016) for an evening meal and some drinks in our local pub and attended the annual plant sale and open day events (both of which I was involved in the previous year) at Fairhaven Road allotment site. As was the case during my fieldwork, I was warmly welcomed by allotmenters at the annual plant sale event and invited along to the open day that took place in August this year.

4.9 Analysing My Data and “Writing up” My Ethnographic Research

While processes of collecting, organising and analysing data often took place concurrently, as part of an iterative process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), I will discuss the process of analysing my data separately here, for simplicity reasons.

In addition to the role of the ethnographer as both 'insider' and 'outsider' presented earlier on in this chapter, there are other *overlapping* roles that lie in the work of an ethnographer as a participant observer and an *analyst*, or what is commonly characterized as generating *emic* and *etic* perspectives. Hammersley (2006, p.4) outlines these two perspectives as follows;

As ethnographers, we typically insist on the importance of coming to understand the perspectives of the people being studied if we are to explain, or even to describe accurately, the activities they engage in and the courses of action they adopt. At the same time, there is usually an equal emphasis on developing an *analytic* understanding of perspectives, activities and action...'

However, for me, this idea of *moving back and forth* between data and ideas was quite difficult to accomplish during the midst of my fieldwork – something which has been recognised by others conducting ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Yet, as I have mentioned previously, the process of writing up my field notes often provided me with the time to reflect upon what had taken place earlier that day and thus, I would often record any preliminary ideas or hunches, otherwise defined as 'analytic memos' about what was happening relatively early on during my fieldwork, which helped me to recognise any emerging ideas (Walsh, 1998, p.229). Nevertheless, these early exploratory ideas did not begin to take shape until much later, when I came to analyse the entirety of my data (or at least the data that I had collected up to that point) months after I had started my field work.

I organised my field notes, the photographs that I had taken and later, the photographs my participants had taken, plus the interview transcripts using NVivo 10, which proved to be particularly valuable throughout the analytical process; in the process of assigning codes to pieces of data, organising codes and also owing to the ability of the software to retrieve data assigned to particular codes almost instantaneously (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Hammersley

and Atkinson, 2007; Seale and Kelly, 1998). Although, it is worth mentioning here that such computer-aided software merely supports this process. As Fetterman (1998, p.84) points out, 'they still require the eyes and ears of the ethnographer to determine what to collect and how to record it as well as how to interpret the data from a cultural perspective'. Once I became familiar with my data, through reading and re-reading my field notes and (later on) my interview transcripts, I began to code my data based upon any emerging patterns that I could identify, often in relation (but not necessarily limited) to materials, forms of competence and meaning, consistent with the aims of my research (Seale and Kelly, 1998). Parts of my data would often be assigned to multiple codes, if I thought it was necessary, following Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.155) insights;

...observed social action does not present itself to the ethnographer one theme at a time. The social world – and therefore our data – is complex in its enactments. Data, therefore, need to be coded densely, and to be faithful to the many possible topics and themes that are discoverable.

Gradually, through reflecting on my data and my experience *in the field*, I began to develop a *set* of analytical categories/codes which I then considered in relation to *new* field notes and in turn, developed, in light of any new insights that emerged, resembling the constant comparative technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Field notes and interview transcripts were re-examined in light of any new codes that I had developed. Subsequently, I started to draw themes together in the process of identifying relationships between my codes. For instance, I considered the ways in which certain tools, equipment and materials were used and appropriated in the course of doing allotmenting.

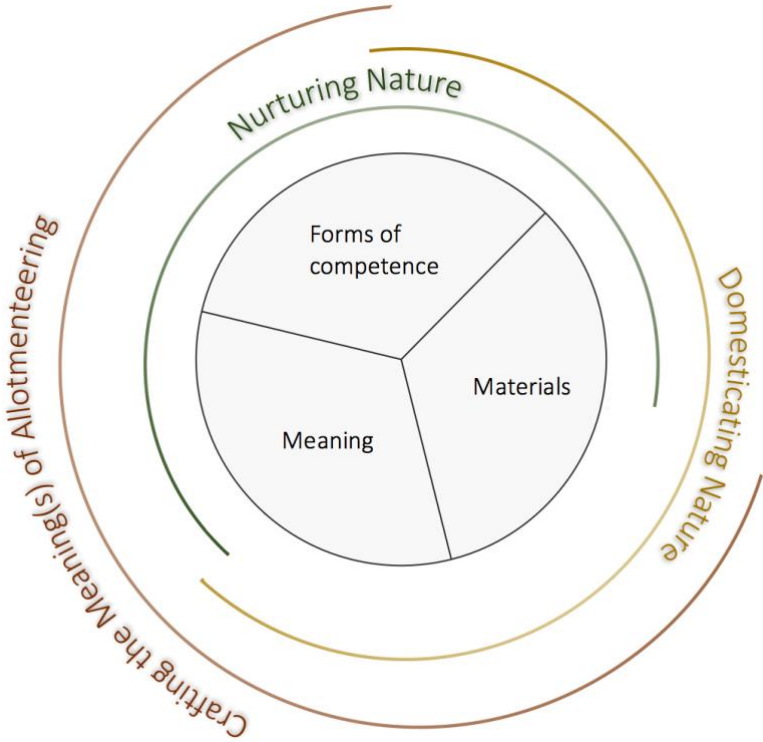
In order to support this process, I started to look at the practice of allotmenting as a process (or rather, a series of processes, integrating practices of storing, preserving, conversing and composting, for instance) focused around 'food' and 'waste', composed of three *loose* phases; 1) production, 2) the juncture between production and consumption, reflecting the different conduits that food travel through (including entering a state of abeyance wherein food is frozen or otherwise preserved) and 3) consumption. This enabled me to think about how I could best interpret and understand the processes that took place in the course of *doing* allotmenting that I had identified within my codes.

At the same time, exploring the practice of allotmenting as a series of processes that take place within/across three (loose) phrases, also made me aware of other (fairly significant) meanings, processes and practices that I had identified within my codes (e.g. meanings around the sensory pleasures of their produce and processes/practices around forms of DIY and craft consumption) that I had not accounted for. This prompted me to broaden my analysis and also explore 'the allotment plot' as a space through which *other* processes, practices and meanings transpire in the process of 'doing' allotmenting.

Emerging themes were then explored further during the remainder of my time in the field. The photographs that I had taken were used both as a visual reminder of 'being there' and coded together with descriptions in my field notes (Fetterman, 1998) and my participants' photographs were coded in relation their personal experiences discussed during their interview. A closer investigation into each theme prompted more detailed descriptions of the practice of allotmenting.

Following an approach adopted by Schouten and McAlexander (1995, p.47) in their analysis of the 'new bikers' subculture, '[I] treated each theme like a puzzle piece [and]... sought to devise a conceptual framework that would unite them all in a holistic fashion'. The diagram below (figure 4.2) provides a visual aid, demonstrating the three elements; forms of competence, materials and meaning that combine to form my theoretical framework (discussed in the previous chapter) and my themes; nurturing nature, domesticating nature and crafting the meaning(s) of allotmenteeing, each of which will be discussed within the following three chapters.

Figure 4.2 Visual representation of the three elements.



The inner circle of this diagram represents my theoretical framework; the three core elements that comprise any given practice, according to Shove et al. (2012). The three curves surrounding this inner circle, set apart by three different colours, represent my three analytical themes; Nurturing Nature, Domesticating Nature and Crafting the Meaning(s) of Allotmenteeing and the extent to which each of these themes embraces the three core elements of a practice. For

instance, the green curve illustrates how Nurturing Nature largely focuses on “forms of competence”, whilst calling attention to both “meanings” and “materials”, as illustrated by the way the green curve overlaps these elements.

Finally, as I have indicated in section 4.7.2.1, ethnography; a practice which is primarily concerned with developing an understanding, and the representation of a culture (whatever that culture may be) is an “interpretive craft” (Van Maanen, 2011b, p.219). The following three chapters of this thesis put forward my interpretation of the practice, which is rooted in my own experiences in and of the world of my participants. My ethnography closely resonates with what Humphreys and Watson (2009, p.43) have referred to in their work as “enhanced ethnography”; that is “an account of events...which uses the presentational techniques of the novelist” such as; “descriptive scene-setting”, “use of dialogues”, “author as a character in the narrative” and “attention to the perspectives and stories of subjects”. Thus, my narrative offers a personal account, which captures the intimate sense of ‘being there’ (Hannerz, 2003), and guides the reader through the processes and practicalities of doing allotmenting in a clear and coherent fashion, which reflects my own way of knowing.

Chapter 5. Nurturing Nature

5.1 Introduction

The analytical focus of this chapter is on the critical role of competence, or rather, *different forms* of competence, as evinced within Shove and Pantzar’s (2005) research, whilst recognising that this element of practice is intimately bound up with the other elements; materials and meanings, and therefore cannot be explored in isolation (see the shaded area in figure 5.1 below). Drawing upon Schatzki’s (2010) concept of materiality (see chapter 3, section 3.6), which embraces physical, biological and natural entities, and the idea that competence is actively distributed between practitioners (bodies/minds) and materiality, competence is herein considered to be a diverse construct, ranging from abstract knowledge through to material knowledge (forms of competence inscribed in materials).

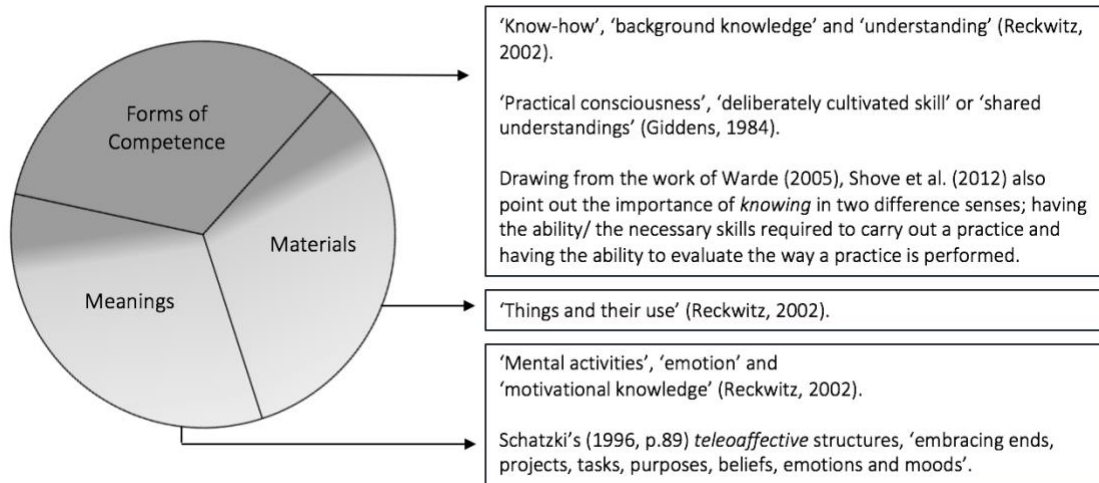


Figure 5.1 My theoretical framework with a focus on 'forms of competence'.

Within what follows, I explore some of the processes through which my participants *nurture nature* in their performance of *doing* allotmenting. I argue that such processes occupy a significant role in the practice of allotmenting and reinforce the intimate relationship between allotmenters and nature.

To begin with, this chapter places emphasis on practitioners; their ability to understand and anticipate nature and their embodied intimate experiences with nature, before moving on to explore how allotmenters employ an array of resources (and their relative competences) in their performance of the practice. Finally, attention is given to the idea of growing fruits/vegetables for horticultural shows, before I bring this chapter to a close by reflecting upon the processes of nurturing nature in the broader context of environmental sustainability.

5.2 Understanding and Anticipating Nature

This section explores the manner in which allotmenters come to understand and anticipate nature, first by looking at experiences of both novice and experienced practitioners who reflect back on their early experiences of doing allotmenting. This is then extended into a discussion that considers some fairly recent cases, which demonstrate how knowledge is shared and why knowledge is sometimes not shared amongst allotmenters.

As Samantha and I approached her allotment, we walked towards the back where her husband, Nick was watering the plants in their greenhouse. As we drew nearer to Nick, Samantha mentioned that he used to be a landscape gardener, a profession which he had for around twenty years, before his current job teaching science. Joining in our conversation, Nick mentioned that he has 'pruned trees and other things like that but, growing vegetables is a completely different matter'. Overturning Nick's point of view, Samantha explained how she feels as though Nick's previous line of work and his current profession as a science teacher; teaching chemistry, biology and physics has 'some use on the allotment'. She went on to talk about his knowledge of various natural resources, which are understood to be beneficial to certain types of plants, using her fingers to list the various types; 'he tells me we need fish and bone for *this* plant, potash for *this* one and nettles and comfrey feed for *this* one...if it was up to me I would have fed them all with the same feed!' before she started laughing.

(Field notes, 22nd May, 2016)

As Marie had informed me, both her and her husband, Alan had taken early retirement from their job as civil servants just before they acquired the tenancy for their plot. Marie explained to me how she has always loved to garden, before pointing out how she feels 'gardening at home' compares to tending to their allotment; 'I'd always have about twenty hanging baskets growing during the summer months...but *this* [tending to their allotment] wasn't gardening. [In the beginning], I had to *re-learn* everything I thought I knew and this was primarily through trial and error!'

(Field notes, 19th May, 2016, Marie's emphasis in *italics*)

Within both of these excerpts above taken from my field notes, Nick and Marie reveal how their first experiences of allotmenting and growing one's own food diverge from their prior experiences of gardening. Despite their fairly extensive previous experience of 'doing' gardening, both Nick and Marie indicate that the practice of allotmenting represents an unfamiliar territory, which requires them to engage with *new* techniques, procedures and *ways of doing*. Marie, in particular, demonstrates how, in the early stages of becoming an allotmenter, learning and engaging with different forms of competence amounted to fairly significant steps, requiring her to 're-learn everything' she thought she knew. Thus, through the process of 'doing allotmenting' both participants appear to be gaining practical, embodied experienced-based knowledge. Therefore, for Marie and Nick, their initial attempts at allotmenting required them to break away from previously routine and hence *familiar* ways of *doing* gardening and engage with the *unfamiliar*. It could be argued that Nick's and Marie's experiences of *not knowing* how to engage in the practice initially (which they both seem surprised by) created doubts and challenged their understanding and know-how learnt through their previous gardening-related engagements, that they *carried* into the practice of allotmenting.

Nevertheless, Samantha, an inexperienced practitioner, unveils how Nick is able to draw upon knowledge and understanding that he has accumulated from both his previous and his current

profession. Filled with effervescence, Samantha demonstrates how, for her, doing allotmenting requires learning, what, appears to be, fascinating processes and procedures which are typically unfamiliar to a novice, like herself. As the following extract demonstrates, Samantha is eager to learn about the unfamiliar ways of 'doing' allotmenting, from other practitioners;

She pointed out that she often likes to take walks around the allotment site itself to see what other plot-holders are up to, the ways in which they organise their plots and see if they have any 'tips' for her that could help her in any way on her plot.

(Field notes, 22nd May, 2016)

In one sense, walking around the allotment site, to meet and talk to other allotmenters about their plots and the way they 'do' allotmenting could signal one of the ways in which a wealth of knowledge, carried by existing cohorts of practitioners, is passed on to other allotmenters (Shove et al., 2012). This also seems to resonate with James' experiences as demonstrated in the extract below. Before procuring his own (half) plot in August 2015, James explained to me that he would often help his mother; Linda, manage and cultivate her fruits and vegetables on her allotment. He recalled one of his early experiences of growing:

'One summer, we planted the strawberries and picked them once they were ready to be harvested, *without realising* that this wasn't the *right* way to grow strawberries!' He went on to say, 'the following year, they [the strawberry plants] didn't produce much fruit and the year after that, they died'. Following this incident, James mentioned that he spoke to Eric [another more experienced plot-holder] for some advice and he explained to James, [James reiterates Eric] 'you aren't supposed to harvest strawberries in their first year, you are supposed to de-head the flowers once they start flowering so that the energy goes back into stabilizing the plant rather than producing fruit'. He went on to say, 'it's more about letting the plant become more established in its first year', before smiling.

(Field notes, 28th May, 2016, James' emphasis in *italics*)

As James indicates, he sought advice from a more experienced practitioner, Eric (who has occupied a plot on this allotment site for over fifty-five years) who enlightened him of his (and his mother's) mistakes *following* their unsuccessful attempt at growing strawberries and demonstrated how he feels the practice 'should' be performed. This instance provides a sense of how an understanding of *how nature works* and conventions around *what growing your own foods involves*, appear to travel amongst existing cohorts of practitioners (Shove and Pantzar, 2007) in the process of doing allotmenting.

For James, his new-found understanding of the way in which practitioners are 'supposed' to tend to their strawberry plants, appears to compensate for the lengthy amount of time he and his mother spent growing strawberries without any success. Similar to Samantha, it appears as though making discoveries about nature, however small, evokes a sense of interest and excitement, in the art of cultivation itself. Even so, in James' case, gradually undergoing the transition from *not knowing* to *knowing* particular details about how to cultivate fruits and vegetables requires an element of perseverance. Although, this is not to say that James and his mother were not succeeding in cultivating *other* fruits and vegetables. Drawing attention back to the ways in which knowledge is passed on to practitioners, the following two extracts taken both from my field notes and my interview with Helen relate to one fairly recent experience shared by Helen and Jean:

Jean and Helen had an arrangement in place during the summer months (or days with higher temperatures) whereby Jean would open the door of Helen's (and her daughter's) polytunnel on the mornings that Helen wasn't visiting, so that her plants in the polytunnel didn't suffocate in the heat. Whilst with Jean at her allotment one morning, I accompanied her to Helen's allotment so that she could open her polytunnel door. On this occasion, Jean had mentioned that Helen was away on holiday with her daughter and her family in their caravan so she had been left responsible for opening and closing Helen's polytunnel door. On our way to the front of Helen's polytunnel, she stopped and pointed out

Helen's cabbages, which were growing directly into the soil along the side of her polytunnel, underneath a small netted green tunnel cloche. In particular, she drew attention to the young leaves which, according to Jean, looked as though they were 'starting to wither'. She explained to me that Helen had only bought some cabbage plants because she [Jean] had mentioned to Helen not too long ago that she has bought some herself from the garden centre.

She went on to say, 'it will be interesting to see how the plants develop because she [Helen] has planted hers straight into the ground and so, they will have tiny roots. I've potted mine on to slightly bigger pots so the roots would have already developed before I plant mine out; they will have a much larger root on them'.

As we moved further around the polytunnel towards the doorway, she went on to explain that, 'there is always a risk of developing club root on cabbages, and well, any type of brassica really, cauliflowers, sprouts, swedes, radishes...and the best chance you can give them is by allowing the plant to grow and develop a strong and healthy root system... so it will be interesting to see the difference between the two'. I asked Jean whether she had made Helen aware of what *might* happen to her plants. She explained to me that she hadn't mentioned anything to Helen 'because [paused], well it's difficult isn't it?...because when she told me that she'd bought them, she'd already planted them in the ground and I didn't want to turn around and tell her she shouldn't be doing that...if she had asked me then I would have told her...they might be okay and she might end up with the best cabbages on the site so well shall see.

(Field notes, 8th September, 2016)

Helen: ...I bought some cabbage plants fairly recently. Jean grew some last year and she said 'oh I bought these plants from The Plant Place again', little plug plants, so before I went on holiday in September I put them out, I thought 'oh I'll get some of those because they were beautiful cabbages [that Jean had grown last year]' and you think sometimes they might be hardier if they have been planted at a garden centre.

I: Oh right.

Helen: I don't know if they are, it is just my way of thinking, anyway, when I came back [to the allotment after being away], they had all been eaten hadn't they! So, I was like, 'egghhh'. I had put netting over them so it was obviously slugs but Jean mentioned afterwards, 'oh well, I don't-' [Helen interrupted her own impersonation of Jean] I mean she has a wealth of knowledge, she said, 'you should have put them in pots first to make them stronger and grown them until they were fairly big in their pots before replanting them in the ground'.

I: Why, what's the difference?

Helen: Well, because, the smaller plants-, the slugs will just decimate them whereas if they [the plants] are bigger and stronger, they might just eat a leaf or two but not the *whole* plant, so we are learning, I'm learning all the time, every day I go down there I'm learning, but yeah, I was a bit upset about that.

(Interview, Helen)

Jean who was employed as a biology laboratory technician before retiring and who has completed a Royal Horticultural Society certified course at a nearby college, has cultivated her own allotment for the past seven years. Within the first extract, she reveals how her knowledge and understanding that she has assimilated over the years enables her to provide her plants with what she considers to be the 'best chance' of surviving. It also demonstrates how her knowledge and understanding enables her foresee some of the potential adverse consequences (i.e. what might go wrong), if this knowledge and understanding is not put into practice.

Within the second extract, Helen, who has occupied and cultivated her plot together with her daughter (Laura) for three years now, reveals how, despite her attempt to nurture nature; by covering her cabbages with 'netting' and protecting them from potential predators, *other* forms of nature (i.e. plant pests) continued to take effect. Therefore, despite knowing what to plant at certain times of the year (for instance), there can be uncertainties (for instance, whether the plant will survive if planted straight into the ground) or potentialities (garden pests) that practitioners learn to anticipate through practical experience, as their 'career' (Shove et al., 2012) as an allotmentee develops. Like James, for Helen, *learning the ropes* derives, in part, from her *unsuccessful* attempts and her perseverance to try again.

As demonstrated in the second extract, once Helen returned from her holiday, Jean had advised her on how she *should* have nurtured and taken care of her plants, from *her* point of view.

Comparable to the previous instance with James and Eric, this reflects one of the ways in which the different competences governing the 'doing' of allotmenting travels amongst cohorts of existing practitioners.

Yet, at the same time, as Jean's experience (in the first extract above) suggests, the process of sharing and disseminating knowledge can be a slightly more complex and delicate affair. In first extract, Jean describes herself as being in a 'difficult' position of both knowing how to engage in the practice and sharing this understanding. Whilst Jean recognises that telling Helen about the potential risks that she is taking by planting her cabbages directly into the ground could help Helen assimilate into the practice, at the same time, she feels as though she may be intruding and criticising Helen's way of doing things. It was only after Helen became aware of her unsuccessful attempt to grow cabbages (as a result of her inability to anticipate *what might go wrong*, once she returned from her holiday), when Jean informed her of how she 'should' have taken care of her plants. The sensitivity surrounding *knowing* and sharing this knowledge and experience with others in this instance demonstrates the importance of their practical engagement in the process of understanding and anticipating nature.

In another case, Adrian also demonstrates how fragile this process of sharing knowledge and understanding with other allotmenters can be, to the extent that certain 'ways of doing' may not always travel through cohorts of existing practitioners; 'I often get excited when I learn something new and I want to share it...but I get the impression as though other people feel like I'm showing off or trying to tell them how they should be doing it...so I don't share as much as I used to'. Although, it was clear throughout the fieldwork that Adrian did give advice to a small number of allotmenters who occupied plots close to him.

Of course, as Nigel demonstrates in the following extract, there are also instances whereby practitioners do not share their understanding and experiences in case the recipient happens to cultivate better produce than them as a consequence of the knowledge they have enlightened them with;

‘There are some people on this allotment site that won’t give you *anything* and they won’t tell you how they’ve grown something because they perhaps want to have the best produce on the site! Allotment breeds are funny...

(Field notes, 27th August, 2016, with Nigel)

This line of analysis places emphasis on the practitioners themselves and their patterns of ‘career’ (Shove et al., 2012) development in the practice of allotmenting. In doing so, it draws attention towards the practitioners’ *need* to engage with, understand and anticipate nature; the skills and forms of competence, which practitioners acquire over time, in the process of engaging in more or less *challenging, enthralling* and sometimes *unsuccessful* attempts at growing their own food. Furthermore, it also suggested that knowledge may *not* always be passed on to other allotmenters owing to self-conscious concerns about whether they may be interfering too much or out of fear that other allotmenters think they might be *showing off* or have ulterior motives. Whilst this section has introduced and placed emphasis on allotmenters’ *embodied* capabilities, which they learn through experience, the following section, explores this idea of practical experience-based learning further and calls attention to the idea of distributed competence that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In particular, it demonstrates how, through appreciating the intimate, embodied process of learning that allotmenters undergo, we begin to see that this relationship between allotmenters and nature is mutual; centred around co-dependency and co-instruction.

5.3 Forging Intimate Connections with Nature

Practitioners' physical and embodied experiences with food production processes within the confines of their allotment enable them to forge profound, intimate connections with nature. Similar to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli's (2007b, p.145) understanding of community supported agricultural farming, these allotmenters are also intimately involved in the 'puzzle-solving process that necessitates a close, intuitive connection with the land and a skilful decoding of the subtle signs encoded in plants and soil'. This interplay between nature's visual cues and practitioners' ability to detect and respond to them is embedded within and constitutes a part of what *doing allotmenting* is all about for these allotmenters. As the following extract suggests, allotmenters emphasise the need to look for and detect the visual cues immanent within nature;

Looking closely at her cape gooseberries, currently planted in a relatively large pot, Jean explained, 'it needs to be cut back because it's growing rather wild'. Pointing at the smaller shoots, she added, 'when you see these start to come through, you can cut it back then'.

(Field notes, 30th January, 2016)

It is through this process of cultivating and nurturing their crops that allotmenters are able to learn, develop and put into practice, what Canniford and Shankar (2013) have referred to as 'sensory vigilance'. In this regard, Canniford and Shankar (2013, p.1065) suggest that the sensory abilities that their participants bring to bear are 'disciplined' sensory procedures; 'adaptations of the body to nature'. Although their analysis appertains to a surfing community and the relation between surfers' bodies and the natural movements of the sea, their observations are also

relevant to the practice of allotmenting. As the extract below highlights, Hayley, who has cultivated her allotment with her husband and two sons for five years, demonstrates her acute awareness of the markings on her potato plants as she tries to make sense of them and appreciates that such markings may represent a signal or an indication that her potato plants are suffering from potato blight.

After Hayley harvested some of their spring onions and tomatoes, she picked up their garden fork from their allotment tool shed and headed over to their potato plants that were growing in a nearby raised bed to harvest some of her potatoes. She stood looking at her potato plants tentatively, inspecting some of the leaves more closely before pointing out to me that some of the leaves appear to have 'brown flecks' on them. She explained to me that she was trying to decipher whether her potato plants were 'suffering from potato blight'; an airborne disease that affects both potatoes and tomatoes. She expressed her concern about the disease as she affirmed, 'you don't want that because once one plant has it, it can spread quickly to all of them'.

(Field notes, 16th July, 2016)

Her efforts to focus intently on the distinctive particularities of her potato crop, epitomises the perceptive understanding that practitioners sometimes have. In this case, it appears as though Hayley lacks the confidence and self-assurance to determine whether *these* markings in particular are indicative of the disease. Nevertheless, as practitioners become more intimate with nature over time, they learn to appreciate the visual cues emanating from nature to a greater extent. As the extract below demonstrates, Adrian who has tended to his allotment (with his wife) for over ten years now (and thus is a more experienced practitioner, compared to Hayley) appears to be more attuned to nature, which clearly manifests through his sensory awareness towards the particularities inscribed within his leeks, onions and garlic.

Adrian explained to me that he had suffered this year with a bout of rust on his leeks and consequently, he 'needed' to trim some of the older leaves back on at

least two separate occasions, whilst inspecting his trimmed leeks more closely. Whilst glancing over at his leeks [in the raised bed behind me], he pointed out to me that they were 'still growing' and consequently, he inferred that they were 'not doing too badly'. Elaborating on this, he suggested that the onset of the rust on his leeks is 'down to bad practice', by people 'not knowing what they should be doing'. He proceeded to say... 'I presume you know, but rust is an airborne fungi disease and you aren't supposed to put the [rusted] leaves into the compost [heap] because otherwise you would be spreading the diseases and letting them grow... the same has happened with my garlic [he showed me the rust speckles on his onions and garlic] and my onions, although my onions aren't too bad...'. He moved on to explain that he suspects that the disease is coming from 'that direction' [pointing over to the East of the allotment site] 'because from here, you get the East coastal winds coming across...'.

(Field notes, 17th June, 2016)

It appears as though Adrian has developed the perceptual skills required to recognise and identify the rust pustules, enabling him to try and deal with the disease accordingly. Owing to the pervasive nature of the airborne disease, he explained that he has 'needed' to trim his leeks back in an attempt to control the disease and prevent it from having an effect on the growth of his leeks. Fully immersed within the process of *nurturing nature*, Adrian demonstrates how 'sensory vigilance' (Canniford and Shankar, 2013) represents a valuable resource that practitioners can draw upon to help them successfully cultivate their crops. It is important to know what these markings are, in order to deal with them. Furthermore, Adrian's experiences seem to suggest that, with experience, 'sensory vigilance' becomes routine and taken for granted in the process of doing allotmenting. In this sense, as practitioners progress up the 'career ladder' and become accustomed to *decoding nature's puzzles*, these visual cues lose their sense of mystery.

Like the previous two instances, the following extract reveals how nature's visual cues can assist practitioners and enable them to *work with nature* in their performance of the practice.

[With Jean on Helen's allotment] After opening the door of Helen's polytunnel, Jean stepped in and swept the green netting [which hung like a curtain in the doorway to prevent insects from going into the polytunnel - Laura, Helen's daughter had told me previously] to one side. After looking around, Jean drew my attention towards Helen's [and Laura's] onions that were left to dry in their polytunnel. She explained to me that 'their onions have got white rot', before stating that she has tried to tell Helen about her onions having this disease. 'I could tell by the way they had fallen' she added.

At this point, I questioned how, the way onions with white rot fall, is different to the way onions fall naturally once they've finished growing [something which I had come to learn during my fieldwork]. Jean explained to me that 'when the onions are ready to be harvested, the leaves tend to bend over, but if they have white onion rot, the whole onion will topple over and the roots are normally exposed and, if you can see that they don't have many roots and they have the white fungi growing around the roots then you know'. She went on to say that Helen insisted that 'it [the onions falling over in the way that they have done] was something to do with the weather that they have had'...rather than the onions developing a disease.

(Field notes, 8th September, 2016)

Here, Jean draws a distinction between the observable differences of a healthy onion that is ready for harvesting and a diseased onion that is suffering from white rot. Whilst comparable to the previous two instances, this extract also demonstrates the notion of becoming more in tune with nature; that is to say, gaining knowledge and understanding of *how nature works* and developing an awareness of the potential contingencies that can affect their produce, can be important for the successes and failures of their growing experiences. In the case of white rot, as Keith pointed out, during one conversation at the allotment, 'the bacteria from this disease lies active in that bed for around seven years...so feeding off of those onions for one season has meant that it can survive for an extensive period of time'. In this sense, being more *in tune with nature*, can also have an effect on the *future* successes/failures of allotmenters' growing experiences.

The emergent visual qualities of nature such as the brown flecks, rust-coloured pustules and white fungi, are not limited to diseases, as Jean pointed out in the previous instance with regards to the visual cues that demonstrate when healthy onions are ‘ready’ to be harvested. Perceptible differences that emerge over time can also represent cues which signal the practitioner’s *next move* in the practice of cultivating and nurturing their own fruits and vegetables:

As we walked along the path running along the centre of Jean’s allotment, I noticed her asparagus appeared to have become overgrown with green foliage extending beyond the wooden frame surrounding the raised bed that her asparagus was growing in (see image 5.1 below). As we passed her asparagus, she explained, ‘now the asparagus has produced this extra green foliage, it can absorb energy and [using her hands to demonstrate the flow of energy] this will travel back down into the main stem and to the roots. And then this stays there so that it can produce the asparagus again next year. So, when the leaves go brown that’s the time to cut them back’.

(Field notes, 23rd July, 2016)



Image 5.1: Jean’s asparagus ferns (photograph taken by myself).

As Jean suggests in the extract above, her asparagus ferns are *active* in the sense that they are absorbing energy through their ferns to store within the roots. In this sense, *knowing* that this growth is essential for the crop to grow in the following season is important, to prevent the ferns

being 'cut back' prematurely. According to Jean, the indication that this process of storing energy has finished manifests in the plant itself as it transforms into a 'brown' colour. Resembling previous cases, it could be argued that this colour transformation provides allotmenters with a visual cue, indicating that the plant has consumed enough energy necessary for growth the following season and practitioners can now step in and play their part in this process; by *cutting back the ferns*. This idea also resonates with Helen, who during her interview, mentioned that 'Laura [her daughter], is going down at the weekend to do the asparagus because it is *ready* to cut down now, it's a beautiful colour [...] it's an absolutely wonderful orange autumnal colour' (emphasis in italics). Although, for Helen, the connection between the visual cue; change in colour and what this suggests is implicit. Nevertheless, these instances suggest that traces of co-dependency and what I will call 'co-instruction' can be found between allotmenters and nature, through which allotmenters can observe and respond to the cues that nature provides and in turn, enable nature to continue along its natural cycle and reproduce the following season.

Within each of the cases above, we can begin to see how practitioners' embodied and sensory experiences of cultivating and nurturing their crops and their familiarity with what can otherwise be perceived as the 'backstage activities of agricultural production', naturally gravitates them towards forming more intimate connections with nature (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007b, p.141). The following section helps to develop our understanding of this mutual relationship between allotmenters and nature by building on the arguments made within this section and showing how this idea of distributed competence extends beyond allotmenters and nature to incorporate other forms of materiality.

5.4 Forming Assemblages for Nurturing Nature

In line with these experiences through which traces of co-dependency and co-instruction can be found between practitioners (and their ability to employ certain perceptual skills) and nature, this mutual relationship between practitioners and nature broadens somewhat to embrace other material resources that practitioners draw upon to help foster the growth of their crops, as the following field notes illustrate:

[With Jean, in one of her two greenhouses] Jean drew my attention towards her peach plant which has started to flower. There was a half-bent paintbrush pressed down into the soil in the plant pot with the bristles facing upwards. She took hold of the paintbrush and showed me how she ‘hand pollinates’ her peach plant; using her paintbrush, she gently collected some of the yellow pollen from one flower on the bristles of her paintbrush and transferred it to other flowers, by brushing the flowers’ stigma. Whilst doing so, she explained to me that the stigma is the female reproductive part, which emerges from the centre of the flower and this is the part that eventually produces the fruit. She explained to me that ‘bees are not able to carry out their job in this process naturally because the tree is in the greenhouse, owing to the cold weather [and the greenhouse door is shut at all times] and there aren’t too many bees around at this time of the year anyway so...’ she went on to state that she essentially ‘has to do nature’s work’.

(Field notes, 27th February, 2016)

Paula described how she intends to plant some butternut squash in a couple of her raised beds and she went on to say ‘because they are on vines, they can wrap themselves around the bamboo canes I’ve bought’, so that she can save some space in her raised beds for cultivating other vegetables. She went on to say, ‘though, because the fruit can get quite heavy, you need to support it, so I save the plastic netting that oranges [bought from supermarkets] come in and tie the fruit in the netting to the bamboo canes so that they don’t get too heavy, tear the vines and kill the plant...They still have enough room to grow in the netting’.

(Field notes, 28th May, 2016)

Consistent with previous instances, these two extracts taken from my field notes demonstrate how my participant’s knowledge and understanding enables them to forge close connections to

nature. Within the first of the two extracts above, Jean describes how (in this particular instance), for the pollination process to begin; otherwise a naturally occurring phenomenon, it *requires* her to *mediate* nature's processes. This encourages us to think about how nature, perhaps dictates what can and cannot be grown at certain times of the year, under certain weather conditions, and how practitioners attempt to challenge nature's *system*.

The means by which Jean mediates nature's processes, goes beyond her capacity as an individual, to include the capabilities of the paintbrush. As such, the process of hand-pollination can be understood as a synthesis of different forms of competence and materials, in the process of doing allotmenting. That is to say, Jean's scientific knowledge around pollination, her understanding around the more or less active seasons for bees, her practical understanding of how to hand pollinate using a paintbrush together with the paintbrush itself, demonstrate elements of co-dependency between the various elements. Drawing from Watson and Shove's (2008) research, I would suggest that in this instance forms of competence are actively 'embedded within and distributed between' materials and allotmenters, in this process. In Watson and Shove's (2008) research, the authors consider how, in the context of DIY, forms of competence which are necessary to successfully accomplishing particular projects and tasks are distributed between both human and non-human entities. In one instance, the authors consider how amateur decorators can 'choose fast-drying non-drip water-based paints that 'know' how to go on to a door' (Watson and Shove, 2008, p.78). In this light, it could be argued that *some* forms of competence are distributed between Jean and the capacity of the paintbrush, which 'knows' how to collect the pollen and transfer it to other flowers.

In line with Jean's experience, the second extract shown above illustrates how Paula also feels as though her involvement in nature's processes is essential. Whilst not necessarily emblematic of what has been described as 'distributed' competence as shown in the previous instance (i.e. competence that is distributed between practitioner and various resources *in the process* of doing), this instance illustrates how, through the process of creating the assemblage to support her butternut squash, Paula has embedded the assemblage with the capability to support her butternut squash herself, a capability which was not apparent in either the bamboo canes or the plastic netting alone. That is to say, it is the process of amalgamating the bamboo canes and the plastic netting that produce the capabilities. Having created this assemblage, Paula then relies upon the *new* capabilities of her assemblage to support her butternut squash as it grows, which she feels are essential to the successful accomplishment of the practice.

Moreover, it is worth noting how, in the second instance above, the process of nurturing nature depicts an inherently creative process, through Paula's practical efforts and ingenuity to create her own arrangement and support for her butternut squash plants. In this light, traces of co-dependency can be found between the practitioners' horticultural knowledge, creative improvisation and the materials, which acquire new meaning, importance (Parsons, 2008) and capabilities, in this context. As Parsons (2008) indicates within her work, transforming objects, such as the plastic netting, by creating new uses for them (for instance), may 're-enliven' them and inscribe objects with (new) value. In order to prevent the fruits from becoming 'too heavy' for the vines and eventually destroying the plant, as Paula envisages might happen, cultivating the fruit successfully depends upon *this* understanding, skill and both the plastic netting and the bamboo canes.

The understanding that practitioners embed competences within material relations (amalgamations of different material resources) that they have combined themselves builds upon Watson and Shove's (2008) idea of 'distributed competence'. As I have stated previously, within their work, the authors draw upon research in the field of science and technology to demonstrate how competence is distributed between both human and non-human entities *in the performance of a practice*. Indeed, whilst they do appreciate that competence is embedded within material resources, there is no indication to suggest that practitioners are capable of embedding competences into material relations themselves. The idea that allotmenters can embed material relations with competences is also evident within the following instance

Within this instance, Adrian, who is a relatively devoted practitioner describes the significance of building a fruit cage, as a mechanism to shield his blueberries from unwanted natural predators which he anticipates:

When I first stumbled upon Adrian at his allotment, I was stood along one of the main pathways, and I noticed two men (I later learned this was Adrian and his son), holding what appeared to be a wooden frame/ structure for something. Adrian was using a power tool to finish constructing the frame...Once I managed to catch their attention and they had invited me onto their allotment (after I introduced myself), I learned that the wooden frame they were constructing was a fruit cage for their blueberry bushes. Adrian had mentioned that he expects to get 'around 200 pounds' worth of blueberries from his bushes easily'. [...] Later on, he explained to me that he *needs* to build a fruit cage to put over his blueberry bushes because otherwise, 'the birds would go mad for them! So, there you go again, it's a battle with the birds as well as the moles and the slugs and the insects. And strawberries, when they turn red- [they hadn't at this point] which is why they aren't covered up *yet*, they will take them'.

(Field notes, 17th June, 2016)

In harmony with the previous extract, the extract shown above demonstrates how Adrian actively imbues material relations with the capabilities (that were not in the *individual* materials

themselves previously) to protect the fruit within the cage in his absence, in the process of crafting a blueberry fruit cage. Like Paula, who relies upon her assemblage to support her butternut squash during its growth, in this instance, Adrian relies upon his fruit cage to protect his fruit, when he is not able to do so.

Besides anticipating and responding to nature, he also demonstrates how, certain perceivable changes in strawberries; changing colour from green to red, signal to the wildlife, as well as to practitioners when certain crops are *ready* for harvesting. Consequently, he is able to detect when his strawberries are likely to be a target for wildlife and thus know 'when' the appropriate time is to cover/protect them. In one sense, his blueberry frame is employed to *mediate* nature; birds and their natural instincts. From that perspective, this instance provides evidence of how the practice of allotmenting interacts and *competes* with other forms of nature, namely wildlife, for their produce (Schatzki, 2010). This idea of competing with other forms of nature is explored further in the next chapter; domesticating nature.³⁷

The analysis in this section demonstrates how the mutual relationship found between nature (and nature's visual cues) and allotmenters is extended to embrace other material resources. To a certain extent, it could be argued that the latter two instances presented here demonstrate how, the practitioner *embeds* competency into the materials through crafting an assemblage; Paula's support for the butternut squash (made from bamboo canes and plastic netting) and Adrian's hand-made fruit cage. The following section explores this idea of distributed

³⁷ We can also see how Adrian has taken the initiative to design and craft his own fruit cage, employing his practical DIY abilities, grounded in practices of DIY and craft consumption (Campbell, 2005). The relation between craft consumption and allotmenting will be explored further in chapter 7; Crafting the Meaning(s) of Allotmenting.

competence further, albeit focusing more intently on allotmenters' use of material resources that already embed competences.

5.5 Using Commercial Resources to Nurture Nature

In addition to crafting or improvising with their own materials, my participants use a variety of commercial materials and tools including propagators, greenhouses, polytunnels and various types of nettings (fine insect, butterfly or bird netting, for instance) designed specifically for allotmenters and gardeners to draw competence from, as a means to facilitate their experiences of nurturing nature.

...Well I don't have much success, erm, so we have got some cabbages going. I keep trying but they just get eaten [by insects] and like, broccoli, purple-sprouting broccoli is delicious and we have got a full cage now. It needs to be netted though, first of all, [to prevent] the cabbage white butterfly that lays the eggs on them and then once the eggs hatch, they eat the plant. And secondly, once they [the purple-sprouting broccoli] have flowered and they are ready for us to eat, the pigeons also love them so you have got to keep them netted to keep the pigeons off [Helen starts laughing] ... so it is hard work and sometimes, actually, it is quite demoralizing with the slugs and everything and you try to do it, *organically*, you know, we put beer traps down...

(Interview, Helen)

Within the extract above, Helen demonstrates how she uses netting, which already incorporates the capabilities to help protect vegetables, to shield her purple-sprouting broccoli from other forces of nature; cabbage white butterfly and pigeons. Nevertheless, it still requires Helen to anticipate unwanted predators and to take measures to prevent any eventualities (that could damage the crop, for instance) from occurring. Indeed, whilst using these material resources help to protect their fruits and vegetables from unwanted garden pests, insects, wildlife and

potential damage, such material resources can sometimes play an active role in practitioners' *failed* attempts to nurture their produce, as the following extract demonstrates;

[Staring at one of Keith's raised beds, in front of us, which appeared to be clear, besides a couple of carrots and weeds that were sprouting]. 'This was full of carrots and they were doing well, their leaves were higher than those there [pointing to the only carrots left] the problem is, I covered them with the cloche because you need to but because they are covered, you tend to forget about them, to some extent and I guess I've neglected them quite a bit; I haven't tended to them as I should've...

[later on, during my visit] As we passed Keith's plum tree towards the back of his allotment, I pointed out that the last time I was here [on his plot], his plum tree had two semi-arched mesh panels (made from chicken wire, with a polythene film, which is often used to make cloches, wrapped around the mesh panels) wrapped around it, which he used to protect the tree from frosts, as he had previously told me. 'Yes!' he responded. He appeared to be eager to tell me what had happened since. He went on to say, 'I did cover the tree to protect it from any late frost but in doing so, I also prevented the bees from pollinating as many flowers that should have been pollinated...there were at least three times as many flowers on the tree as there are plums now.

(Field notes, 7th August, 2016)

Here, Keith reveals how following usual procedures associated with nurturing nature inscribed within the practice can lead to unintentional consequences. Despite his intentions to protect his carrots, by simply covering them with a cloche and consequently keeping them hidden, he neglected them. This instance seems to resonate with Evans' (2012a) research exploring the disposal of surplus food, insofar that material resources, designed to assist practitioners, have the potential to work against what they are designed for. Within his work, Evans (2012a, p.1132) considered how fridges, freezers, Tupperware and aluminium foil, which are 'typically designed to preserve food...very often operate as coffins of decay that play an active part in carrying discarded food towards the waste stream'.

In another instance (demonstrated in the extract above), Keith had previously constructed two semi-arched panels, which he assembled together around his plum tree as a means to cushion the tree and protect it from harsh weather conditions that could prevent fruit formation. However, as Keith points out, the *material resource* that he employed to nurture and protect nature, was counterproductive in the sense that it prevented a considerable amount of fruit from yielding. Up until this point, I have shown how the practice of allotmenting is composed of different collaborative networks comprising allotmenters, nature and other forms of materiality. Aside from this, I have also begun to show how some forms of materiality (i.e. commercial resources) hinder the process of nurturing nature.

The following section explores how allotmenters employ natural resources as a means to help them succeed in the practice. More specifically, it demonstrates how, allotmenters activate the competences that are already embedded in different forms of nature so that they can benefit from them.

5.6 Harnessing Nature's Natural Competences

In addition to the commercialized/ man-made material resources that practitioners make use of, they also draw upon the resources offered by nature in diverse ways, which provide them with another opportunity to connect with nature and the earth's natural processes.

5.6.1 Wildlife and Insect Pollinators

Many allotmenters have created 'wildlife area[s]' (Jean, conversation) on their allotment, or otherwise planted flowers, plants and crafted ponds with the intention of, both attracting

'beneficial insects' to and reducing the number of 'bad' insects on their allotment, as the following extract demonstrates;

As we (Marie, Alan and I) were walking around their allotment, Marie mentioned how she 'loves to grow flowers' in and amongst the vegetables before Alan pointed out how 'these are good because they attract the wildlife which eat other bugs and pests that would otherwise eat our vegetables...so it works hand in hand'.

(Field notes, 19th May, 2016)

Prompted by a photograph that Adrian had taken (see image 5.2 below), he explained why he included this *additional* photograph amongst those he had specifically taken for the purpose of this research.

I gave you one of the pond, not just because it was a nice picture but, it's so- if you have got the space on a plot, you are not just er- giving somewhere for the amphibians, the frogs to live, you are also generating beneficial insects in a wildlife pond. If you read about wildlife ponds, they bring so much to a garden that people don't realise, so erm, hover flies love ponds, hoverflies are one of your friends, that's what you want because they eat greenfly and other bad creatures and you-, anyway that is what it is there for [he starts to laugh], beneficial insects and the frogs!

(Interview, Adrian)

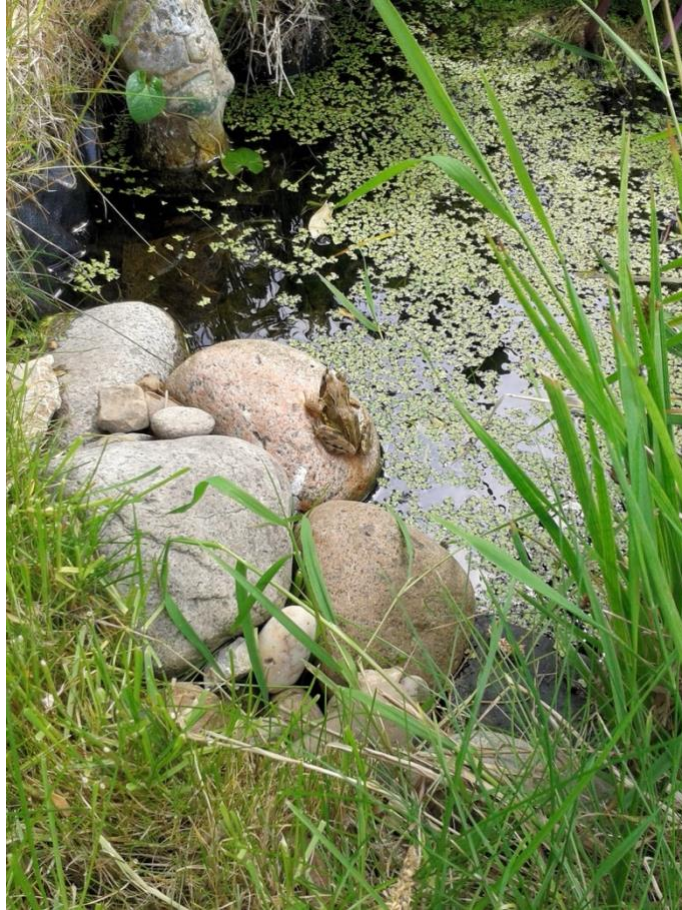


Image 5.2: Adrian's pond on his allotment (photograph taken by Adrian).

As Adrian, Marie and Alan and Nigel demonstrate within the extracts above, by creating ponds, to attract more 'beneficial insects', which are considered to reduce the number of pests, pest damage and pollinate their crops on their allotment, allotmenters are, in turn creating a valuable eco-system which nurture wildlife, including 'hoverflies' and 'frogs'. In this sense, there is a sense of reciprocity between allotmenters and nature, which is born out of their efforts to create a pond, plant beneficial flowers and acquire a bee hive. Furthermore, this sense of reciprocity between allotmenters and bees appears to be more intense; as to varying extents, crops *depend* upon bees (amongst other insect pollinators) for pollination and thus play an essential role in food production (The British Beekeepers Association, 2017). In turn, bees, which are in national decline, can be supported, in part by a variety of diverse plants and flowers, which are critical to them (The Royal Horticultural Society, 2017).

5.6.2 Crafting Natural Recipes

Consistent with the previous section, this section explores how allotmenters harness nature's natural resources. Specifically, it draws attention to how allotmenters produce natural concoctions, some of which, are at once enchanting, owing to their capacity to 'feed everything' and revolting, owing to the 'awful' and 'horrific' stench:

[Whilst stood with Nigel and Lorenzo on Lorenzo's allotment] 'Have you ever heard of comfrey?' Lorenzo asked, before he demonstrated how he uses it on his allotment to create a liquid feed for his plants; 'well, you would have a water butt and you would take some leaves from your comfrey plant'. He briefly pointed out that it did not matter about the amount of comfrey used because the plants 'grow back quickly'. He proceeded to say, 'you would cut up the leaves into small pieces and put them at the bottom of the water butt before adding a small amount of water, and then there you have it! The stench will be *awful*, it will be *horrific* and it comes out like black tar, but you can use this with water to feed everything, everything!' Lorenzo ushered us over to have a look at his comfrey feed that is currently brewing in his water butt. He fetched half a bamboo stick out of his greenhouse and used it to stir the brown/black comfrey liquid in his water butt, before using his hand to gently waft the odour of his comfrey feed into the air and breathing it in in a comical way; giving the impression he was savouring the smell of a broth he had made.

(Field notes, 27th August, 2016, Lorenzo's emphasis in *italics*)

Allotmenters creatively draw upon nature's natural competences by actively combining different forms of nature; compost worms interacting with compostable material in a wormery, comfrey, nettles and seaweed and/or water and transforming them into either a 'worm wee' liquid feed, a comfrey feed, which resembles 'black tar', or a comfrey, nettle and seaweed 'feed'. As demonstrated within the extract above, these 'natural ingredients' which combine to form liquid feeds embody natural, valuable qualities that can be used to 'feed...everything!'. Whilst these 'natural ingredients' embody such valuable qualities, they *only* become valuable to allotmenters and their produce once they have been transformed in such a way so that their

valuable qualities can be procured. Furthermore, as Stanley demonstrates in the first extract above, for allotmenters to take advantage of these valuable, rich sources of nutrients, owing to the potentially detrimental effects of the various feeds, *knowing how* to use them; by diluting them first is essential. The following section takes some of the themes explored in this section forward to explore other ways in which allotmenters draw upon nature's natural resources to nurture their produce; like the liquid feeds/recipes discussed in this section, the next section draw attention to allotmenters' own compost, which is created in the process of composting a blend of natural ingredients.

5.6.3 Compost Heap

Compost heaps have long been recognised as a predominant feature of the allotment landscape which epitomise a tradition that has been practised for decades (Acton, 2011; Crouch and Ward, 1997). For my participants, the compost heap embodies a sense of wonderment, emanating from its ability to regenerate and transform natural *waste* such as fruit and vegetable peelings, dirt, paper and foliage into 'black gold' (Helen, conversation):

(Discussion prompted by the photo he took of his carrier bag of compostable material – see image 5.3 below)

Adrian: It's all peelings and waste and you know and that just gets thrown onto the compost heap

Sophia: Yeah, next time he goes down, he will just take it down with him and throw it on the compost heap

Adrian: There's two out there, two of those [laughs] [Closes the back door after putting the bag back outside]. What I try to do though-, any peelings, any vegetable waste that hasn't been cooked goes back down there, so you are returning it to the soil, it's brilliant, I love it

Sophia: Yeah

Adrian: You know, I like the idea of it, nothing is wasted

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)



Image 5.3: Adrian's bag of his compostable material at home (photograph taken by Adrian).

As the extract above demonstrates, a 'beautifully rich texture' is transformed from combining various natural resources; 'any peelings' or 'vegetable waste that hasn't been cooked' that would otherwise find its way into the waste stream. In this light, 'home-made' compost could be conceded as material phenomena that *extend* the value of 'peelings' and 'vegetable waste' (for instance). As Evans (2012a, p.1133) maintains within his work exploring consumers waste disposal practices, 'home composting represents a[n]...opportunity for households to recover use and value from the food that they have deemed unfit for human...consumption'. Taking Evans' (2012a) understanding of home composting into account, in the context of allotmenting, composting not only creates the opportunity for practitioners to 'recover use and value' by transforming it into compost, it enables them to give something *back* to nature. Within the extract above, Adrian shows how transforming their (natural) food *waste* into their own compost; a rich source of invaluable nutrients, enables them to replenish the soils, which in turn, nurtures their crops. As such, for Adrian, alongside many other allotmenters, soil emerges

as a source of nourishment and growth. Reflecting the previous discussion concerning liquid feeds, allotmenters are only able to harness nature's (with regards to compostable material) natural competences; its ability to nourish the soils, once the compostable has undergone the physical transformative process of turning into compost. Consistent with the previous instances referred to, (i.e. regarding liquid feeds), harnessing nature's natural competences in this instance relies, first and foremost, on allotmenters' ability to 'activate' this process by combining the necessary 'ingredients' and creating the relative conditions that composting requires. The following section explores the relationship between allotmenting and composting in more detail, drawing attention to new connections that transpire from this relationship.

5.6.3.1 Integrating Home-Composting Practices with the Practice of

Allotmenting

For many allotmenters, this process of gathering various natural resources (including vegetable peelings), for composting has become ingrained in the process of 'doing' allotmenting and thus, naturally extends into allotmenters waste disposal practices in their homes, as the extract below suggests;

'Laura (her daughter) has these as well [referring to the small kitchen bins outside, see image 5.4 and 5.5 below] and she also has a wood burner, so she takes the ash down as well from there and that is really useful. The brassicas like that [the ashes] and the strawberries so all of that goes onto the compost [Image 5.6 below] ...and I've got bins and so we take those down. It is all of our peelings from home and next door. Next door gives me hers as well so, I've got one and a half buckets full ready to take down.

(Interview, Helen)



Image 5.4: Helen’s compostable material at home (On the left) (photograph taken by Helen).

Image 5.5: Helen’s compostable material at home (On the right) (photograph taken by Helen).



Image 5.6: Helen’s compost heap at her allotment (photograph taken by Helen).

Like Helen, many participants talked about using some form of a caddy; a plastic carrier or a container, stored either in the kitchen itself or outside of the house, to collect kitchen waste together with other forms of compostable material, before transporting it to their compost heap on their allotments.

Reflecting upon Evans' (2012a, p.1132) work exploring consumers' waste disposal practices again here, managing food waste and other compostable material through the use of caddies and those alike, in an effort to replenish their soils, could be characterised as an 'intervention in their domestic food waste practices'. In relation to the food recycling bins and caddies distributed by local authorities in the UK, Evans (2012a) claims that such bins depict material infrastructures, which are intended to capture kitchen waste and prevent it from reaching the landfill. From another, (although compatible) perspective, this material infrastructure depicts an *extension* of the practice of allotmenting, from the allotment into practitioner's homes, which has subsequently become embedded in their routine everyday food consumption and waste disposal practices. As evidenced within the extract above, in Helen's case, this material infrastructure has also extended beyond her home, to include her neighbour's food consumption and waste disposal practices. In a similar manner, Keith's experiences of composting illustrated in the extract below demonstrates how other new infrastructures can form in light of participants' composting practice:

He dedicated an entire raised bed to making his own compost (see image 5.7), in addition to the numerous compost heaps/bins that he has at the back of his plot (See images 5.8 and 5.9). He explained to me that he and his wife, Janet have 'an arrangement' with the local florist whereby, the florist provides them with her green waste so that they can re-use the material on their compost heap which in turn saves her the cost of having her green waste collected. He explained to me how 'everything [green waste from the florist alongside their own food waste] goes into this [wooden container made from pallets with no

base], until I have time to get out my [petrol] strimmer and break the material down so that it can compost more easily.

(Field notes, 4th May, 2016)



Image 5.7: Keith's and Janet's compost heap, positioned within one of his raised beds on his allotment (photograph taken by Keith).



Image 5.8: Keith and Janet's compost heaps (photograph taken by Keith).



Image 5.9: Keith and Janet's compost bins (photograph taken by Keith).

Later on, during my fieldwork, Keith explained to me how this arrangement with the florist had broken down; his neighbour who worked in close proximity to the florist and used to collect the florist's green waste for him, has since left her job and become employed elsewhere. Nevertheless, he also mentioned that he has established a new arrangement with another local florist, to collect their green waste (imbued with nature's natural competences), for use on their allotment. It is important to recognise here, that the collapse of his *original* arrangement with a local florist, prompted him to pursue *other* local florists. This, in turn, demonstrates the importance of this arrangement, which provides Keith with a source of green waste (one of the key ingredients for composting) in the process of 'doing' allotmenting. In doing so, this reinforces the relationship between composting and allotmenting and demonstrates how disruptions to routine performances do not always prompt consumers to considerably change the way in which they 'do' things. As exemplified within each of these instances above (including those in the previous section), the process of composting; transforming natural materials into *valuable* resources, forms a significant part of allotmenting for these participants. Indeed, the

compost heap embedded in the 'material arrangement' (Schatzki, 2001) of the allotment itself, is often considered to be *part of the furniture* (Crouch and Ward, 1997).

Be that as it may, this is not to say that allotmenters' engagement in composting practices emanate solely from their engagement in the practice of allotmenting; a small number of participants informed me that they had previously composted their kitchen waste at home prior to getting an allotment; 'I used to have a bin at home anyway, a proper composting bin, which is now down here [at her allotment], and I used to put stuff in that...' (interview, Arianna).

Whilst composting can be recognised as a normative expectation prescribed in the physical landscape of the allotment and the process of 'doing' allotmenting, not all of my participants readily composted their vegetable peelings and other kitchen waste;

Kirsty: I had one in the back, things just weren't-, they weren't composting down so then after four years [chuckles] we got it out and still, still stuff hadn't- [composted down] [...] Well I put kitchen waste in, I put plain egg boxes in and they didn't, they didn't-

Tim: They didn't rot

Kirsty: Rot. You know, it's like four years later and...there were still parts of an egg box; a cardboard egg box and you think, well that should have rotted by now. We got rid of it in the end, we got rid of the bin, didn't we?

(Interview, Tim and his sister Kirsty)

Unlike previous instances, Tim (who owns an allotment) and Kirsty (Tim's sister, who grows a proportion of her own fruits and vegetables at home) describe the difficulties that they experienced whilst trying to compost. During the interview, Kirsty explained that she felt as though the bin didn't get 'enough sun' needed to get the composting process started. Reflecting upon Nigel's experiences earlier (concerning the 'right temperature' of the soil which enables

the seeds to germinate) Kirsty suggests that in order for nature to comply; for the compostable material to compost, the *right* conditions need to be in place. Consequently, whilst Kirsty was willing to compost her compostable material at home initially and the material infrastructure for composting was essentially *in place*, she was unable to compost her kitchen waste. This draws attention towards the dynamics of a practice and the integration and relationship between the elements that come together in the performance of a practice (Shove et al., 2012). Adding to this, it suggests that having such amenities in place does not necessarily indicate that composting practices are naturalised into *all* practitioners' food consumption and waste disposal routines and practices *smoothly*, if at all, as the following extract also suggests:

Eric mentioned to both Hazel and myself that he tends not to bring his fruit and vegetable peelings down to the allotment, simply on the grounds that he 'would have to bring them down here'. In response, Hazel avowed 'well I do, I collect them all in a bag and just empty the bag into the compost bin'. Seemingly agitated, Hazel exclaimed that she doesn't own a car or drive and so she often brings her compostable material to the allotment on the bus before comparing her slightly awkward situation to potentially Eric's, who does own a car and could 'easily bring his compostable material down in a container' in his car. There was a brief silence before Eric smiled and maintained that he doesn't need to bring his compostable material to the allotment because 'there is horse manure' [*the allotment has an arrangement with a local farm, which provides the allotment with heaps of manure within a given period*].

(Field notes, 22nd May, 2016)

For Eric, transporting his kitchen waste from home to his allotment appears to be somewhat of an inconvenience for him, in contrast to Hazel's and other allotmenters' experiences discussed above. Within this extract, Hazel demonstrates how she often uses public transport to take her compostable material to the allotment, which could be perceived as being inconvenient in comparison to the effort of transporting compostable materials to the allotment from one's home via car. On a subtler note, it could be argued that Hazel was drawing attention to the possibilities of her facing public scrutiny from others whilst carrying her compostable waste on

public transport. Nonetheless, Hazel's efforts to *stigmatize* Eric for *not composting* and perhaps convey normative messages about what should be done. Furthermore, it also draws attention to the ways in which other arrangements (horse manure delivered to the allotment site from a local farm) can disrupt more conventional ways of 'doing' allotmenting and overlooks the value (including the environmentally sustainable benefits) of transforming their compostable material.

Contrary to the ways in which we have explored 'competence' in this chapter so far, the following section explores the different forms of competence that come together in the process of growing fruits and vegetables for horticultural competitions; another, more formal *version* of the practice of allotmenting. More specifically, we can appreciate how different forms of competence are not merely part and parcel of the practice of allotmenting, since, in this more formal version of the practice, success in horticultural competitions requires allotmenters to learn techniques and skills that go beyond those required to grow fruits and vegetables for their own consumption.

5.7 Perfecting Nature

As Shove and Pantzar (2007) illustrate within their research exploring the parallel processes of recruitment and reproduction within digital photography and floorball, there are different forms of practices that coexist alongside each other; more or less 'messy', 'serious', 'structured' and 'organised'. Within their analysis exploring the establishment and development of competitions in floorball, the authors demonstrate how practitioners are required to draw upon a range of different techniques guided by specific rules and procedures (Shove and Pantzar, 2007). Like digital photography and floorball, allotmenting also appears to transpire in different forms.

Whilst most participants pursue the practice of allotmenting for leisure purposes, (primarily), there is a different, perhaps more formal '*version*'³⁸ (Shove and Pantzar, 2007) of allotmenting, which requires more skilled practitioners. In the context of this more formal '*version*' (Shove and Pantzar, 2007) of allotmenting; growing fruits and vegetables for horticultural shows, which makes way for more serious forms of practice, such techniques are orientated towards growing and exhibiting fruits and vegetables that meet specific criteria focused on the aesthetic qualities; the size, form and the clean appearance of fruits and vegetables;

[in show growing] 'it's all about the looks; they want the perfect shapes, not too big and not too small...if they are sweet peas and they look good, they [the judges] might snap them to see whether the peas snap clean and sharp or if they just bend and with beetroot, sometimes they [judges] cut them in half to check the colour inside, because sometimes you can have white lines running through, but they don't taste them'.

(Field notes, 15th February, 2016)

Days or even hours leading up to the event, allotmenters select, prepare and 'polish' their produce ready for the show-bench;

[After I had made an inquiry regarding the criteria by which fruits and vegetable entries are appraised at an allotment flower and vegetable show, one of the judges still present, began to explain some of the criterion for an entry of 'three white potatoes']

'...This particular class is looking for three white potatoes that are both uniform in their shape and unblemished...it could take you 5-6 potato plants [that you would need to harvest] before you come across 3 potatoes that closely resemble one another...and then the entrants will take them home and give them a wash with some soap [so they can] clean up the surface and remove any rough texture on the potato' before polishing them...He proceeded to say, 'it's not about the taste of the vegetables that matters here, taste doesn't come into it, it's about appearance and presentation'...We moved along to the onions and he went on to say how, in certain [professional] shows, the prize money that is

³⁸ Although, this is not to say that there are not any other versions of allotmenting besides the versions explored; allotmenting as both a leisure pursuit and practice performed on a more professional level.

on offer can be extortionate', but nevertheless, he added, '[professional] growers will have the expense of selecting specific seeds for growing such onions, often from prize winners if not their own [seeds that they have produced themselves] and they will have heated propagators and lights to help grow them in the conditions that they need'.

(Field notes, Flower and Vegetable show, Liverpool, 3rd September, 2016)

The need to present cleansed, 'uniform' fruits and vegetables on the 'show bench', as demonstrated within both extracts above, bears some similarities to the cosmetic standards that commercialized fruits and vegetables are required to meet, if they are to be displayed in supermarkets (Morley, 2017). Nevertheless, these standards do appear to be changing (gradually) as major supermarkets have recently launched 'imperfect', 'wonky' fruit and vegetables lines (Butler, 2016; Morley, 2017).

As the extract above indicates, there are a number of procedures that practitioners follow, before showcasing their entries in an exhibition. In relation to this particular entry discussed above, allotmenters are required to identify three 'uniform' potatoes, in terms of their size, form and unblemished appearance, amongst their potato crop. Their 'show' potatoes then undergo a cleansing ritual, which enables them to remove any unwanted natural characteristics; any dirt and rough textures from the surface of their potatoes, before polishing them.

It is important to acknowledge the shift in an allotmenteer's end-purpose³⁹ (Schatzki, 2012) attributed to growing fruits and vegetables for horticultural shows compared to growing fruits/vegetables for leisure; from an end-purpose linked to consumption, to one linked to a sense of accomplishment achieved through one's place in the competition and through

³⁹ As briefly discussed in chapter 3, section 3.3, a person's end-purpose, or 'end' as Schatzki (2012, p.15) defines it, refers to 'that for the sake of which she acts'.

displaying their proficiency to fellow allotmenters and competitors.⁴⁰ In turn, an allotmenteer's end-purpose influences the ways in which the practitioner performs, including, what techniques and resources they draw upon, as the following extracts with Eric (who grows fruits and vegetables for shows) and Linda and Adam (who grow for their own consumption) demonstrate;

As Eric and I started walking towards the main pathway from his allotment, we passed his *show* potatoes that he was growing in bags and I questioned why he had planted his show potatoes (in particular) in bags. He put his hand into the soil of one of the bags and felt the soil in his hands, 'it's peat, for shows you need to have clean, clear potatoes and they (the judges) don't like to see any marks or blemishes on them...you're able to get a nicer cleaner potato by growing them in peat⁴¹'.

(Field notes, 13th May, 2016)

I followed Linda onto her son's plot where she had already dug out the basic trenches for her 'chitted' potatoes. She used a trowel to dig out the trenches further so that it was deep enough for the potatoes. She explained how 'these raised beds (with trenches dug out) have been treated with bone meal and horse manure, to put nutrients into the soil before these trenches were dug up, so they ready for potatoes to go in...

Later on, in the afternoon, Adam stopped by Linda's plot, just before he left the allotment site for the day. The subject of planting Linda's potatoes emerged in conversation, he explained how he plants his potatoes differently; 'I would stand on the soil, to compact it a little and then put about four inches of horse manure down with some hay and then cover the [raised] bed with this fabric I have'. He went on to say how he would then create small holes in the fabric and plant his potatoes inside, 'only slightly into the soil' amongst the horse manure and hay. 'Normally' he went on to say, 'using the method that Linda uses, you *always* end up putting your spade or your gardening folk into a potato [when harvesting them]. This way, I'll just lift the black cover off and move the hay and horse manure out the way and I'll have my potatoes!'

(Field notes, 4th May, 2016)

⁴⁰ Although, this is not necessarily the *only* 'end-purpose' that practitioners growing for horticultural shows seek to attain as Tim (another participant) has also expressed his interest in the social aspects of horticultural events.

⁴¹ As the Ethical Consumer Research Association (2017a) point out, peatlands are the home of many species including some that are rare and the most threatened. Adding to this, peatlands are also crucial in the sense that they are responsible for storing the equivalent of 'three-quarters of all of the carbon in the atmosphere and twice all the carbon stored in the world's forests' (Ethical Consumer Research Association, 2017b).

In addition to this, in preparation for planting his show produce, Eric used chemicals to sterilize his soil as a means to remove any pests or bacteria that could harbour in the soil and, weed killers (herbicides) to eradicate any unwanted weeds that his crops would otherwise have to compete against for the nutrients in the soil. In this sense show growers like Eric, are perhaps more concerned with removing the insects, bacteria growth and weeds that may result in *visible* consequences for his show produce (i.e. growing smaller vegetables, potentially with fungi, root diseases or holes inside) which would affect his chances of winning any horticultural competitions, rather than the *invisible* consequences that such chemicals can have on the soils and nearby wildlife habitats. This point raised here hints towards the unstable relationship between allotmenters and nature, which is explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

In this sense, nature (in terms of fruits and vegetables) is perhaps not considered to be a source of food primarily but rather, a spectacle; demonstrating practitioners' ability to exert *some* influence over nature's processes and their ability to nurture unblemished, uniform fruits/vegetables.

[Stood with Eric, (an allotment holder who has occupied at least one plot for over 55 years) inside his greenhouse on one of his two allotments] This traditional wooden greenhouse was dedicated entirely to Eric's 'show leeks' that he was growing for an exhibition taking place later this year. His show leeks were stood several feet apart from each other and individually wrapped in pieces of '16-inch faux suede', (although the suede didn't physically touch the leeks) which was tied with string to hold them in place. He mentioned that he also has pieces of faux suede that are '21-inches' long, which he uses in place of the 16 inch pieces of faux suede, once the leeks have grown taller.

Years ago, Eric explained, he used to work in a footwear factory making women's shoes, a trade which he left in 1984. He proceeded to inform me that these pieces of faux suede currently wrapped around his leeks is the same material that he 'used to make women's shoes out of'. He pointed out that 'he

has had them ever since and they are still in good condition now'. He went on to say that he uses them to support the leeks and prevent the stalks from turning green; 'if you don't keep them in the dark, they'll turn green and you won't get the white flesh'. He explained to me that 'all of the professional growers follow similar standards' before digressing a little; 'it's good to get into the shows because it causes you to push yourself even further and learn more. They [professional growers] are interested in bacteria at the moment and there is one called mycorrhizal fungi that you can buy. He went on to say that he feels as though he is 'too old now to start learning about the processes that go beyond basic biology', but nevertheless he began to explain to me how this type of fungi works; he described it as a 'good bacteria that helps the root system of the plants which will in turn, improve the growth of the plant'.

(Field notes, 22nd May, 2016)

Within the extract above, Eric reveals how, for him *competing* in horticultural shows coerces him to develop his level of understanding and technical expertise around the cultivation of various fruits and vegetables; as he becomes more involved in growing produce for horticultural competitions, new pathways of understanding and ways of 'doing' fall in his reach (Shove et al., 2012). It appears as though Eric's interest in the process of cultivating nature stems, in part, from his ability to know about and draw upon his old, creative techniques; using his 'faux suede' and explore with new techniques; 'mycorrhizal fungi', which enable him to grow the *desired* vegetables for display and appraisal at exhibitions. As such, his performance is shaped, in part, by developments in the field and 'new techniques' that his fellow competitors bring into play. To some extent, employing mycorrhizal fungi, *a natural resource*, and creatively adapting pieces of his faux suede and using them in ways other than they were originally intended, demonstrate both his level of understanding of the techniques that enable him to cultivate desired fruits/vegetables for exhibition, but also his *reliance* on the capabilities of other resources; of the faux suede to keep his leeks 'in the dark' and the mycorrhizal fungi to help 'improve the growth of the plant'.

Even so, fruit and vegetable entries in horticultural exhibitions represent a means through which practitioners can visually showcase their skill and prowess, their ability to adapt new techniques, to improvise and (*some extent*) manage nature's processes. In this sense, growing fruits and vegetables for exhibition carries a new significance for those participating in the practice, in comparison to the more *informal* version of the practice.

5.8 Nurturing Nature and Sustainability

This chapter shines a light on the intimate connections that allotmenters forge with nature, established around a sense of co-dependency, co-instruction and/ or reciprocity. As my analysis demonstrates, these intimate connections with nature are achieved through allotmenters' practical experience of 'doing' allotmenting; we can see how practitioners come to understand, appreciate, interact with and nurture nature and, how they learn to anticipate, develop an acute awareness of and respond to nature's processes. As my analysis develops, we can also see how competency (that is, allotmenters' ability to grow a bountiful crop), is distributed between a variety of man-made/hand-crafted and natural material resources.

For instance, the analysis presented in *Forming Assemblages for Nurturing Nature* (sub-section 5.4) demonstrates how competence is distributed between allotmenters and the tools they use (i.e. a paintbrush) and also how allotmenters embed competences within assemblages that they craft (e.g. fruit cage) to assist them in the process of nurturing nature in their absence. Equally, sub-section 5.5 shows how allotmenters draw upon commercial resources, which are typically designed to assist them in the process of nurturing nature. For instance, it demonstrates how greenhouses and polytunnels provide allotmenters with the means to cultivate crops in better thermal and atmospheric conditions. Similarly, sub-section 5.6 entitled

Harnessing Nature's Natural Competences, calls attention to the ways in which different forms of nature (e.g. insect pollinators, comfrey, nettles, raw food waste) embody certain valuable qualities and also how, for particular forms of nature; comfrey, nettles and raw food waste (for instance), these valuable qualities embedded within nature only become accessible once allotmenters create the right conditions, to activate such qualities.

Up to this point, we can see how, for this study, an ethnographic methodology, framed by practice theory, provides the means through which we can capture, what allotmenters *actually* do and in turn, explore what the processes of doing allotmenting entail. As this chapter has begun to show, such a focus provides access to the nuances and complexities of environmentally responsible consumption.

By exploring both the process of becoming a competent practitioner and the process of nurturing nature in detail, we can see how the practice of allotmenting contributes (albeit in small ways) to environmental sustainability. For instance, as allotmenters develop an understanding of *how nature works* and how they might be able to influence nature's processes in order to grow a bountiful crop, they begin to form a reciprocal relationship with nature. For allotmenters, this reciprocal relationship is based on the understanding that if they can attract 'beneficial insects' and pollinators to their allotments, they will increase the chances of pollination and in turn, increase the chances of producing a greater yield. Nevertheless, through their efforts to attract 'beneficial insects' for the success of *their* crops, (i.e. by creating ponds, wildlife areas or acquiring a beehive), practitioners are in turn, helping to support and maintain habitats for bees and other forms of wildlife. This is particularly significant, given the decline in honey bees, bumblebees and other pollinators, which are *essential* to food production

(Carrington, 2016a; 2016b). Over the past few years, research has demonstrated how insecticides, specifically neonicotinoids (one of the main insecticides used across the world), which are linked to industrial agriculture, are one of the main reasons (besides climate change and loss of habitat, for instance) for the decline and severe risk posed to bee populations (Greenpeace, 2014; Carrington, 2016a; 2016b; Soil Association, 2017).

Similarly, whilst the idea of composting is inherently connected to broader environmental ideologies concerning 'diverting waste', 'sustainability' and 'looking after the planet' as Crouch and Ward (1997) have suggested previously, the majority of the allotmenters in this study are concerned primarily with the benefits/nutrients that rich nourishing compost (*end product* that materialises from composting), provides for the soil and hence their crops. Yet, whilst composting does not necessarily reflect practitioners' attempts to 'reduce their ecological footprint' *per se*, their ability to divert food waste (and other material resources) from the waste stream, helps to alleviate (to some extent) the significant food waste phenomenon that society currently faces.

As a researcher, the links between the activities of these allotmenters and the broader context of environmental sustainability are discernible. However, the allotmenters in the present study do not appear to relate their experiences of nature to pertinent environmental issues (i.e. connected to existing food production-consumption systems). Rather, the ways in which these allotmenters nurture nature demonstrate the taken-for-granted ways in which they care for their allotment. In other words, these allotmenters care for their *immediate* environment (though nurturing nature), as a means to grow a bountiful crop.

Based on these findings therefore that it appears as though allotmenters engage in environmentally responsible production and consumption patterns *unintentionally* in the process of doing allotmenting. These findings resonate with Moraes et al.'s (2015) research on fine jewellery consumption. Thus, like Moraes et al. (2015), the current study demonstrates how more environmentally responsible consumption patterns can be, and perhaps often are, performed without conscious reflection.

Somewhat connected to this point, we can see how processes of nurturing nature provide allotmenters with the means to establish 'enlivening connections to their material...roots' (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli's, 2007a, p.141). However, unlike previous research exploring alternative market systems (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010; Seyfang, 2007; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007), the allotmenters in this study do not appear to ascribe political significance to their activities. Rather, for these allotmenters, 'caring for the environment' can be interpreted as a personal concern, intimately bound up in the time and effort that they invest into the practice of allotmenting, rather than as a political or ideological concern about the welfare of distant others, the environment (in a more universal sense) and future generations.

Consequently, the analysis presented in this chapter contributes to the literature, in the sense that it shows how allotmenters, who do not necessarily see themselves as 'environmentally responsible consumers', engage environmentally responsible consumption patterns for their own self-interested needs, which derive from their engagement in the practice of allotmenting. By doing so, it demonstrates how, by merely focusing on consumers who are labelled 'environmentally responsible', previous research has failed to consider the ways in

which environmentally responsible consumption patterns might transpire through other means, *beyond* this narrowly defined group of consumers.

This analysis has also shown how the practice of composting forms a bridge between the practice of allotmenting and different waste disposal practices that take place beyond the allotment; at allotmenters' homes, their neighbours' homes and also local businesses (e.g. local florists). As such, it highlights the value of taking a 'multi-sited' ethnographic approach (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995), which appreciates that the field is not necessarily geographically-bound to one place. Beyond this, it also demonstrates how the very process of composting on an allotment has the potential to intervene in other peoples' waste-disposal practices and how it encourages them to engage in more environmentally responsible consumption patterns, since they give allotmenters their green and other compostable waste that might have otherwise found its way into the waste stream. Although, it is important to note here, that these environmentally responsible consumption patterns transpire through the connections between the practice of allotmenting and the people who work to create and maintain the connections. Consequently, if these connections were lost, as they were in Keith's case (see sub-section 5.6.3.1), allotmenters' neighbours, local florists may revert back to previously held routines and these environmentally responsible consumption patterns may cease to exist.

Whilst my analysis has also shown how the practice of allotmenting can make positive (albeit small) contributions to the environment; through allotmenters' concerted efforts to *work with nature*, it also considers how the practice can lead allotmenters to engage in environmentally damaging consumption patterns, with consequences for the wildlife and the soils in their *immediate* environment. The previous sub-section of this chapter; *Perfecting Nature*, considers

how allotmenters concerned with growing fruits/vegetables for horticultural competitions climb up the career ladder of allotmenting by drawing upon established 'ways of doing' allotmenting and exploring new approaches and techniques; some *more* or *less* sustainable than others, as a means to achieve 'perfect' fruits/vegetables, free from any 'marks' or 'blemishes'.

Thus, it could be argued that the practice of allotmenting embraces more *and* less environmentally responsible ways of doing, which could be further exacerbated by the end-purposes of individual practitioners (i.e. those growing for horticultural competitions). This view resonates with previous research following a practice-theoretical perspective, which illustrates how more resource intensive and thus less environmentally responsible ways of consuming (e.g. consuming water or electricity) are tied to everyday routine household consumption practices and conventions around comfort, cleanliness and convenience (Shove, 2003). This emphasis on less environmentally responsible consumption patterns is explored further in the following chapter, where we can continue to look into the nuances and complexities of environmentally responsible consumption that we have begun to unpick here.

Chapter 6. Domesticating Nature

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter; *Nurturing Nature* illustrates how allotmenters learn to become competent practitioners, (in part) through the close intimate relationships that they form with nature. In particular, it demonstrates some of the ways through which allotmenters try to protect or shield nature (i.e. their produce) considered to be vulnerable and susceptible to *other* forces of nature (harsh weather conditions or predators, for instance), placing emphasis on *forms of competence*. In doing so, the previous chapter was able to explore the idea of 'distributed competence' in detail and convey some of the ways in which practitioners embed competences within assemblages that they create, use commercial resources with competences already embedded within them and show how allotmenters activate the competences already embedded within nature (natural resources).

Drawing upon Schatzki's (2010) concept of materiality again here, (embracing physical, biological and natural entities), the analysis presented in this chapter, placing emphasis on 'materials' (Shove et al., 2012) is particularly sensitive to the continuous flow of nature, whether in the form of growth, spoilage or deterioration/decay and how allotmenters seek to intervene (see the shaded area in figure 6.1 below).

Building on this, it also takes into account how some forms of nature (including allotmenters' produce) have the ability to exert *some* influence in the process of 'doing' allotmenting. Inspired, in part, by Michel Callon's (1986) influential study in the field of science studies; 'Some elements of a sociology of translation; domestication of the scallops and the fisherman of St

Brieuc Bay', the chapter brings the concept of *domestication* into play, which is embedded in the narrative underlying Callon's work. In particular, it draws attention to the idea that a sense of agency is distributed between allotmenters and nature and the idea that '*full* control can never be exerted' (Canniford and Shankar, 2013, p.1059). Thus, whilst chapter 5 focused on the idea of distributed competence and demonstrated the ways in which connections between allotmenters, nature and other forms of materiality worked collaboratively (in the main) in the process of nurturing nature, these ideas presented here allow us to deepen our understanding of the connections between allotmenters, nature and other forms of materiality.

Whilst this chapter focuses predominantly on 'materials' (Shove et al., 2012), the three elements that compose a practice; materials, meaning and forms of competence, cannot be separated and explored independently from one another (as demonstrated in the previous chapter) and thus, both forms of competence and meanings feature in the analysis, albeit to a lesser extent, as demonstrated below.

The chapter focuses predominantly, how allotmenters manage (and to some extent, compete with) different forms of nature, which can intervene in the course of 'doing' allotmenting (particularly if left untouched or handled in any way). In this sense, these process through which allotmenters manage (or otherwise domesticate) different forms of nature, could be characterised as processes which transpire within the process of nurturing nature.

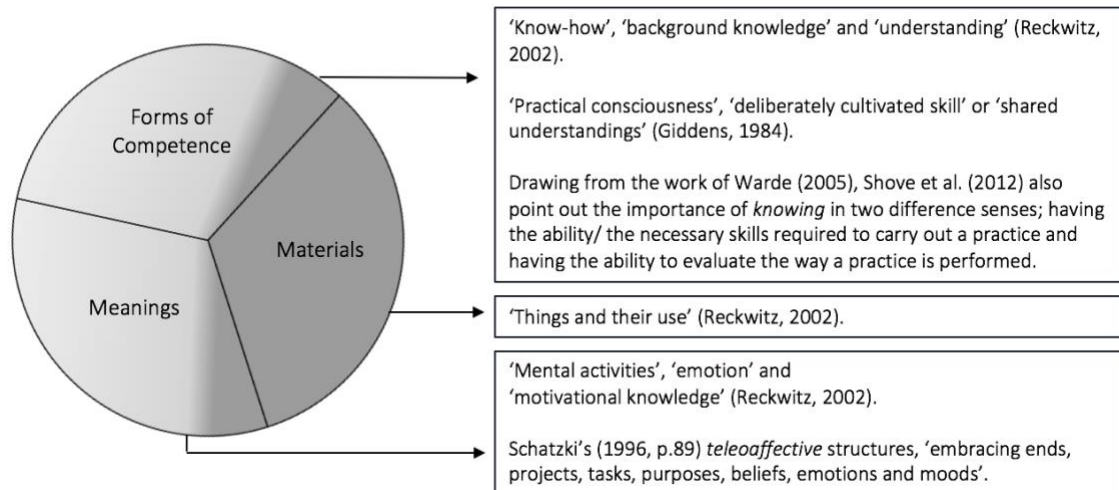


Figure 6.1: My theoretical framework with a focus on 'materials'.

6.2 Taming and Confronting Nature

Focusing on the allotment itself and the thriving conditions that practitioners are encumbered by on their allotment; often overspread with burgeoning weeds and the prevalence of wildlife habitats, for instance, as they embark on the practice of allotmenting, this section explores how a sense of agency is distributed between both practitioners and different forms of nature. Drawing from the work of Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe (2007, p.189) who introduce the idea that objects, 'practices, placings, conduits and connectivities' are always 'acting-back' (albeit in the context of consumers' divestment practices), in the sense that they refuse, go against, or have unintended consequences for consumers, this section considers the ways in which nature is always 'acting-back' in the process of 'doing' allotmenting.

...Once Alan, Marie and myself had sat down together on their allotment, Marie started to describe the conditions that their plot had been in, when they first took occupancy eight years ago, shortly after they had both taken early retirement. Turning to face the dense shrubs and trees (running alongside their plot) roughly four feet from where we were sat, she described how their newly-acquired plot was 'completely covered' in weeds and overgrowth from the thicket of trees and shrubs. She went on to say that 'no-one had really used this

plot in over 25 years, so we'd been informed'. Consequently, as Marie and Alan had both pointed out, it required dedication and perseverance on their part, owing to the considerable amount of clearing involved in order to get their plot 'straightened up'. Marie explained to me how the thicket of trees running alongside their plot has become a 'continuous battle' for them; 'it is so dense and wild and they [the roots] grow so far underground and come up in different areas on your plot and they can come up ten, twenty or even thirty feet from here'! ...Alan went on to say, 'it was hard graft...we wouldn't have entertained this plot if we'd retired recently!'

...After cutting back some of the trees and shrubs that consumed much of their allotment to begin with, Alan had mentioned how they decided to make use of some of the thicker branches to create their own wooden obelisk feature and a trellis-styled archway...

As I was leaving their allotment, they both gave me a brief tour around their plot, greenhouses, fruits, vegetables and flowers that they were growing and the wooden features that they had crafted themselves. As we came across the wooden obelisk, which had sweet peas growing up and around it, with the stems and the tendrils wrapping themselves around the branches, they explained to me how all four branches, forming the main structure of their obelisk had taken root and had started to grow a number of side shoots. Consequently, as they pointed out, they have created more 'work' for themselves since Alan is now going to need to uproot all four branches before 'it gets any worse'.

(Field notes, 19th May, 2016)

When Sarah first took occupancy of her plot, she described how it was smothered in weeds, 'even bindweed as tall as [herself]...it took a lot of hard work to remove it all'. Shortly after clearing some of the weeds from her newly-occupied plot, she recalled how she went away for a short while and upon returning, the overgrowth 'was exactly the same as when I had first got it!' In her second attempt to remove the overgrowth, Sarah hired a rotivator and asked her husband to ask some of his work colleagues to come and help her remove the weeds and clear the plot... 'we got so much done that day!'

(Field notes, 13th May, 2016)

Within these extracts above, Marie and Alan describe the physical, laborious work and drudgery required to tame nature by many *new* allotment holders that have recently secured a tenancy for an allotment. In one sense, it could be argued that this process of taming or domesticating nature that many novice practitioners experience at the outset makes them aware of the physical labour that allotmenting demands.⁴² Of course, like any other practice, some novice practitioners do ‘drop out along the way’ (Shove et al., 2012, p.71) as some allotmenters pointed out during the course of my fieldwork. During one conversation with Steve, a relatively faithful practitioner, he maintained that he can often ‘tell’ when practitioners are not fully committed to the practice before they eventually give up their tenancy on their allotment.

In another sense, the ‘hard graft’ that many novice practitioners endure at the beginning could mark the starting point of their ‘career’ as a committed practitioner or the moment by which they are ‘caught’ by the practice (Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Shove et al., 2012). Whilst all novice practitioners may not endure laborious work to the same extent as Marie and Alan, their experiences nevertheless, alongside Sarah’s, reveal how invasive nature can be. As both Marie and Alan’s and Sarah’s accounts clearly demonstrates, their efforts to try and tame the thicket and/or the weeds on their allotment become a ‘continuous battle’.

Adding to this, Marie and Alan’s attempt to re-use some of the thicker braches to craft their own obelisk, which has in turn taken root *again* demonstrates how, ‘things can act-back with unintended consequences’ (Gregson et al., 2007, p.195). In a similar manner, Jean; a particularly knowledgeable and experienced allotmenteer, demonstrates how a rotivator; the tool that Sarah

⁴² Whilst I have already drawn attention to allotmenters’ early experiences of allotmenting in chapter 5, the analysis predominantly focused on the development of a competent practitioner, whereas the arguments here, centred around the flowing material qualities of nature, call attention to the perseverance and commitment that is required of allotmenters.

had used to break up the soil on her second attempt at clearing her plot, also has the potential to 'act-back' (Gregson et al., 2007). On one occasion, she proclaimed, 'rotivating is one of the worst things that you can do on a plot; each individual blade of grass could potentially grow into a new plant so you could end up needing to put more effort in, than when you first started' (conversation).

Nevertheless, some newcomers can be fortunate enough to occupy an allotment that requires less physical exertion, providing that the changeover period from the previous (committed) allotmenteer(s) to the new occupancy is brief, as the following extract demonstrates;

They (Samantha, her husband, her son and often her sister and her niece) spent the two-week Easter break trying to tidy up and arrange the allotment to their liking. The way in which Samantha visualised the 'allotment landscape to be, was pretty similar to this', with various raised beds build up, either side with a pathway which runs straight up the middle. She went on to say that 'during the Easter break, we spent as much time here [at the allotment] as we could... and we replaced the wood [from the edges of the raised beds] with some re-claimed wood from local building suppliers...and the guttering that runs across the shed, with some that my dad found in a skip where he works'.

Nevertheless, Samantha who first took over her plot, together with her family in March 2016 demonstrates how the need to engage in physical labour from the onset is still necessary. Moving away from thickets, perennial weeds, and other forms of overgrowth, the following extracts illustrate how the practice of allotmenteeing interacts with other forms of nature, including; ecosystems, diseases and wildlife habitats.⁴³

⁴³ Whilst the previous chapter also illustrated the ways in which the practice of allotmenteeing interacts with other forms of nature (i.e. in terms of creating wildlife habitats/ecosystems and establishing a sense of reciprocity with insect pollinators that depend upon these habitats for their survival), it merely focused on the ways in which the practice and *particular* forms of nature form positive, collaborative relationships. Here, the concept of distributed agency and domestication allow us to pay close attention to the ways in which forms of nature (different from those explored in the previous chapter) interfere in the practice, and thus, explore these connections from a different angle.

'Ever since man started growing their own fruits and vegetables, it has always been a battle between man and creatures. Let me give you an example' Adrian proceeded to show me the four mole holes that had 'appeared overnight' on his plot. Following this, he then pointed out a mole trap that he had placed inside one of the mole holes. 'Look, this is what I have had to resort to!' The tone of his voice suggested that he was quite unsettled about using mole traps on his allotment, which both captures and kills them. He went on to say 'I *absolutely hate* killing anything, even flies, I *really detest* it and I try to avoid it in any way possible'...

Turning around slightly, to face the empty raised bed in front of us, Adrian went on to tell me how he intends to plant his sprout plants in this particular bed, which would require him (as would be the case with other plants) to 'create the spaces for them and water them in'. Before continuing, Adrian paused mid-sentence, turned to look at me and asked whether I understood gardening; 'you do *know* about gardening, don't you?'

At this point, I felt as though he thought I might not appreciate what he was about to say, I didn't '*know* about gardening'. So, I explained to him that I knew 'the basics', but that I was still very much in the process of learning. He proceeded with his case in point, which I felt was perhaps *more* detailed than it might have otherwise been, so that he could ensure that I would grasp what he was trying to say. He explained, 'you need to water them in because that way, you give the roots a chance to spread out in the soil, and if you don't, they are still compacted within the smaller space [the mould from the previous plant pot that you have transplanted them from] and they may wither up and die and so doing this can take an hour to an hour and a half; a long time!'

He went on to say, 'when I planted my onions in here one year, I lined them up with string and I watered them in. I came back the next day and they'd all come up out of the bed!' At this point, he paused as though he had just relived this experience. 'Moles don't eat onions', he continued, 'they tend to eat slugs and the worms and the insects, but what happens is, once you've watered the soil, you attract the slugs to the water and this then attracts the moles....so it's a constant battle'.

(Field notes, 17th June, 2016, *italics* used where Adrian emphasized his words)

Walking around Keith's allotment, the first raised bed we across had sweetcorn planted in rows. As we drew closer, he explained to me that the sweetcorn will be 'ready when the tassels turn much browner than they are now. Then, you

can open the tops of the leaves which supporting the corn slightly, and if you see yellow, then that means that they are ready. But, when they are ready, you have to be quick because the rats also seem to know when they are ready'. He mentioned that he has already needed to 'take action' to deal with the rats on his allotment. Curious to know, I asked Keith what kind of 'action' he had taken, but he didn't want to say. Pushing this a little further, I asked whether he had set traps up on his plot. 'They are worse than traps' he said, 'you wouldn't want to know so we'll just leave it there'. Then, he gave a brief pause before going on to say, 'the trouble is, I don't like doing this, I hate to have to hurt anything, but at the end of the day it's not a zoo for these creatures, it's my allotment and if you don't take action then all of your crops get eaten!'

...He went on to say that 'slugs are another pest that are difficult to control'. He explained to me to me how he uses slug pellets, although somewhat unwillingly, because 'they just keep coming and coming and I don't know how many they produce but there just seems to be no stop in them!' He went on to say that he has used beer traps in the past, although as he explains, 'they are effective [paused for a couple of seconds] but they aren't effective *enough* so I've resorted back to using slug pellets'.

(Field notes, 7th August, 2016)

Whilst sat with Marie and Alan on their allotment, Alan drew my attention to their polycarbonate greenhouse, which *looked* relatively new. He explained to me that, 'you can seal [the greenhouse] as you would normally seal your windows or the tiles in your bathroom, with sealant, to close any gaps'. Yet, as Marie had pointed out, the mice had managed to prize their way in at least 'three or four times' this year as Marie and Alan have sown and re-sown their peas several times already after discovering that they had been taken, as Marie pointed out; 'I was watering them thinking *surely, they must have germinated by now* and I rooted around in the soil and I couldn't find any seeds and so, [I thought] the mice must have taken them. They must crawl underneath the ground and get in that way because all of the glass has been sealed. So, they beat us this time!

(Field notes, 19th May, 2016)

As each of the extracts presented above demonstrate, allotments *per se*, fall at the interface between the practice of allotmenting and the habitats of slugs, insects, moles, mice and other wildlife.

Adrian's experiences resonate with Hazel's, Keith's and Marie's and Alan's experiences (in the extracts above) insofar that, if they do not try to deal with the rats, mice and/or slugs, to bring them under control in some way, they pose a problem for allotmenters themselves and their efforts to grow their own food. Thus, contrary to the previous chapter, which explored how allotmenters try to nurture nature, when we consider the ways in which other forms of nature interfere in the cultivation process, we begin to see how this seemingly favourable, supportive relationship between allotmenters and nature starts to break down.

Nevertheless, anticipating nature's next steps and taking measures, by using 'beer traps' to prevent slug damage (Keith) or sealing the gaps in and around the greenhouse (Marie and Alan), such measures are not always 'effective enough' to prevent damage/ any interference. In Keith's case, he has 'resorted *back*' to using slug pellets which, he considers to be a more reliable method, (compared to beer traps) capable of alleviating the possibility of slug damage. Furthermore, despite taking 'action' to tame his rat problem, Keith still demonstrates his need to pay close attention to the change in colour of the tassels on his sweetcorn, (which give a visual indication that the sweetcorn is 'ready' to harvest) and harvest it *quickly*, owing to the prospect that the rats may beat him to it.

The following extract demonstrates how, as Keith signified in one of the extracts above (see page 203), allotmenters often use slug pellets containing harmful, hazardous chemicals, something which *some* practitioners are aware of;

Jean recalled a fairly recent incident relating to one hedgehog which she suspects was *the* hedgehog (that she would often keep an eye on) that resided within the burrow at the far end of her plot. She relayed to me how 'the guy' who occupies the plot on the right [of her own] had planted a particular variety of flowers. She went on to say 'slugs don't even like this flower and they were

covered in slug pellets!’ Not long after discovering the seemingly unnecessary (according to Jean) scattering of slug pellets, another plot-holder had mentioned to Jean that they had seen a hedgehog near the entrance gate of the allotment site upon their arrival. She went on to say, ‘I rushed to go and see because it’s unusual to see a hedgehog during the day, you don’t see them unless something is wrong, and anyway it had gone’, before pointing out that she hadn’t caught sight of *the* hedgehog that took residence at the far end of her allotment since this incident. She went on to make her point about slug pellets; ‘when one hedgehog dies, that then leaves space for another to come in and live in this burrow, but then, that one will die as a result of the slug pellets and then another will die, because the slugs inevitably become poisonous and the hedgehogs eat the poisonous slugs!’

(Field notes, 14th May, 2016)

‘Even I use slug pellets, but *reluctantly!* Because of the gradient of the plots [the entire allotment site], the rain comes and washes the poison down towards the Mere at the [far] end [of the allotment site] and possibly filter into the birds’ water source!’

(Field notes, 13th May, 2016, with Sarah (Sarah’s emphasis in *italics*))

Comparable to Adrian and Keith, it appears as though Sarah (the second extract shown above) unwillingly takes ‘action’ as a means to tame the slugs on her plot. Drawing from previous consumer research exploring individual consumers’ ethical decision making, Sarah’s (alongside Adrian and Keith’s) predicament leads us to think that the practice of allotmenting embraces a ‘flexible’ approach to ethics (Szmigin et al., 2009). As some of these practitioners have suggested (in the extracts above), processes of anticipating and trying to tame nature (for instance, slugs, insects, moles and mice), in potentially harmful ways inevitably take place as a matter of course in the practice of allotmenting and whilst *some* allotmenters recognise the negative implications of using slug pellets and other methods/approaches, still, their produce and the idea of growing a prolific crop takes precedence. In other words, it is their personal, intimate engagement in the practice that takes priority over their concerns and which leads them to engage in *less* environmentally responsible consumption patterns.

This reinforces the idea that agency is distributed between allotmenters and nature and that allotmenters *qua* consumers are not autonomous agents, that have the ability to reduce their impact on the environment. Consequently, it challenges previous research in the field of environmentally responsible consumption that assumes consumer agency and places emphasis on spreading awareness and communicating information about our impact on the environment. Equally, it also challenges research that merely places emphasis on the 'environmentally responsible' consumer and their knowledge, attitudes and environmental concerns, insofar that consumers do not always show the inclination to consume in ways which align with their environmental concerns.

Moving away from practitioners' attempts to tame nature in terms of insects and wildlife, Adrian's experiences of a rust disease on his leeks, garlics and onions (see section 5.3 forging intimate connections with nature, in the previous chapter), demonstrate how allotmenters try to tame the disease by trimming the rusted leaves to prevent the disease from having an effect on the growth of the produce.

Yet, as Adrian demonstrated, practitioners who deposit the rusted leaves in with their compost; practitioners who otherwise 'do not know what they should be doing', (according to Adrian) make it possible for the rusted disease to 'act-back' (Gregson et al., 2007) and spread across other allotments on the site. Adding to this, allotmenters are also found to domesticate their plants in order to control their growth, as the following extract demonstrates;

As we came across Jean's raised bed with her cauliflowers planted in, she explained to me how she has managed to 'stagger their growth' so that they wouldn't all be 'ready' for harvesting at the same time; 'because of their established root system, they are able to reach far underground for their water and so, I tried to water the cauliflower plants over there [furthest away from us]

more than these ones here [closest to where we were stood] and that this seems to have helped stagger the growth because they [the cauliflower plants furthest away from us in the raised bed] have had more water...with the second set of cauliflowers, I transplanted them at different stages (weeks apart) so that I could keep some of cauliflower plants in smaller cell trays for longer, whilst other cauliflower plants were becoming more established as they were growing in larger cell trays'. Nevertheless, as she pointed out later on, the cauliflower plants that she 'transplanted' to larger cell trays last, have 'caught up' with the cauliflower plants that she transplanted first.

(Field notes, 25th June, 2016)

Here, Jean has used water and 'smaller cell trays' as tools, (in one sense) to 'stagger' the growth of her cauliflowers by trying to restrict the amount of water (an essential resource for plants to thrive and prosper) they take in and limiting the potential growth (of the roots and the plant) to the size of the smaller cell tray. However, as Jean later revealed, transplanting some of her cauliflower plants from 'smaller cell trays' to 'larger cell trays' created the opportunity for the cauliflowers to 'act-back' (Gregson et al., 2007) and catch up with the cauliflowers that were transplanted earlier and work against the practitioner's intentions. This instance demonstrates how allotmenters are not always able to take control over nature's processes so that they fall in line with their own consumption patterns. Thus, to reiterate a point made earlier, whilst the discussion in the previous chapter enabled us to see how allotmenters and nature (and other forms of materiality) establish a supportive, collaborative relationship centred around co-dependency, co-instruction and a sense of reciprocity over time, the idea of distributed agency explored here allows us to draw attention to the unpleasant, inescapable ways in which allotmenters and *other* forms of nature interact.

Consistent with some of the themes introduced in the previous chapter; Nurturing Nature, the above discussion draws attention towards both the interaction between practitioners and

different forms of nature and demonstrates how a sense of agency can be distributed between practitioners, nature and materials. In doing so, it coincides with studies emanating from and (partly) influenced by the field of science and technology and material culture that break away from conventional theories of consumption wherein agency is the privilege of individual consumers and pay close attention to people's everyday (practical) interactions with the material world, in which things and technology (for instance) are understood to shape people's everyday activities (Dant, 1999; 2005; Latour, 1993; Truninger, 2011; Watson and Shove, 2008).

The following section takes these ideas forwards and places emphasis on the processes and practices that take place at home *beyond* their allotment, once practitioners have harvested their produce.

6.3 Challenging Nature's Rhythms

As highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, the natural biological processes immanent within nature are always flowing/ongoing. Taking these ideas forward, this section considers how, the *need* to tame such processes, demand practitioners' time and require practitioners to draw upon resources and other forms of competence that vary from those embedded in processes of cultivating and nurturing nature.

Within the extract below, Adrian encapsulates the growth and movement of some of these, what I will call 'flowing material qualities', that transpire after harvesting fruits and vegetables and the implications that this can have for allotmentees.

Any vegetation, right, as soon as you stop it growing, it starts to decay. That sounds extreme but it does. In some cases this process can be very quick. Erm,

what happens is, as soon as it stops growing, there are enzymes within the plant or the fruit or whatever that kick in and if left to its own devices; so not preserved or stopped in any way, then those enzymes will eventually make the fruit decay, which it is meant to do. Otherwise, you'd have mountains of- [produce] you know, it's part of nature, but the first thing, once those enzymes kick in, the first thing to go is the flavour and then the second thing to go is the actual nutrients in there, but the first thing to go is the flavour, so if you want to keep the flavour, you've got to store them or freeze them straight away.

(Interview, Adrian)

In the extract above, Adrian demonstrates how, the onset of decay; a natural process which can be provoked by harvesting fruits and vegetables, causes flowing qualities; 'flavour' and 'nutrients' inherent within fruits and vegetables to wane and diminish at the same time. As such, he draws our attention towards, what can be characterised as the more inconspicuous or invisible processes that transpire within fruits and vegetables once they have been harvested. Furthermore, Adrian demonstrates how the capacity to control these processes and capture these imperceptible yet valuable qualities (i.e. taste) is contingent upon engaged practitioners, drawing upon the necessary capabilities and materials (for instance, storing and arrangements and freezing technology) and with time being of the essence. This enables us to see how the practice of allotmenting is *essentially* connected to other consumption spaces and practices, beyond the confines of the allotment and how this seemingly straightforward process of harvesting unfolds into a relatively complex affair.

Indeed, whilst many participants did not describe the details of these natural processes to the same extent as Adrian, it is evident that they are aware of the flowing material qualities that come into being once fruits and vegetables have been harvested, albeit their awareness appears

to be more tacit. Like Adrian, a sense of urgency to *contain* the natural qualities and/or prevent detrimental qualities of produce (such as decay) from materialising arises.⁴⁵

The following extract taken from an interview with three allotmenters; Arianna, Catherine and Lynn, follows on from a discussion with Arianna, during which, she recounted the process that she went through to make her red current and white current jams (initiated by the photograph that she had taken of her jars of jam at home – see image 6.1 below). Within the extract, they draw attention to the narrow time frame that they have, to make use out of their produce (specifically soft fruit in this instance) once it has been harvested and before it loses its ‘worth’.

I: Ah right okay, so when did you make it?

Arianna: Well, you would do it straight away if you could-

Catherine: Yeah, you can't always

Arianna: But you could leave it a day or two

Lynn: To bottle things?

Arianna: Yeah

Lynn: Yeah, because you know yourself how long it's going to last before it won't be *worth* doing it, I mean, we would never leave it *that* long so that you would have to chuck it away. Unless, like Arianna, where she has been away, and she forgot about some apples⁴⁶.

Arianna: Yeah, there is just a certain time limit that you have to do something within otherwise you will *lose* it.

I: How can you tell then?

Arianna: It just starts to go mouldy, it is just rotting fruit, it's just like food that you buy from the supermarket, you know when it is past its best don't you?

(Interview, Arianna, Catherine and Lynn, *italics* used to reflect their emphasis)

⁴⁵ Although, this varies depending on the type of fruit/vegetable.

⁴⁶ Earlier on during the interview, Arianna referred to a fairly recent incident where she had gone away for a few days and had ‘forgotten’ about some of her apples; ‘and I came home and thought, ‘something smells sour in here’, and I thought, ‘oh my apples!’ So, I had a look in the bag, I’d forgotten all about them and one had turned black, the *whole* apple was black’.



Image 6.1: Arianna's red current and white current preserves (photograph taken by Arianna).

Consistent with Adrian's view, there is an understanding amongst Arianna, Catherine and Lynn that their produce is relatively vulnerable during this interim period between harvesting and the process of preserving it in some way. According to Lynn, how *worthy* the fruits or vegetables are, is configured in relation to time, from the moment they have been harvested; as time goes on, the worthiness of the produce fades. Although, from Lynn's perspective, their awareness of the limited amount of time that they have to 'do' something clearly acts as a safeguard, preventing their newly harvested produce from reaching an otherwise 'worthless' state.

Likewise, for Arianna, the visual traces of the natural decaying process provide an indication of when the fruit has 'past it's best'. This embodied and sensory realisation; the 'practical understanding' (Schatzki, 2003) of what the process of decay *looks* like and the point at which the fruit becomes *worthless*, represent one way in which allotmenters can envisage how much time they have, to act upon these natural processes and preserve the valued qualities of their fruits and vegetables.

Nevertheless, Arianna's forgetfulness alluded to in the extract above highlights that whilst allotmenters may have intentions to 'do something' with their produce, their plans may be quashed by other plans that disrupt their normal routines.

It is worth noting here that practitioners' embodied awareness of and response to the visual and sensory cues described here, has not necessarily come about as a result of their engagement in the practice of allotmenting. Instead, they are often found to be implicitly embedded within these practitioners' everyday food consumption practices (Short, 2006).

Nonetheless, perhaps what is of interest here, is how this sense of urgency, somewhat induced by nature's rhythms, impels them to 'do' something to preserve their produce. Building on this further, during two separate interviews, participants Hayley and Adrian and his wife Sophia, point out the timescales that motivate their activities, which appear to be governed by nature's rhythms.

I: After harvesting your produce from your allotment, what do you do with it?

Hayley: We tend to try and process them the same day or if not, the next day because obviously, the longer you leave them they start to spoil. So, during the summer months, most of the weekend will involve going to the allotment [and] harvesting our produce and then we will spend the rest of the weekend processing it; making jams, some chutneys or freezing it.

(Interview, Hayley)

I: Once you've harvested something, when is it that you go about trying to preserve your foods in the different ways that you have talked about?

Adrian: Usually the next day

Sophia: Either the same day or the next day

Adrian: Yeah, but it is usually the next day because well, we will get home with a crop at teatime and then we have got to start cooking for our tea and what have you, so it will probably be the day after but I always say this to new people who have got allotments; there are two particular things that are incredible if you pick them on the plot and eat them there [at the allotment], cook them and eat them. One of them is first early potatoes, because just the trip from there [the allotment] to here [5-10 minutes walking distance] and leaving them for a day, they don't taste the same as when you first pick them and that is these enzymes working and the other one is sweetcorn isn't it? [directed at Sophia]

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)

To some extent, the need to work in harmony with nature's rhythms and patterns is an indication of how, in instances like those mentioned in the extracts above, nature *demand*s practitioners' time and their embodied efforts. In the first extract above, Hayley, who works full-time as a learning and development manager, which can often involve travelling around the country during weekdays, describes how, for her and her family, *doing* allotmenting, in terms of both cultivating and preserving their produce, is something which occupies the majority of their weekends during the summer months.

Alternatively, whilst Adrian and Sophia (who are now both retired) did not specify particular days of the week like Hayley, they did emphasise the narrow time frame governed by nature's rhythms that they have to manage and the need to preserve their produce after harvesting it. However, they don't appear to draw attention to the ways in which this process of preserving can be demanding of their time and efforts. Rather, he induces a sense of enchantment, which is fostered by his appreciation that *flavour* is a transitory quality of food that begins to fade once triggered by the harvesting process, when he talks about his desire to appraise any newcomers about the experience of eating freshly harvested first early potatoes and sweetcorn. In this sense, it could be argued that, flavour (certainly for Adrian) and the *fresh* qualities of allotment produce is something to be cherished and are perhaps qualities, which emphasise the importance of *other* related practices (including ways of preserving, conserving and storing produce) which the practice of allotmenting often *depends* upon.

Reflecting upon practitioners' *need* to preserve their produce, it could be argued, that they 'carry', in the sense of being a 'carrier' of the practice, a sense of responsibility or obligation that comes about as a result of growing and nurturing and tending to their produce (Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Shove et al., 2007).

During an interview with both Tim and Kirsty (Tim's sister who does not have an allotment herself), Kirsty described how, gardening and growing her own food has become a part of her life. Within the extract below, she recalled how she developed an interest in gardening and growing food from an early age through her brother's interest at their family home, which she 'carried' forward into her first home and her own (current) family home (Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Shove et al., 2007).

Tim used to have a greenhouse at home and he used to grow tomatoes...and I used to nag him, to grow stuff with him... and then the first little house that I bought, I had a little plot out at the back and I used to put plants in. I always really liked it looking nice and here, I've got a growing patch all down the side [of the house] and a greenhouse. So, I grow raspberries, peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers...'

(Interview, Kirsty)

Whilst Kirsty does not own an allotment *per se*, it could be argued that her lasting engagement in the practice of *growing one's own food* has perhaps, like other allotmenters that I have discussed, induced a sense of obligation to manage and preserve her brother's produce once it has been harvested, as well as her own. However, this is not to say that, a sense of obligation is necessarily *passed* on to *other* close relatives and friends of Tim's, but rather, it reflects more upon Kirsty's involvement in the practice of *growing your own*.

During my interview with Tim and Kirsty, Kirsty describes how during the summer months, she and her husband prepare and cook passata either the same day or the day after harvesting tomatoes (from her own tomato plants or her brother's tomato plants, at his home/ his allotment), two to three times a week, before preserving them in sterilised wine bottles, which are then corked. Like Adrian, this prevailing sense of urgency is founded upon both Kirsty's desire to savour the flavours of 'fresh' home-grown produce, which can (from Kirsty's view) be captured in the process of making passata. Furthermore, she draws attention to the time frame that she has to make the passata, recognising that the physical composition deteriorates if they are left; 'the quicker you do it, the nicer and fresher it is, because if you leave them in the fridge, they are alright if you leave them a day or two, but you don't want to leave them forever, you know, if you leave them for a week they start to go a bit soggy and mushy'.

During an interview with Arianna, she expressed her concerns about giving some of her produce away to both her daughter and her close friends;

'It does bother me because I-, if I give my daughter anything I usually clean it all first and I don't give her beetroot as it is, I always cook it and pickle it for her, just to make sure, because I can't stand it being wasted so I have to make sure that it's-, but I only like giving things away that I know I think they will use. Because if they are not going to use it, it's going to waste and I hate to think of it being wasted. So, that's why you- well that's why I tend to give things like, if somebody would like a courgette, like one of my neighbours, she likes courgettes and tomatoes and leeks and onions. Things that I know that people will use...I did get kale for my friends at work er, they were asking me about kale and I washed it all and everything and bagged it up for them er, but they have never asked me for any more since [laughs]. So, I think it is with all of the er, people saying about how good it is for you but it's erm, [pause] kale is a bit, and if you have anything [bug wise] on it, and they are in all those creases [of the leaves] and they are hard to [get rid of]. But the Cavolo Nero kale, in the recipe⁴⁷ that's- I think that is easier to clean, but it still gets whitefly

(Interview, Arianna)

As Arianna demonstrates within the extract above, it appears as though giving produce away to close friends and relatives does not (always) alleviate some of the responsibility that they carry themselves. More to the point, it appears as though Arianna makes the effort to ensure that her kale looks more presentable (through cleaning it) and her beetroot trouble-free (through cooking and pickling it), to give it the best possible chance of being eaten once it has been passed on to her close friends and her daughter.

⁴⁷ Earlier on during the interview, Arianna talked about a soup that she had made (following a recipe from one of her cooking books) using some kale from her allotment.

6.4 Domesticating Practices

Within the previous section, practitioners' dependency on practices of preserving as a means of *domesticating* nature become apparent. This section builds on this idea by drawing attention towards the different ways in which practitioners *domesticate* nature and the necessary recourses and forms of competence required to do so.

The means by which allotmenters try to domesticate their produce vary considerably. In part, this often relates to, what could be described as, the biological structures that constitute fruits and vegetables. It is argued here, that the biological make-up of fruits and vegetables embody certain *rules*, or biological scripts that determine the most appropriate ways of preserving them. These *rules* represent an orchestrating framework which govern both what practitioners *should* and *should not* do if they wish to preserve their produce and prevent it from decaying. Within the following extracts, participants discuss how some of their produce *needs* to be handled and preserved in certain ways, which are seemingly dictated by the biological scripts inherent within certain fruits and vegetables.

With potatoes, we get the surface soil off before taking them home. We don't wash them. Well, in the first year I did wash them because I didn't really know what to do with them and then Tim mentioned how 'you shouldn't wash them because it can introduce diseases and they could stay damp'. So now I just brush the surface clean [Hayley used her hands to demonstrate how she would remove the surface soil from the potatoes]. They are in the shed [at home] actually, in bags and I've just kept them in there and they've been fine.

(Interview, Hayley)

Here, Hayley talks about how practitioners 'shouldn't wash' their potatoes, after first trying to remove the dirt *altogether*, which coincides with more conventional cleaning practices (Denegri-Knott and Parsons, 2014). In this sense, contrary to normal concepts of dirt and cleanliness

(Denegri-Knott and Parsons, 2014; Douglas, 1966), keeping soiled potatoes dry and in this sense still slightly dirty, works to prevent them from 'acting-back' and developing 'diseases', whilst the process of cleansing them is believed to potentially encourage diseases (Gregson et al., 2007).

In the following extract, Adrian and his wife Sophia outline the importance of drying out onions 'correctly' (a discussion that was prompted by the photographs that Adrian had taken of his own 'onion rack' that he put together, see image 6.2 below). In a similar manner to the previous example regarding potatoes, this reflects what can perhaps be described as a precondition for storing onions; a process that must be carried out once the onions have been harvested, before they can be stored for a lengthy period of time. Here, the need to abide by certain biological *rules* governed by nature underpins Adrian's and Sophia's understanding and ways of preserving onions. Moreover, this can also be seen as a way of *intervening* in nature's processes, by preventing or reducing the possibilities of their onions going mouldy and subsequently decaying.

I: I have three similar photographs of your onions here [presents them to both Adrian and Sophia]

Adrian: In the shed, that is our drying rack.

I: At your allotment?

Adrian: Yeah.

Sophia: Yes, that's in the shed, where the other wooden greenhouse is, it is attached to it.

Adrian: Where the grapes are.

I: Ah, where the grapes are, I see

Adrian: Erm, what you do is, draw your onions, take them out when they are ready, or at the right time and just cut some of the foliage off and- I built that rack

I: For your onions?

Adrian: Yeah.

Sophia: Yeah, it's just strips, individual strips that run along from one side of the shed to the other, with gaps in between. I think there are about 6 individual rows going back [pauses, examines the photographs more closely], oh no five.

Adrian: So, when you dry onions, you've got to dry them upside down so-, and moisture comes out.

Sophia: It runs down as opposed to going the other way and running into the onion

Adrian: Because if you were to try and dry them stood up, you might end up with moisture staining the neck and it might go mouldy. They are very prone to mould. [*He picks up one of their onions that they have in a wicker basket behind me and holds the stem/neck of the onion with his other hand*] once that bit [the neck of the onion] has gone completely dry, they are ready and you can put them anywhere then.

I: Ah right.

Adrian: [Referring to the onions in the wicker basket] These are ready to be- Sophia plaits them.

Sophia: No, I don't plait them, I get a string and then the surplus stork bit goes through, wrapped into the string and pulled down and I'll do about 12 on top of each other on the string, so you can hang them up somewhere to store them.

Adrian: To give you an idea, this year, I actually had some, I was just using the last of last year's when I harvested these so they will last all year them. Hmm we don't buy any from the supermarket, do we?

Sophia: No, no...They are a very easy vegetable to grow though, aren't they? You just put them in the ground and that's it.

Adrian: Yeah, it's that bit, it's the drying bit that spoils it.

Sophia: and the storing as well, yeah.

Adrian: Because they need to be stored somewhere that is cool and dry.

I: Mmm, okay.

Adrian: If it is a damp environment, they tend to develop mould, you know, and if they are too warm, they will start growing again.

Sophia: Yeah, they will start to shoot [roots out] from the middle, at the bottom of the onion.

Adrian: Alliums are very forgiving vegetables, all of the allium family. You know, er, leeks, garlcs, onions and there are others and you can get a leek right- a big leek, pull it out the ground like that [demonstrates the movement of pulling a leek from the soil with both of his hands firmly pulling the imaginary leek

upwards], cut all of the roots off, and cut all of the foliage off, stick it back in the ground-

Sophia: And it will start growing again, it'll form more roots and start growing again.

Adrian: So, if you keep your onions too warm, when-, which can be a bit difficult, you know, to find a cool, dry place.

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)



Image 6.2: Adrian's onion rack at his allotment (photograph taken by Adrian).

Consistent with the previous example and other experiences of managing produce and taming the natural processes that are always ongoing, Adrian and Sophia's account reveals the importance of understanding the unique particularities, features and idiosyncrasies inscribed within each type of fruit/vegetable. In this instance, they acknowledge the potential consequences that they risk facing, as a result of leaving their onions to dry out 'stood up' or keeping them under unsuitable ('damp' or 'too warm') conditions. It appears as though,

allotmenters, through their engagement in the practice, are more in tune with nature and have the ability to anticipate (some of if not all of) the consequences that can arise, if they do not handle their produce in a certain way.

Once the process of drying onions out has been achieved and they are 'ready' to be strung up, it appears as though they have significantly constrained or in other respects, procured *some* control over, nature's biological processes, as a way of managing their produce. However, as Adrian and Sophia both recognise, the prospect that certain changes in the conditions of an onion's immediate environment can cause such biological processes (growth or decay) to materialise and flow again is still imminent, owing to the sensitive and responsive qualities of nature, reinforcing the understanding that 'full control can never be exerted' (Callon, 1986; Canniford and Shankar, 2013, p.1059).

So far, this section considered how the process of domesticating nature, an apparent *need* for these allotmenters, is curbed by the biological composition of fruits/vegetables. Taking these ideas forward, the following sub-sections consider how, owing to the biological structures of fruits/vegetables, some fruits and vegetables permit *other*, more versatile ways of domesticating nature. This freedom granted by the biological composition of other fruits and vegetables, opens up opportunities for practitioners to 'adapt, improvise and experiment' with their produce and other resources, which are brought into play, during the process of preserving (Warde, 2005, p.141).

6.4.1 Stabilising Qualities and Transforming Materialities

Many allotmenters talked about their efforts to preserve their produce by making jams, chutneys, pickles, chilli powder and cordials (see image 6.3 below, for instance), which demand various skills and resources associated with different cooking practices. The following extract, taken from an interview with Hayley draws attention to her efforts to make chilli powder out of her own chillies.



Image 6.3: Keith's and Janet's preserves (from left to right); 'damson chutney', 'pickled cucumber', 'pickled beetroot' and two jars of 'jam' (photograph taken by Keith).

[As we came back into Hayley' house through her conservatory, after being in her back garden, she pointed out to me the remainder of her chillies, each tied up along a piece of string hanging on the door handle in her conservatory. Prior to this, Hayley had shown me an airtight Kilner jar, (larger than a 400g tin, in size), full of chilli powder that she had made].

Hayley: Oh, there are my other chillies as well...these are drying out, normally they are in the kitchen and we would normally hang them on the shelf but because we have been decorating [in the kitchen] ...they would dry out quicker

in the kitchen and then, once they are dry I would put them into a blender and make the chilli powder...

I: Why is it you turn them into chilli powder rather than freeze them as you have done with your other chillies?

Hayley: Erm, mainly for space really because I don't have any more freezer space and I just find it easier with the chillies powder to be honest, it's a lot easier just to put a spoonful of chillies powder in my food...so I dry them out and I've got a NutriBullet and I'll just put them in there because I've got a coffee grinder and I used to do it in there but it used to take forever because you could only put a small amount in at one time and I thought, I'm going to try my NutriBullet and I just chop them up and chuck them in and it works like a dream!
[laughs]

(Interview, Hayley)

In the extract above, Hayley demonstrates how she is able to 'hang' (up) her chillies in her conservatory, to 'dry out', without the risk of decay. She explains how she improvises; using her Nutribullet in a way other than it was originally intended, to turn her chillies into a chilli powder. In doing so, she increases the value of them as they become 'a lot easier' to use in her cooking. Thus, whilst transforming her chillies into a powder provides Hayley with a way of preserving them, it also *prepares* them insofar that she can conveniently use them in her cooking without needing to chop or blend them when she comes to use them in her cooking. Here, we can begin to see how paying close attention to materiality (i.e. harvested fruits and vegetables and the flowing material qualities) allows us to deepen our understanding of both, the relationship between allotmenters and nature and what it means to be a competent practitioner, beyond the confines of the allotment (as explored in chapter 5).

The following extract, taken from my field notes draws attention towards various ingredients, competencies and know-how required to preserve fruits *properly*, by making jam.

Whilst sat in the porta cabin, Arianna [who was sat next to me] had mentioned amongst those of us in the porta cabin; five other plot-holders, a relative of one plot-holder and myself, that she had made two jars of jam yesterday, making the point that they have 'managed to set'...to which, Paula, who seemed fairly inquisitive, questioned what Arianna did exactly, because Paula herself had made twenty-four jars of jam yesterday which hadn't managed to set as of yet. Paula explained to Arianna that her jars of jam are 'trying to set - you can see that they aren't too far off but if you tilt the jar to the side you can see that it runs slightly' before asking whether Arianna had put lemon in her jam. Arianna went on to explain that she added both lemon and pectin and then recalled the last time she'd attempted to make some jam, in which case, the jam hadn't quite set. Arianna then suggested that this may be due to the fact that she wasn't able to reach the temperature of 220F, which, as she described, 'is the temperature you need to reach in order to allow your jam to set'. Then Paula changed the topic of the conversation slightly as she started to explain a method that you can follow, as a means to extract 'natural' pectin from certain fruits, as opposed to buying it. [...]

After a short period of silence, Paula started to ruminate a little bit about her jams and the reason they might not have set and she explained to us that perhaps she'd not put 'enough lemon juice in this time'. Arianna and Catherine then pointed out that Arianna had put more lemon juice within these two jars [that she had made yesterday] compared to the amount of lemon that she has used previously but, as they indicate, Arianna also managed to get the temperature right this time too. Subsequently, Paula went on to explain that her recipes suggest that you should use un-ripened fruits and that she'd used some ripened and even some fruit that had over-ripened. In response, Arianna explained that her recipes also suggest using un-ripened fruits but she had also used ripened fruits to make her jams. For clarification, I asked Arianna what the difference was between ripe and un-ripened fruits when making jams and she explained to me that 'generally, un-ripened fruits will tend to have more pectin in them compared to ripened fruits'. Paula added that it is very much a balancing act; getting the amount of lemon right and the amount of pectin in the mixture. And then Arianna added – 'and then reaching the temperature that allows the mixture to set'.

(Field notes, 10th July, 2016)

Within the extract above, it becomes apparent that the practice of *preserving* (as exemplified in this case) necessarily depends upon the 'active integration' of various elements (Shove and Pantzar, 2005). Both Arianna and Paula reveal how, in the process of making jam, ensuring that they incorporate 'enough' lemon and pectin and reach the 'boiling point' of their fruits are

necessary *procedures* that they must follow. As such, they demonstrate how making jam (that has set!) is dependent upon these various *other* resources working together. In this sense, it is the *active integration* of the ingredients; lemon, pectin, together with the soft fruits and the *right* temperature, during the process of *doing*, which, not only transforms the physical composition of the produce but also furnishes the fruits with *preserving qualities*, which extend their shelf life.

Furthermore, they demonstrate how, in such circumstances when both Arianna and Paula have used ripened (and in Paula's case, over-ripened) fruits, which are perceived to contain less pectin (compared to un-ripened fruits, which their recipe books recommend) their ability to *do preserving* is dependent upon their ability to improvise and adjust their methods. Arianna and Paula reveal how, in reality, their attempts to preserve their fruits do not always go as planned, as their attempts may be subject to moments of uncertainty or potential inaccuracies in their measurements, which demonstrate that nature does not always comply. As such, the importance of *knowing* how to preserve foods takes on a new significance for allotmenters. On top of this, these circumstances also reinforce the importance of trying to arrest nature's flowing material qualities at the 'right' time (i.e. un-ripened, as their recipe books recommend) to (potentially) prevent any issues from arising.

Besides processes of making preserves, pickles and powders, one of the most common ways for allotmenters to manage at least some of their produce is to freeze it, if the biological properties of the fruits/vegetables allow them to do so. As Adrian stated during his interview, 'the freezing process is kind to certain vegetables and unkind to others'. Of course, the process of freezing fresh, allotment produce is not a new phenomenon (Crouch and Ward, 1997; Shove and

Southerton, 2000). As Shove and Southerton (2000, p.305) demonstrated within their work, freezers were first used as a means to freeze 'gluts of home grown fruits and vegetables'. Owing to the rate at which the same fruits/ vegetables often become *ready* for harvesting (French beans or peas for instance); falling out of synchronisation with household consumption rates (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a), allotmenters require a means through which they can manage copious amount of fresh produce and prevent it from spoiling. In this sense, the freezer helps to resolve this incompatibility, between the natural timescales for different fruits and vegetables and household needs/consumption patterns. As Schatzki (2010, pp.137-138) argues within his article *Materiality and Social Life*, 'human practices can mediate physical and biological flows, and technology is essential to or intimately embedded in many of these practices'. Elaborating on his point further, he maintains how,

...heating systems, for instance, mediate between the physical-chemical composition of oil and gas—a natural feature of them—and, not just the practice of warming houses, but other practices carried on there such as cooking, cleaning, reading, conversing, and bookkeeping.

In this light, it is argued that freezers 'mediate' between the physical-biological compositions of allotmenters' produce and also between practices of harvesting, cooking and eating. In one sense, it could also be argued that domesticating nature, as exemplified by the process of freezing produce, somewhat *slows* time down as it intervenes with and *slows* nature's processes down. In doing so, it captures the produce within what could be described as, a *state of abeyance*, so that it can be consumed in line with consumers' cooking practices and their household consumption needs. As Norwak (1969, cited in Shove and Southerton, 2000) points out, it allows practitioners to overcome this issue of seasonality and consume their own produce throughout the year;

I don't know what it is but there is something magical about the combination of raspberries and the oats so simple sachets... the raspberries taste almost just as good once they've been frozen compared to when they are fresh... I can just put them in the porridge straight from the freezer because the heat from the porridge will defrost them...so this tends to be my breakfast during the winter too!

(Field notes, 23rd July, 2016, with Jean)

In one sense, the way in which the practice of allotmenting relies on the practice of freezing (and other preserving practices for that matter!) illustrates how, in part, the successful accomplishment of the practice has come to depend upon its integration with other practices.

In some cases, the process of freezing is accompanied by other practices/ doings that take place beforehand, such as chopping, blanching, blending and/or boiling. During my interview with Hayley, she explained how she would often cook large 'batches' of tomatoes, that she had harvested from her allotment, together with salt and pepper before dividing up and freezing the tomato sauce in individual freezer bags that are 'equivalent to one tin of tomatoes'. These bags of frozen tomatoes then form the base for tomato-based dishes such as 'spaghetti bolognese or something like that'. Similarly, whilst I was in Hayley's kitchen as she went through some of the contents of her freezer, during the interview, she pointed out the butternut squash soup that she had prepared, cooked and divided into individual foil trays/ proportions before freezing. In both of these cases, the process of freezing allotment produce, accompanied by processes of preparing and cooking that take place beforehand, demonstrate how allotment produce can conveniently *fit within* allotmenters everyday food consumption practices. For instance, her frozen tomato-based sauces amount to a key ingredient in one of several tomato-based dishes, like a 'spaghetti bolognese' that Hayley plans to cook at some point in the future. By preparing a number of her sauces in advance, less time, effort and preparation is required at the time of

cooking. Alternatively, in the case of her butternut squash soups, these ready, prepared, individually-sized portions can be conveniently de-frosted and re-heated during the week, as Hayley highlights during the interview, 'if we are working, I can just grab something out of the freezer'. In this sense, preparing, cooking and freezing her produce, not only works as a means to *domesticate* it (keep the butternut squash for a longer period of time without it spoiling), as such, but also as a means to plan ahead and/or prepare for the occasions where they may find themselves short of time.

Indeed, practitioners need to domesticate their produce and control the natural processes that are always on-going, is never the practitioner's end-purpose (Schatzki, 1996). In the process of freezing (often accompanied by processes of preparing and cooking food as outlined above), practitioners are always working towards their end-purpose, which in the case illustrated above, is to create convenient individually-prepared meals that they can 'grab' and re-heat in a short space of time (Schatzki, 1996).

Like Hayley, a number of other participants described similar processes through which preparation and cooking processes are carried out *prior* to freezing. Within the following extract taken from an interview with Adrian and his wife Sophia, the two of them reflect on some of the photographs they had taken of their 'sun-dried' tomatoes (see image 6.4 and 6.5 below).

I: ...Okay so looking at these next photos that you have taken [shows the photographs of the small sun-dried tomatoes and the larger tomatoes in the foil trays that Adrian had taken in their kitchen]

Sophia: Yes, those are our sun-dried tomatoes those

Adrian: Our 'take' on sun-dried...

Sophia: Yeah, we just cut them in half, lay them on a tray and in the oven for about two and a half hours, on a *really low* heat, either number one or number two gas, you know, because we always cook gas.

Adrian: The reason they are called sun-dried tomatoes is because traditionally in Italy, they would spread them out on a tarp

Sophia: Outside and let the sun dry them out

Adrian: And what it does, it evaporates all of the moisture out of the tomato and intensifies the flavour and that's what- so if you get sundried tomatoes, they are going to be a lot more tomato-y than normal tomatoes

I: Right, so is that why you do this then?

Adrian: Yeah, and it is a way of preserving them

Sophia: Yeah, and we use them in fish, if we buy a whole seabass or something like that, we will put some inside where the gut has been, with some rosemary and some lemon and we will lay some across the top

Adrian: And the reason for that is because-

Sophia: It's lovely

Adrian: Because they are dried, not totally dried, but almost er, the tomatoes will soak up the juices from the fish and er, they have also got a very intense tomato flavour so, but if you put ordinary tomatoes in, you are adding a lot of water, which you don't want to do.

Sophia: Yes, the water from the tomatoes would be coming out

Adrian: Also, if I'm doing a quick erm, sauce and I don't want too many tomatoes in, but I want a lot of tomato flavour, I'll put some of the [tomato] puree in and some of those

I: The cubed puree?⁴⁸

Adrian: Yeah, the cubed, yeah, I'll show you [gets up to get the cubed tomato puree in the 'ice tray' from the freezer]

I: and [from looking at the photographs I've got] I can see here in this photo that you freeze them in plastic bags with labels

Sophia: Yeah so, we will just throw it in and it defrosts within minutes.

⁴⁸ At an earlier point during the interview with Adrian and Sophia, they described the process that they go through to make small iced cubes of tomato puree from the tomatoes that they have grown.



Image 6.4: Adrian's sun-dried tomatoes in preparation for the oven (photograph taken by Adrian).



Image 6.5: Adrian's 'sun-dried' tomatoes prepared for the freezer (photograph taken by Adrian).

Here, Adrian and Sophia's efforts to prepare and cook their allotment-grown tomatoes, in different ways (before freezing) serves to 'intensify the flavour' of their food and create different

purposes/ways that they can be used in their cooking. As such, like Hayley's instance with her tomato-based sauces, the freezer provides the means through which Adrian and Sophia can capture such flavours and gain quick access to *their* unique ingredients; their 'take' on sun-dried tomatoes and their 'cubed puree', for use in their cooking at a later date.

Alternatively, within this extract below, a retired couple, Jack and Denise talk about the processes that they go through; podding and blanching to prepare their green peas for the freezer, almost as though they go hand-in-hand with the process of freezing.

Whilst sat talking to Denise on her and her husband's (Jack's) plot, I noticed that one of their pea plants had been uprooted and left resting on their fence, with the stems, foliage and a number of pea pods still attached. Once I'd drawn this plant to Denise's attention, Jack (who was getting ready to use his strimmer) explained to me that he was fed up picking the remainder of the pea pods, so he's left it over the fence so that the plant can 'dry out completely'. Denise added, 'once they are dry, we can collect the peas and keep them stored in a jar until the following year when it comes to planting them again'.

She went on to say that Jack *had* picked some green peas yesterday, but that they haven't had time to deal with them yet, owing to a hospital appointment that she had about her knees. She explained, 'we didn't get back home till gone 6 o'clock and by that point, I didn't feel like podding them'. She went on to say, 'but I will do! I'll sit there with my tray on my knees [at this point, she held her hands out in front of her as though she was gripping the handles of a tray either side that was sat on her knees and then, demonstrated with imaginary pea pods how she would remove the peas from the pods with her hands, placing the imaginary peas in one bowl and the pods in another] and take them all out of their pods, before blanching them.

Jack then re-joined our conversation, after briefly talking to Stanley (their neighbouring plot-holder who had not long arrived) and described the process of blanching that *they* do; he makes sure that the water on the hob is 'boiling before dropping all of the peas in, for about 30 seconds to a minute'. Then, he went on to say, 'I drain them and drop them in freezing cold water to stop them from cooking' to which Denise then added, 'this ensures that you don't cook

them fully, because you will want to cook them properly when you come around to eating them...so that's what I'll be doing tonight'. Then, Denise went on to say, 'this is the longest we've ever left them...normally we get them done straight away; the same day. But once we have blanched them, they will go into a bag, we have those freezer bags and they'll all go in one bag together, in the freezer.

(Field notes, 22nd July, 2016)

Unlike Adrian and Sophia's processes of preparing and cooking their tomatoes, for the purposes of enhancing the flavour of their tomatoes and creating different uses for them (as opposed to their tomatoes that have been freshly picked), within the extract above, the processes of podding and blanching green peas appears to be taken for granted as processes that ordinarily take place prior to freezing them. However, there are a number of allotmenters that either no longer or indeed have never blanch(d) their produce before freezing, because it tastes 'perfectly fine' (Interview, Helen) without doing so.

Even so, it is clear that the process of freezing produce can be more or less demanding of practitioners' time, depending upon the type of fruit/vegetable, the amount of preparation/cooking⁴⁹ that is carried out beforehand as well as their ability to 'adapt, improvise and experiment' (Warde, 2005, p.141). The following extracts demonstrate the amount of care and attention that is required to manage/ prepare raspberries for freezing compared with cauliflowers and peas;

...[Jean] described how, under normal circumstances, she would go home and give her raspberries 'a quick wash' and then put them on 'individual trays' or in 'freezer bags' before placing them in one of her two freezers.

(Field notes, 23rd July, 2016)

⁴⁹ Other forms of preparation carried out before freezing that participants referred to included; removing broad beans from their pods, blanching sweetcorn and broad beans, stewing apples or otherwise 'chopping' leeks, sweet peppers, French beans and/or fennel before placing them into freezer bags and freezing.

As Denise and I were walking away from their shed, towards Jack, who was, on his hands and knees underneath a cloche, clearing the raised bed that he had not long harvested their cauliflowers from, Denise went on to say, ‘...so the plans for tonight are for Jack cut the cauliflowers into small florets and then blanche them before freezing them and I’ll pod the peas and we can get them blanched and froze...this can be about 2-3 hours’ work...so really, you have to organise yourself, you have to plan ahead and think about what you are harvesting and pick them when you know that you’ve got the time to deal with them afterwards’.

(Field notes, 22nd July, 2016)

But nevertheless, these more or less time-intensive processes are somewhat mitigated by the convenience and practicality that pre-prepared produce serves (‘...you just go into your freezer and take a handful of this and a handful of that and throw it into a pan...’, Lynn) when they come to use it in their cooking at a later date (Shove and Southerton, 2000). The convenience of using frozen pre-prepared produce from their allotment was raised within all of my interviews with my participants.

Moreover, as Denise indicates in the extract above, in order to reap these benefits, practitioners are required to ‘organise’ themselves and ‘plan ahead’ so that processes and practices of preparing, blanching, (or cooking) and freezing produce can fit into their everyday lives. For Hayley and Adrian and Sophia, for instance, such processes and practices carried out over ‘the weekend’ or ‘usually the next day’ appear to be *relatively* stable routines, ‘something around which other events are arranged (Shove and Pantzar, 2007, p.162). Yet, as Denise pointed out previously (see extract on pages 230-231), such practices and processes sometimes compete with other arrangements or events that take place in practitioners lives. Furthermore, as Keith indicated previously (see extract on pages 202-203) with regards to his sweetcorn, it is not

always possible to harvest fruits/vegetables when you 'plan' to, without the risk of other predators eating them first.

Nevertheless, the ways in which practitioners casually talked about freezing their produce draws attention to their reliance on such processes (as already highlighted) and the freezer in itself;

[Linda] went on to explain to me that she has 'two large chest freezers at home' which are dedicated to keeping produce that she harvests from her allotment...

(Field notes, 1st May, 2016)

Walking around the raised bed with his [Keith's] sprout plants growing in, he pointed out to me that all of his sprouts would be ready near enough all at once. After asking what he plans to do with them when they are ready to be harvested, he chuckled, stating that he wasn't too sure what he'll do with them, before calling out 'new free-zer!' in a higher-pitched voice. He went on to say, 'well, I would have to buy another to store all of the extra vegetables that we have'.

(Field notes, 7th August, 2016)

Both of these extracts above demonstrate how, for these allotmenters, using a freezer to preserve produce is so embedded in the practice of allotmenting that it is taken as a given. Beyond this, the second extract hints towards the ways in which allotmenters' dependence on the freezer can induce allotmenters to engage in more resource-intensive forms of consumption. That is to say, the practice of allotmenting can lead allotmenters to engage in *less* environmentally responsible consumption patterns. This idea is discussed further in subsection 6.6.

6.5 Managing 'Surplus' Food and the Inevitability of Waste

Despite their efforts to try and capture the flowing material qualities of their produce so that it can be eaten in line with their consumption patterns and needs, allotmenters still seem to end up with produce that goes beyond their current consumption needs. Quite often during my field work, allotmenters gave some of their surplus produce away (or indeed spoke about doing so) to their friends, neighbours, close relatives, as the following extracts demonstrate;

As we (Lorenzo, Nigel and myself) were walking around Lorenzo's allotment, talking about growing more fruits/vegetables than they need, we passed Lorenzo's cabbages and Nigel argued the point that if Lorenzo 'didn't eat all of his cabbages, it would be sacrilege not to offer them to someone else, wouldn't it? It would be a waste if he just turned them into the soil [by composting them] but, if no-one wanted them then he could turn them into the soil because they wouldn't be wasted because they will break down in the soil [and enrich it]. In fact, he gave one of his cabbages to my chickens not too long ago...

Whilst walking around Lorenzo's plot, he offered me some of his kale, which he cut and tied together in a bunch with string, a tromboncino, a sweetcorn, one of his tomatoes and a couple of onions...

Just before leaving, Nigel went back to his plot (next to Lorenzo's) to fetch a carrier for me to take some of Lorenzo's freshly harvested produce home, along with a pack of six eggs that Nigel had given me earlier on during my visit, along with two bunches of grapes (see image 6.6 below). On numerous occasions, Nigel and Lorenzo pointed out that they would often give their produce away to others because there is 'too much' for them to eat at home. Nigel went on to say, 'sometimes I would drop a bag off outside my friends' homes, so, they know when I've been [to the allotment]'.

(Field notes, 27th August, 2016)



Image 6.6: Produce given to me by Nigel and Lorenzo during one of my visits to the allotment; Spinach, a tromboncino, sweetcorn, a tomato, two onions, six eggs, kale and two bunches of grapes (photograph taken by myself).

Whilst weeding an area of Arianna's allotment with her, (on the subject of growing more than enough food) she avowed how much that she 'hate[s] waste'. She explained to me that she would often give some of her produce to other plot-holders on the allotment. Later on, during our conversation Arianna pointed out how other allotment holders have the same propensity to share their produce; she went on to say how Adrian 'has had *a lot* of rhubarb this year and so he gave me and Catherine some because our rhubarb has done terribly this year'.

[Later on, in the afternoon] Whilst we (Arianna and I) were talking on Arianna's plot, Matt, the person who owns the plot next to Arianna's had called out her name from across the (low) fence (separating the two allotments) and asked whether she wanted any blackberries. As Arianna and I made our way to his plot

with two empty containers from her shed, Matt explained how his 'freezer is currently full of them at home and it would be a shame to see them go to waste as it's coming towards the end of the season now'.

(Field notes, 22nd July, 2016)

As the two extracts above demonstrate, allotmenters often try to give some of their surplus produce, that is 'surplus to their perceived and immediate requirements for consumption' (Evans, 2012a, p.1125) away to other plot-holders, their neighbours, friends and/or family as a means to prevent it from 'going to waste' or composting it at a last resort. Whilst he values the compost heap as a means of making use of excess produce, the produce is worth more than just a means of making compost. As Nigel demonstrates in the first of the two extracts, if allotmenters have enough produce for their own needs, not offering their food away to other people would be 'sacrilege'.

These findings seem to diverge from Evans (2012a) study exploring everyday household situations where surplus food could be saved from wastage. His findings suggest that surplus foods, including leftovers, are more likely to be placed in the waste bin (and thus linked directly to the waste stream) rather than passed through one of the possible conduits through which wastage can be avoided (handed down or handed around, for instance) owing to the anxieties and ambiguities surrounding food. In comparison, perhaps it could be argued here that, in this context, allotmenters experience a sense of anxiety surrounding the possibility of their own freshly harvested produce going to waste. This relates back to the idea that allotmenters 'carry' a sense of responsibility, which transpires from their involvement in the process of cultivating and nurturing their produce. These ideas also resonate with Jean's experience demonstrated in the extract below:

[Stood talking to Jean and Hayley on Jean's allotment, with a punnet of black raspberries and two punnets of red raspberries (in tubs in front of us) that Jean had harvested earlier that morning]. Jean offered her punnet of black raspberries and one punnet of her red raspberries to both Hayley and myself before she pointed out to us that they were 'going begging'. She explained to us that she doesn't really eat jams, nor does she have much room in her freezers at home and there will be more to pick tomorrow. The second punnet of red raspberries she had harvested were reserved for a close friend who Jean was visiting later that afternoon. She described how, under normal circumstances, she would go home and give her raspberries 'a quick wash' and then put them on 'individual trays' or in 'freezer bags' before placing them in one of her two freezers.

Jean made the point of explaining to us that, normally, when she goes to put her bags of raspberries in her freezer in her garage, she would only lift the lid of her freezer 'slightly' because she has her dog's food sitting on top. She went on to say, 'it was only recently when I lifted up the chest freezer and tried to put a bag [of some of her produce] in and it wouldn't fit! ...The problem with a chest freezer is, you can't really get to the stuff at the bottom and I need to have a delve in to sort through it'. Later, Jill mentioned that she had some asparagus in there [the chest freezer] from the previous year and she had intended to do something with it but 'never got around to doing anything' and so she 'ended up throwing it away'.

(Field notes, 23rd July, 2016)

Here, Jean reveals how some of her freshly harvested raspberries are 'going begging' to avoid them from being wasted because she felt that all of her options had been exhausted, vis-à-vis not wanting to make jam since it is not to her taste and like Matt, her freezers are already replete with frozen goods. Of course, the freezer is performing as it should; preserving produce in a state of abeyance. However, relating this back to the connection or the 'alliance' (drawing from the work of Monica Truninger, 2011) formed between both the practice of allotmenteeing and practice of freezing/ the freezer itself (explored in the previous section), this instance seems to suggest that there becomes a point at which the success of this 'alliance' (Truninger, 2011), relies upon the practitioner playing their role and eating some of their frozen produce throughout the course of the year or at least, leading up to the time when it comes to

harvesting/freezing *more* produce the following season. In this sense, Jean appears to have become *over-reliant* on the freezer as a means to preserve her produce.

Within this extract, Jean also revealed how she 'ended up throwing...away' some of her frozen asparagus from her chest freezer because she 'never got around to doing anything' with it, despite her intentions. In this sense, it could also be argued, that the success of this alliance, also depends upon the design of the freezer itself insofar that 'you can't really get to the stuff at the bottom'. This instance seems to suggest that it is not only freshly harvested (surplus) produce that allotmenters have difficulty managing; despite all of their efforts to capture the material qualities of produce to extend their lives and 'fit' in with consumption patterns, waste is still an issue. The following extract demonstrates another instance, where one allotmenteer has found himself throwing of some of his frozen produce away.

In fact, broccoli is a good example actually because this year I have thrown about three big bags, those bags actually [looking at the photograph of the bags of frozen broccoli he has, see image 6.7 below] away. They would probably be alright but we are not going to use them because we have got this year's going in there already and this year, for some reason, our broccoli crop is phenomenal.

(Interview, Adrian)



Image 6.7: Adrian's bags of frozen broccoli (photograph taken by Adrian).

Like the previous instance, the case above demonstrates how practitioners' *over-reliance* on the freezer, as a means to store their freshly harvested produce can work against them, insofar that Adrian has thrown some of his broccoli (harvested the season before) away as a means to *make room* in his freezer for the broccoli that he was harvesting this season. This reinforces, the idea that the success of this alliance, in part, depends upon practitioners' efforts to eat some of their produce over the course of the year to keep up with the produce that they yield each growing season. This perhaps demonstrates a tension between having a glut of a particular fruit/vegetable and their desire for variety and 'choice' in their meals, that allotmentees may experience. Within this instance, Adrian openly confesses to throwing his frozen broccoli (harvested the previous year), knowing that it would 'probably be alright', because they 'have

got this year's going in there already'. This seems to suggest that, for Adrian and Sophia, the advent of fresh broccoli renders their frozen broccoli (harvested the previous year) somewhat inferior or less valuable. In this sense, it could be argued, that the very nature of the practice of allotmenting, which involves sowing, cultivating and harvesting *fresh* produce, *may* contribute to the waste of their frozen produce, as demonstrated here. As such, the value of allotmenters' produce is constantly being re-worked and re-evaluated in the process of 'doing' allotmenting.

Even so, the very idea that allotmenters sometimes throw produce away, despite all of their efforts to prevent any from going to waste, calls attention to the complexity of the practice of allotmenting and the inherent tensions between consumers' wants/concerns (i.e. to preserve their produce) and what they do. Again, consistent with a point made earlier in sub-section 6.2, with regards to the use of harmful resources on the allotment, the analysis presented here challenges previous research that focuses on the 'environmentally responsible' autonomous consumer insofar that it demonstrates how consumers, despite their close, personal and intimate involvement in the practice, do not always behave in ways that align with their concerns. This is explored further within sub-section 6.6, where I develop the analysis presented here in the broader context of environmentally responsible consumption.

Furthermore, this instance, also provides us with some insight into how 'avoidable' (WRAP, 2017b) household food waste is (to some extent) 'unavoidable'. As highlighted in the introduction to this thesis (see chapter 1, section 1.2), 4.4 million tonnes of 'avoidable' (i.e. food that could have been eaten) is wasted. However, as these findings suggest, despite their efforts to preserve their produce, waste is somewhat inevitable, owing to the difficulty of trying to align

the growth and the amount of allotment fruits/vegetables produced with household consumption patterns.

In the process of re-working and re-evaluating the value of their produce as exemplified here, there appears to be a tension between their *need* to domesticate their produce, by preserving it and throwing it away as Adrian and Sophia demonstrate, later on, during their interview;

Adrian: ...you take the main head [off the broccoli plant], once they are ready and cut it off and then you get side shoots growing on it and there are about 4-, 4 crops aren't there altogether? [question directed at Sophia], and so because of throwing those away this year, which is heart-breaking because you have gone to all of the trouble to grow it, erm, we are only going to grow half the amount of broccoli.

Sophia: Next year

I: Right okay, so you are cutting back?

Sophia: Yeah, we have decided that we are adjusting.

Adrian: Half the amount of plants.

Sophia: *We* do try to plan our meals according to what we have got in the freezer and what needs using up

Adrian: And another thing, over the years, it's like, your recipes might change, your taste might change so you adjust what you grow accordingly and we are not eating as much broccoli as we have done in the past

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia, *Italics* used to reflect their emphasis)

Despite having an allotment for over ten years now, the extract above indicates how, for Adrian and Sophia, monitoring and trying to govern the amount of a certain crop that they cultivate forms a continuous part of the process of *doing* allotmenting. As such, for these practitioners, allotmenting forms a continuous process of trial, error and adjustment.

6.6 Domesticating Nature and Sustainability

This chapter explores the relationship between practitioners and nature, the notion of unintentionality and the positive and negative environmental sustainability aspects of the practice (identified in chapter 5) in more detail. By doing so, it accentuates the complexity and contradictions inherent in the practice of allotmenting, when situated within the broader context of environmental sustainability.

As my analysis delves into this reciprocity that allotmenters achieve with some aspects of nature (e.g. plants and beneficial insects) a little further, we can see how this connection is betrayed by other aspects of nature (wildlife and insects) and (what I have referred to as) the flowing material qualities of nature, which thwart their desire to grow a bountiful crop. As my analysis develops, we can see how, consequently, this leads practitioners to take various measures to (1) prevent these disruptions and (2) control the flowing material qualities of nature (e.g. flavour and nutrients). It is in this sense that practitioners try to domesticate (i.e. tame) nature, so as to be successful. As I shall outline below, the positive and/or negative environmental sustainability aspects of the practice stem from allotmenters attempts to take various measures to prevent any disruptions and control the flowing material qualities of nature.

For instance, this chapter demonstrates how allotmenters' 'need' to intervene and prevent any disruption/interference, can induce them to (sometimes reluctantly!) use harmful resources, such as slug pellets (which poison slugs and thus have the potential to poison hedgehogs who prey on them) or mole traps (designed to kill moles), which have some capacity to prevent the disruption. Whilst some allotmenters are aware/concerned about the impact that using these resources can have on the local wildlife, it appears as though the crux of the practice; to be

successful and grow a bountiful crop, is more important. Although, this is not to say that allotmenters do not try more environmentally responsible methods. As shown earlier on in this chapter, Keith demonstrates how using 'beer traps', which are generally considered to be environmentally responsible solutions to slug problems (The Guardian, 2006) can be 'effective', but 'not effective enough' to prevent the damage caused to their crops. Consequently, allotmenters often feel compelled to use environmentally-damaging resources, whether they are concerned about the harmful effects that transpire as a result of using them or not. As such, this analysis draws attention towards the seemingly contradictory nature of allotmenting, where allotmenters are, at once, nurturing and suppressing nature.

Alongside this, practitioners' efforts to domesticate nature extend beyond the allotment and into their own homes, which is where they attempt to arrest the flowing material qualities of their produce, before they start to spoil, by preserving them. In this regard, the practice(s) of preserving acquires significance in the practice of allotmenting, as allotmenters engage with and draw upon the material resources and forms of competence involved in cooking jams, sauces, soups, pickles and blanching and freezing produce, in their attempt to control the flowing material qualities of nature. As such, the analysis in this chapter shows how allotmenters become involved in other 'production-engaged' consumption practices (Moraes et al., 2010), become resourceful and become involved with traditional ways of preserving as a means to prevent any of their produce from going to waste. That is to say, practitioners make conscious efforts to avoid (or at least reduce) the amount of food that is wasted. This is significant, given the impact that food waste has on society; it contributes to the substantial amount of carbon dioxide that is released into the earth's atmosphere and in turn, to society's environmental problems at large (WRAP, 2017b).

There are two aspects (motivations and/or outcomes) underpinning this conscious effort. Firstly, my analysis shows how, through all of the hard work and care that allotmenters have put into nurturing and domesticating nature, they develop a responsibility to nurture their produce once it has been harvested to prevent it from being wasted. In other words, allowing their produce to go to waste would (metaphorically speaking) be a waste of their time. Secondly, preserving their produce in different ways (by making sauces to be used as a base for meals later on in the week, or making soups which are then frozen into individual portion-sized containers, for instance) allows them to incorporate their produce into their food-related consumption patterns and their day-to-day routines at home more readily and conveniently.

On the one hand, preserving their produce at the right time; after it has been harvested and before it starts to spoil, can be demanding of practitioner's time and effort. Yet, on the other hand, it can be more convenient for practitioners later on when time is more precious; preserving their produce, particularly by transforming it into something else (i.e. sauces which then frozen or preserved in glass jars, for instance), provides the opportunity to conveniently 'save' time in the future or rather, it helps to 'redistribute time and labour' (Shove and Southerton, 2000, p.315), insofar that when practitioners come to use their preserved produce, some or nearly all of the preparation and cooking involved has already been carried out. Similarly, the various ways in which allotmenters preserve their produce (e.g. by pickling or freezing), means that they do not have to consume copious amounts of their freshly harvested produce within a short space of time, before decay sets in.

Reflecting upon these two points made here, we can also see how allotmenters' conscious efforts to avoid waste are motivated by their self-interested, personal needs rather than

political/ideological concerns. That is to say, for these allotmenters, the avoidance of waste is motivated by their their time, effort and involvement in processes of nurturing and domesticating nature and their ability to 'fit' their produce into their household food provisioning patterns. Yet, at the same time, preserving their produce to prevent any of it from going to waste helps to alleviate the food waste phenomenon that society is currently dealing with. Consequently, in harmony with the findings presented in the previous chapter and Moraes et al. (2015) work, the findings presented in this chapter demonstrate how allotmenters engage in environmentally responsible consumption patterns unintentionally. As I have pointed out previously, this challenges research in the field of environmentally responsible consumption that places emphasis on understanding 'environmentally responsible' consumers; consumers who are environmentally aware and *consciously* make the effort to reduce the impact they have on the environment through their consumption activities. This is primarily because this research fails to recognise that environmentally responsibly consumption patterns can transpire through *any* other means, that is, other than the autonomous, environmentally responsible consumer.

Drawing our attention back to the importance of preserving in the practice of allotmenting, this study also calls attention to the importance of paying attention to the links between two related practices insofar as it demonstrates how more positive environmentally responsible consumption patterns (in terms of avoiding food waste) can transpire through the links between these practices. Figure 6.2 below highlights the links between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of preserving.

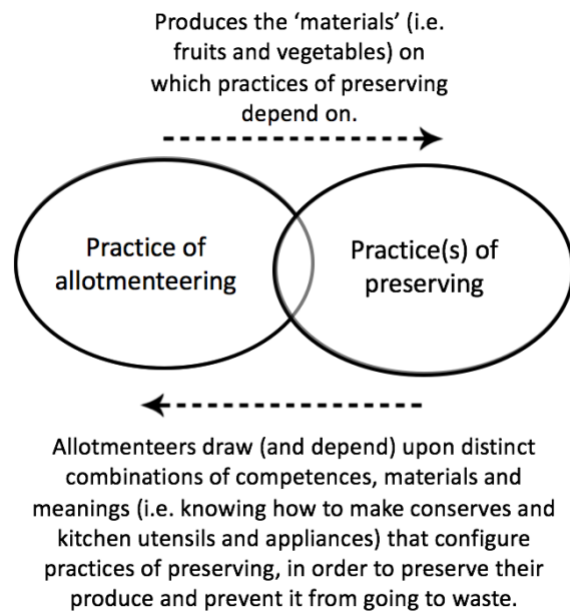


Figure 6.2: The links between the practice of allotmenteeing and the practice of preserving.

As I have already mentioned, exploring both practices allow us to appreciate how the practice of allotmenteeing and the ability to prevent produce from going to waste depends upon allotmenteeers' ability to engage in various preserving practices (i.e. draw upon competences; knowing how to make jam and material resources; kitchen utensils and appliances). At the same time, exploring the links between these practices also allows us to see that, in this context, to exist, practices of preserving depend upon the 'materials', that is, the fruits and vegetables, that the practice of allotmenteeing produces.

Aside from this, exploring the links between the practice of allotmenteeing and other kitchen-related practices also allows us to understand how A) food waste transpires B) the practice can lead allotmenteeers to engage in more resource-intensive forms of consumption.

Firstly, it demonstrates how food waste can transpire through the links between the practice of allotmenteeing and the practice of freezing, what has been referred to in this chapter as an

'alliance' (Truninger, 2011). As my analysis in this chapter has shown, the success of this alliance depends, in part, upon allotmenters' abilities to coordinate their *frozen* produce into their food-related practices throughout the year to ensure that there is enough space to freeze their fresh allotment produce harvested the following season. However, in some cases, where allotmenters had difficulty trying to 'fit' their frozen produce into their everyday consumption patterns, allotmenters were found to throw some of their frozen produce away. Figure 6.3 illustrates these links between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing.

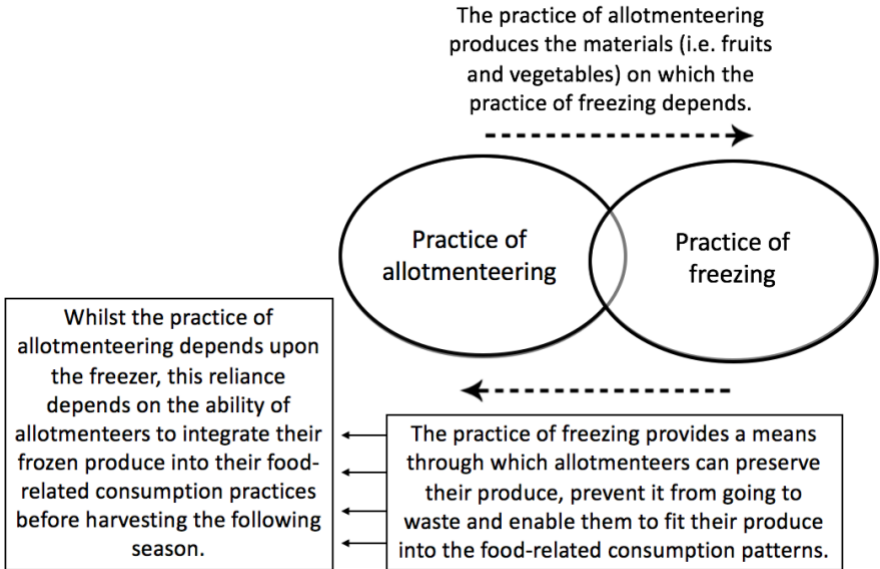


Figure 6.3: The links between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing.

Secondly, it demonstrates how the links between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing can also lead allotmenters to engage in more resource-intensive forms of consumption; this emphasis on the ability of the freezer to preserve copious amounts of produce, coupled with the limited amount of *precious space* that freezers have, has prompted a number of allotmenters to purchase yet another freezer, specifically for their allotment

produce. Ironically, the significance of the freezer; an 'energy intensive appliance', which allows them to save their produce from wastage, demonstrates how the practice can ironically 'trigger trajectories towards unsustainable consumption' (Truninger, 2011, p.52).

Drawing attention back to Shove's (2003) work and her arguments made in relation to resource intensive practices (briefly mentioned in section 5.8 in the previous chapter), it becomes apparent here that allotmenters do not necessarily consume electricity, they consume freezers, which depend upon electricity, in the process of preserving. As such, more resource-intensive ways of consuming are 'hidden' within the practice of allotmenting. Within her work, Shove (2003) visually demonstrates how individuals are becoming increasingly dependent on what she has defined as 'convenience devices' (e.g. freezers, tumble dryers) and the resulting increase in energy consumption that transpires from this, as shown in figure 6.4 below. From this perspective, we can see how the practice of allotmenting supports resource-intensive ways of consuming (as do the supermarkets and the frozen food industry), and can in some instances, lead consumers to engage in *more* resource-intensive ways of consuming, as some are encouraged to purchase a second freezer to prevent their produce from spoilage.

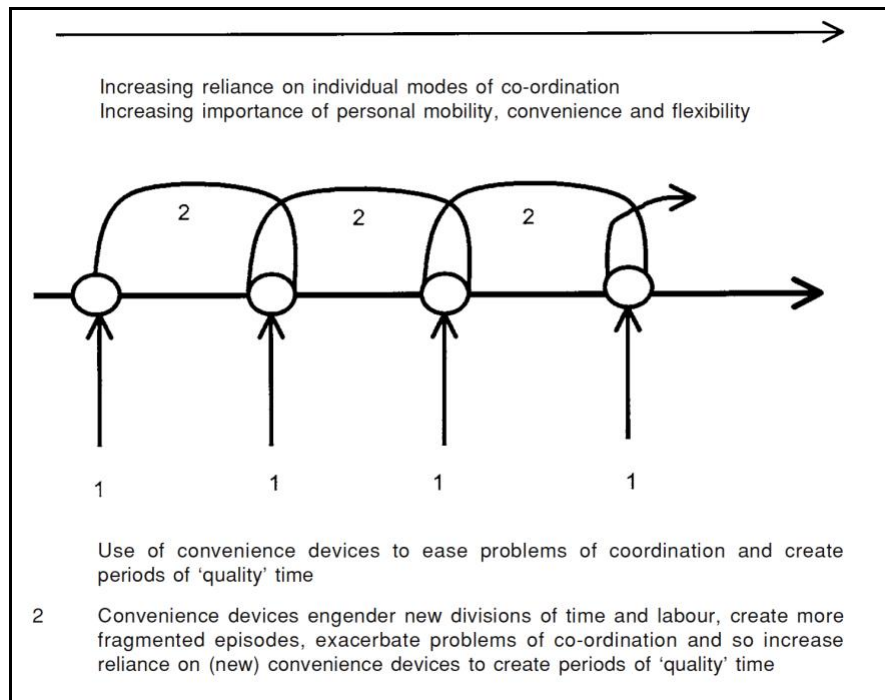


Figure 6.4 Spirals of convenience (Source: Shove, 2003).

Consequently, this study highlights the importance of exploring the links between related practices, when situating research in the broader context of environmental sustainability. Whilst the links between practices have been theoretically explored, to the best of my knowledge they have yet (until now), been explored empirically, in the field of environmentally responsible consumption.

In addition to this, this study contributes to the literature in the field of environmentally responsible consumption insofar that it draws attention to the ways in which the practice of allotmenting induces allotmenters to engage in *less environmentally responsible* and *more* resource-intensive forms of consumption. This contribution is particularly significant given that previous research exploring environmentally responsible consumption has primarily drawn attention to the ways in which certain consumption activities, communities and networks provide consumers with the ability to alleviate some of the impact that they have on the

environment, at the expense of developing an understanding of some of the environmental consequences that might evolve.

Chapter 7. Crafting the Meaning(s) of Allotmenting

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws attention towards the ‘meanings’ created and embraced by the practice of allotmenting, whilst appreciating that both ‘materials’ and ‘forms of competence’ feature heavily in the ways in which meanings transpire (see the shaded area in figure 7.1 below). The meanings surrounding the practice of allotmenting derive from two key aspects (1) the allotment plot (i.e. the physical space in which allotmenters nurture and domesticate nature) and (2) meanings/significance of the produce that arise from processes of nurturing and domesticating nature.

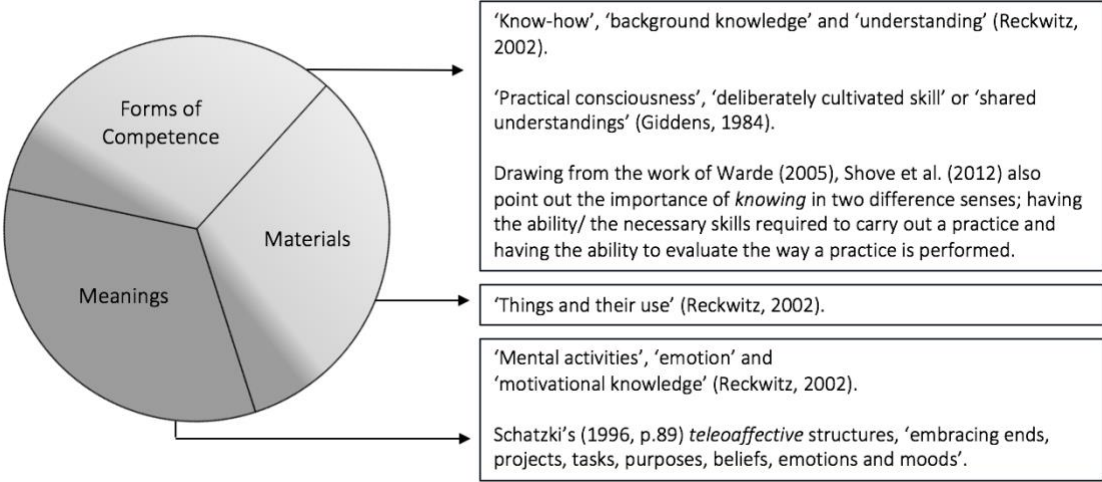


Figure 7.1: My theoretical framework with a focus on ‘meanings’.

The preceding chapters; Nurturing Nature and Domesticating Nature captured the different ways through which allotmenters engage with nature; as they participate in processes of sowing seeds, transplanting plants, weeding, protecting nature from potentially inimical weather conditions and garden pests, making their own organic compost, harvesting and subsequently managing and preserving their allotment-grown produce once harvested. Extending these ideas

around processes of *nurturing* and *domesticating* a little further, this chapter also introduces ideas around 'nurturing the allotment practitioner', 'nurturing social relationships' and the domestication of the allotment shed, all of which transpire in the process of 'doing' allotmenting.

The first section explores how practitioners construct the meaning of allotmenting in terms of (creative) 'work', through their engagement in alternative modes of consumption, forms of craft consumption and processes of re-using second-hand material resources. Secondly, this chapter draws attention to the value that practitioners ascribe to their 'natural' produce and the sense of accomplishment that transpires from their efforts to create their own home-made produce. The third section of this chapter explores how allotmenters craft meanings of allotmenting, in terms of leisure, before reflecting upon the analysis presented in this chapter in relation to the broader context of environmental sustainability.

7.2 Working on the Allotment Plot

The allotment landscape has long been recognised for both, its unique aesthetic qualities, 'redolent of do it yourself', (Thorpe, 1975, p.169) and its ethos around make-do and mend practices, which have resulted in an amalgamation of recycled, re-used, repaired, constructed and handcrafted materials and structures (Crouch and Ward, 1997). Often situated along the periphery of or otherwise interspersed in and around towns and cities, allotment gardens have previously been considered to be culturally problematic spaces (Crouch and Ward, 1997; Thorpe; 1975) that challenge the 'aestheticization of everyday life' (Crewe and Gregson, 1998, p.40; Thorpe, 1975).

Nevertheless, it is argued that these rather informal, productive spaces designed to facilitate the practical modes of 'doing' allotmenting allow practitioners to engage with more flexible, unorthodox, refreshing and nuanced ways of designing and shaping their small parcel of land, which embrace craftsmanship and creativity (Campbell, 2005). Such unconventional and innovative approaches to designing and creating their allotment space emerge through participants' engagement in processes and practices of recycling, re-using, repairing, crafting and nurturing and domesticating nature, all of which, are deeply embedded in the practice of allotmenting. The following extract taken from my field notes provides one instance in which both the practice of re-using materials and forms of craft consumption, carried out in the process of nurturing nature (i.e. helping to foster the growth by creating a warmer atmosphere and protecting plants from harsh weather conditions), serve to infuse the practice of allotmenting with meanings around 'work';

When I first approached Sarah on her plot, she was in the process of watering her plants in her greenhouse, filling and re-filling her watering can with water from the water butt connected to her greenhouse.

...Whilst she was watering the plants in her greenhouse, she recounted a fortunate occurrence which enabled her to source the necessary materials used to construct her greenhouse. She explained to me that she was in the process of having her home refurbished; replacing the glass in her home for double-glazed windows and she asked the guy who was installing her double-glazed windows, 'jokingly' [as she had pointed out], whether he knew anyone who had a spare conservatory going, 'and he did!' she recalled. 'They [the original owners of the conservatory] hadn't quite got the measurements right for the conservatory glass...so he delivered it all to the allotment for me to use'.

She went on to say that her husband along with a few of his friends 'built the wooden frame to suit the measurements of the glass' that they had been provided with, for their greenhouse...'I love it in here' she went on to say, 'because, you can grow so much more in here because of the heat'. Her greenhouse was crowded with plants in plant pots on shelving, the patio flooring and within patches in the ground (without patio). She had two water butts running connected through some drainpipes, which she also acquired from the original owners of the conservatory (as she had informed me). She went on to say, 'I didn't even buy the water butts that I've got!' She had acquired and re-used them from other people that she knows who no longer

needed them and connected them to the guttering and piping on her greenhouse...‘Apart from the odd pieces of wood, everything [I have used on my allotment] has been ‘recycled’.

(Field notes, 13th May, 2016)

Moments of consumption like Sarah’s illustrated above, depart from traditional, linear modes of acquiring and disposing of materials/objects concerned with monetary/ exchange value and move towards modes of acquiring which embrace the idea of a circular economy. These alternative modes of acquiring, consuming and disposing of goods reflect a growing interest in practices which work alongside traditional forms of consumption and exchange value and encourage consumers to acquire/circulate/transform second-hand (or goods no longer desired by their previous owners) through practices such as ‘eBaying’ (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2009) car boot sales (Crewe and Gregson, 1998) or more informal networks (i.e. garage sales), for instance. This idea around re-using/re-cycling second-hand materials are explored in more detail later in this chapter (see section 7.5).

For Sarah, it becomes apparent here that acquiring second-hand materials/resources (i.e. the greenhouse glass, drainpipes and her water butts) adds a sense of excitement and creativity to the practice of allotmenting and provides her with a profound sense of personal satisfaction. Thus, building on the meanings around allotmenting alluded to towards the beginning of the previous chapter, which calls attention towards the drudgery, laborious aspects of allotmenting connected to the ‘flowing material qualities’ intrinsic within nature and the idea that hard graft is inherent within the practice, here, we are able to discern the more enjoyable aspects of the practice associated with creativity and craft.

The realisation that Sarah actively sought out materials (second-hand or otherwise), for the construction of her greenhouse (rather than purchasing a greenhouse wherein some of the main components can be bought pre-assembled, for instance), underlines the active and participatory nature of consumption (Moraes et al., 2010; Szmigin et al., 2007) evident within Colin Campbell's (2005) conceptualisation of the 'craft consumer'. Within his renowned article; *The Craft Consumer; Culture, Craft and Consumption in a Postmodern Society*, Campbell (2005, p.24) first and foremost draws a distinction between what he characterises as the 'craft consumer' and other prevalent, dominant models of the consumer as either a 'rational actor', 'dupe' or a 'postmodern identity seeker', for he argues that;

[The craft consumer] rejects any suggestion that the contemporary consumer is simply the helpless puppet of external forces. On the other hand, it does not foreground rational self-interested conduct, nor does it presume as is the case with the postmodern model, that the consumer has an overwhelming concern with image, lifestyle or identity. Rather, the assumption here is that individuals consume principally out of a desire to engage in *creative acts of self-expression*. Thus, although this model embodies the presumption that consumers actively respond to commodities and services, consciously employing these as a means to achieving their own ends, there is no assumption that they are trying to create, or even necessarily to maintain, a sense of identity. Rather, it is claimed that these consumers already have a clear and stable sense of identity...

In doing so, he calls attention towards the more productive forms of consumption, that require some form of consumer labour (i.e. work), which in turn *creates* value (Moisio et al., 2013). For Campbell (2005, p.27), the 'craft consumer' or 'craft worker' refers to someone who is actively involved in designing *and* crafting objects 'that they themselves consume'. Campbell's (2005) work on consumption as craftwork, provides insights into the ways in which allotmenters imbue meanings around 'work' into the practice of allotmenting. Within his work, he reinforces the productive nature of and the considerable effort involved in craft activities, wherein craft consumers 'bring skill, knowledge, judgement, love and passion to their consuming in much the

same way that it has always been assumed that traditional craftsmen and craftswomen approach their work' (Campbell, 2005, p.27).

Whilst Sarah did not construct the greenhouse herself (as she openly acknowledged), this example demonstrates both, her creative ability to 'recognise the potential of a commodity which might not be apparent in its current form' (Crewe and Gregson, 1998, p.48) and the practical engagement of her husband and a number of his friends. In this sense, the skills, knowledge and judgement involved in sourcing the raw materials, designing and subsequently constructing a greenhouse (a particularly labour-intensive process!), are dispersed among and exercised by several people; Sarah, her husband and a number of his friends, rather than a single (craft) consumer. Besides the know-how, skills and judgement that sourcing the raw materials and the process of designing and constructing a greenhouse demand, the creative nature of this process becomes more apparent given the circumstances here. Since the glass that Sarah acquired was not bought from a greenhouse manufacturer; it was not accompanied by wood that was cut to size, fixtures and fittings or manufacturer instructions explaining how to assemble the greenhouse. Rather, the process of crafting a greenhouse depends upon their skills, creativity and ability to improvise.

In a similar manner, the extract below demonstrates how the necessary skills, judgement and creative ability (Campbell, 2005) involved in sourcing and subsequently designing and building a polytunnel (to assist in processes of nurturing nature), are dispersed between both Hayley and her husband, Jason.

Whilst Hayley and I were sorting through the metal frames, screws and pieces of glass (parts of a dismantled greenhouse, which Hayley, her husband and I put together that day), she explained to me (with some enthusiasm in her voice),

how she and her husband, Jason had managed to construct their own polytunnel using materials that they had sourced themselves, as opposed to just purchasing a prefabricated/ manufactured polytunnel. She explained to me how she 'managed' to source eight scaffolding poles, five-foot long each, (which they used to secure and support the bottom of the polytunnel frame into the ground) and the flexible plastic tubes (which were used to create the arch framework of the polytunnel) from the building suppliers (which was visible from the allotment site) without incurring any costs. She pointed out to me that the builders' suppliers seemed quite happy to provide her with the materials that she needed and that she only needed to buy the polythene sheet (which covers the polytunnel), which cost them £100.... Whilst their polytunnel didn't look as *perfect* as commercialised polytunnels, as Hayley had pointed out, she explained to me that their polytunnel performed 'as they needed it to'. In doing so, she appeared to criticise another allotment holder who had bought a prefabricated polytunnel (costing around £1,000) and paid to have it put together on his allotment.

(Field notes, 5th March, 2016)

The scaffolding poles and the flexible plastic tubes used to construct the frame of the polytunnel demonstrate Hayley's and Jason's creativity and ability to improvise; using second-hand building materials in ways other than they were originally intended and investing their own ideas and efforts into designing and crafting the polytunnel themselves (Campbell, 2005). Whilst there are alternative means through which allotmenters can acquire a polytunnel at their disposal, which 'avoids the craft route' (Campbell, 2005, p.33) as clearly demonstrated within the extract above, they chose to build their own. Hayley points out how her polytunnel does not measure up to the visual standards of commercial polytunnels, owing to the visual traces of imperfect craftsmanship (e.g. the materials that they have re-used and the creases in the polythene). Yet, she reinforces the practical, instrumental value of their polytunnel, which assist her and Jason in the process of nurturing nature (i.e. protect their plants from inimical weather conditions and wildlife, for instance). Thus, perhaps it is actually the visual traces of craftsmanship, which materialise from their own hard graft and imbue their efforts with a sense of authenticity, which provides them with a sense of accomplishment. In this sense, crafting material resources (like

polytunnels) to assist allotmenters in the process of nurturing nature, could also be characterised as a process which nurtures the allotment practitioner.

In other instances, allotmenters have sourced their own wood, reclaimed (Hayley and Jason), ‘recycled’ (both Paula and Richard) or otherwise (Adrian and Sophia) which has been used to craft their own allotment sheds⁵⁰ (and a chicken pen, in the case of both Hayley and Jason and Richard) (see images 7.1 and 7.2, for instance).



Image 7.1: Richard’s handcrafted allotment shed, which he named the ‘Broken Spoke’ (photograph taken by myself).

⁵⁰ Which also requires other materials including; hardware tools, wooden panels, gussets, galvanised nails and roofing felt and an understanding of how to lay the foundations, construct a frame, build roof rafters and use the necessary tools required, for instance.



Image 7.2: Hayley and Jason’s handcrafted chicken pen (photograph taken by myself).

Like the materials that Sarah and Hayley and Jason acquired in the previous examples, the wood which these allotmenters acquired was not bought as part of a ‘flat-pack’ shed for instance, complete with specific shed-building materials designed to be put together in a particular way.⁵¹ As such, it requires allotmenters to use their judgement and skills and enables them to engage in the creative process of both designing and crafting their own allotment shed. This idea of designing and crafting objects by hand on the allotment also resonates within Ray Garner’s (recited and developed by Crouch and Ward’s, 1997, p.11) work;

The allotment garden shed is seen by another architect, Ray Garner, as ‘probably Britain’s most prolific and vigorous’ remaining example of the self-builder’s art, precisely because it has evaded the criteria of imposed controls on design. ‘The shed-builder has no such constraints; there are no precise rules to be followed; his components need not be assembled in such an exacting way. The limitations are to do with lack of craftsmanship and “proper” material. The freedom is the abrogation of responsibility to the manners of craftsmanship and

⁵¹ This is not to say that products which have been crafted by following a “‘basic design’ taken from elsewhere’, that the end product is not a craft (Campbell, 2005, p.33). As Campbell (2005, p.33) argues, in the case of following a recipe, ‘some improvisation frequently occurs’.

aesthetics. Anything “will do”. This separation from a mechanical system and rules, together with a need to innovate, is the force which clears the way for creativity and subconscious expression.

In this sense, Sarah’s greenhouse, Hayley and Jason’s polytunnel and various allotmenters’ handcrafted sheds could be characterised as ‘self-builder’s art’ (Garner (1984), cited by Crouch and Ward, 1997, p.11), imbued with artistry, ‘self-expression’ and ‘authenticity’ (Campbell, 2005). It could also be argued here that whilst these different works of art provide tangible illustrations of the work (physical exertion) aspects of allotmenting, they also hint at the emotional fulfilment that allotmenters’ experience and thus allow us to catch sight of the way in which these processes of craft consumption and nurturing nature are also processes through which allotment practitioners become nurtured themselves (in the sense that they provide them with a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement).

Whilst Campbell (2005) does not explicitly talk about consumption spaces *per se*, within his research, he describes craft consumption as an ‘ensemble activity’, through which consumers ‘craft’ an ‘ensemble’:

...What is actually ‘created’ is an ‘ensemble’ or a ‘putting together’ of products, each of which may itself be a standardized or mass-produced item. Indeed, it is this kind of ‘ensemble creativity’ that is so typical of the modern craft consumer, being apparent, for example, in the way that individuals choose to coordinate the clothes that comprise an ‘outfit’ or in the manner in which they arrange furniture and decorative items to create a given ‘style’ in a room or in their home as a whole.

(Campbell, 2005, p.34)

Other examples he provides of ‘ensembles’ include ‘DIY and home modification and improvement’, alongside, ‘gardening’ and ‘cooking’. Relating his notion of craft consumption as

an 'ensemble activity' to the *practice* of allotmenting rather than a 'product' *per se* or 'a room' for instance, allows us to envisage the allotment space as just one facet of the 'ensemble', that is, of the practice of allotmenting. As such, the allotment plot becomes part of the *ensemble* that allotmenters craft as they re-design, re-arrange and give new meaning and significance to the practice of allotmenting 'as a whole' (Campbell, 2005, p.34), as the extract below demonstrates;

...Once Sarah had finished watering her plants in her greenhouse, she explained to me how she 'loves to grow flowers to attract the bees' and she took me further around her plot to show me the blue forget-me-nots (which she had sown the seeds for earlier in the year) that were thriving along the side of the small, narrow dyke that ran just alongside her allotment before reiterating how she 'love[s] stuff like that'...She went on to say, 'I don't understand why people aren't more creative with their plots...I go to different allotments and sometimes they can look quite shabby'.

Moving further around her plot, she drew my attention towards an archway that she had crafted from some small branches from a tree that she had pruned herself and her sweet peas, which she had sown at the feet of the archway purposively so that the tendrils of the plant could weave in amongst and climb up the branches...She went on to say, 'the only thing that I haven't done that I would like to do, is create something tall that pumpkins and squashes can climb up...out of recycled materials'. She explained to me that she had recently visited a place in the lake district and discovered a sculpture that had been crafted out of recycled metals cast together which has inspired her create her own.

(Field notes, 13th May, 2016)

By sowing forget-me-not seeds around the edge of the dyke that runs alongside her allotment and sweet peas at the feet of her handcrafted archway, Sarah has captured a rustic and picturesque 'style' on her allotment, embracing nature as a source of creativity, which she 'loves'. Reflecting upon an earlier discussion relating to Sarah's greenhouse (see pages 250-251), it could be argued that her forget-me-nots, sweet peas, handcrafted archway, greenhouse and the physical space of her allotment (including the dyke) come together to create a distinctive, creative allotment garden embedded within the 'ensemble'. Unpacking this ensemble shines a

light on the meanings of allotmenting; whilst the above example primarily highlights the physical and creative work involved in the process of doing allotmenting, we are able to see glimpses of the emotional fulfilment derived through the process of experiencing the practice of allotmenting and thus, the way in which allotmenters' become 'nurtured' themselves.

Building on this idea of allotmenting as a process which also nurtures the allotment practitioner (as well as nature), the following extract taken from my field notes calls our attention towards the emotional fulfilment and sense of achievement that flows through allotmenters' experiences of the practice of allotmenting;

As Adrian and I were passing their wooden greenhouse (see image 7.3 below – referring to the greenhouse on the far left), he drew my attention to the large daisies, cornflower and poppies that he and his wife had planted to 'attract the butterflies and the bees'. Not too far from his wooden greenhouse, he pointed out two triangular-shaped raised beds that he had designed and built as a means to both use the space (as he explained, it was previously just a grassed area) and create an 'interesting feature and a contrast for the eye when you look at it'. Although, he went on to explain, he feels as though this 'contrast' that he has created (in terms of the angles of the raised beds) and the point at which your eyes are drawn to, 'is sharper when the grass is cut'.

He went on to recount his and his wife's experience of designing and crafting their allotment enthusiastically, referring to Sophia and himself as 'artists'⁵²; 'before we *did anything*, we designed the allotment on paper, like you do, when you-, [at this point, he was moving his hands around as though he was picking things up and moving them around within an imaginary space in front of him], when you compose a picture and you position certain parts or aspects where you'd like them to be...'

...He went on to say, 'we tried to design the plot so that, whichever way you look at it, it- [paused] it has this look about it'. At this point, he bent his knees a little and he placed his hands out in front of him, with his palms facing outwards

⁵² I later learnt during my interview with Adrian and Sophia that Adrian used to make furniture and Sophia, his wife used to craft sculptures in their leisure time before they came to occupy their allotment.

and thumbs touching, almost as though he was trying to capture this *look* (that he was trying to describe) in the gap between his hands. 'When I do something, I like to do it properly...it does look better when the grass has been cut though' he reiterated. I got the impression as though Adrian wanted to make it clear to me that firstly, his (and his wife's) allotment was not in the best conditions, visually, that it could be and secondly, that I knew that he felt this way. He explained to me that he and his wife have a caravan in the Dales and that they have just come back from spending a week there, even though he knows that 'it's not an ideal time to be leaving the allotment when there is so much going on!' He pointed over to one of his raised beds (close to where we were stood) with weeds reaching a foot in height growing in amongst the brassicas...

...'When we got our first greenhouse (see image 7.3 below – Adrian is referring to the greenhouse on the far right in the photograph) (which they bought second-hand), we cleaned it and then we built it and positioned it on an angle and other plot-holders were commenting, saying (whilst mimicking the other plot-holders by speaking in a different tone, he pulled a face drawing his eyebrows closer together) 'you don't have your greenhouse on an angle like that, you are supposed to have it in line with everything!' and 'why have you done that?!' He pointed out that they were 'the first on this allotment [site]' to both, put their greenhouse on an angle and to construct and use raised beds; 'other plot-holders used to have open spaces, where they would plant their vegetables in rows.

(Field notes, 17th June, 2016)



Image 7.3: Adrian's and Sophia's allotment (photograph taken by Adrian).

In the process of recounting their experiences when they first came to occupy their plots, Adrian describes both his and his wife's experimental and artistic plans for their allotment, which they drafted on paper before carrying out any handwork, so that they could visualize how it would look. As demonstrated within the extract above, both Adrian and his wife designed their allotment, as though it was a blank canvas, so to speak, through which they could craft a creative, expressive piece of art; a *part* of the 'ensemble' (Campbell, 2005) of the practice, that they both consider to be aesthetically pleasing, 'whichever way you look at it'. This is reflected in the composition of their allotment which has been designed to create contrasting features 'for the eye' and the position of their first greenhouse, which as Adrian pointed out, was considered to be somewhat eccentric. Just as the hard work and physical effort of Adrian's and Sophia's

craft activities manifest in the materiality of the allotment space, so too do the personal and emotional meanings of allotmenting. As we can see in the extract above, the process of designing and crafting their allotment space provides Adrian and Sophia with a consumption experience that is characterised by passion and excitement and gives them a sense of 'profound personal satisfaction' (Campbell, 2005, p.38). Thus, allotments provide practitioners with a space through which they can engage with creative ideas, express their tastes and feel a sense of deep personal fulfilment as a result of the work that they put into the practice of allotmenting.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise here that crafting this *part* of the ensemble, that is, the allotment plot, is an ongoing process, much like the practice of allotmenting itself. It is my contention that allotmenters craft and continue to craft the practice of allotmenting and in turn, their allotment plot. That is to say, each time they come to sow some more seeds, replenish their soils and nurture their crops and through their efforts to design, build and maintain fixtures, fittings and their sheds, allotmenters continue to craft and re-craft both the practice and their allotment.

Consequently, in contrast to Campbell (2005, p.33), who makes the point that craft consumers craft what he defines as the 'end product' or the 'end result' (he uses 'a meal' as an example in his work), in this context, it is argued that there is no 'end product'. Therefore, by applying Campbell's (2005) concept of an 'ensemble' to the practice of allotmenting and demonstrating how craft consumption can transpire within and through practitioners' engagement in the *practice* of allotmenting, it allows us to broaden our understanding of the ways in which forms of craft consumption can transpire in ways other than those that necessarily

produce an 'end product'. In this sense, this study builds upon and enriches Campbell's (2005) theorisation of craft consumption/ the craft consumer.

The following extract illustrates this point by demonstrating how, maintaining the allotment space requires allotmentees to undergo what appears to be fairly tedious and time-consuming work, recurrently:

...Look at the grass around us, it's difficult here without electricity, because you need to trim the grass area, but the battery only lasts for 45 minutes so you can trim most of it, then re-charge the battery at home and finish the remaining area another time, but then, by the time you've done that, it's time to go back over the first part again!

(Field notes, 22nd May, 2016, with Samantha)

Up to this point, this chapter has drawn attention to the physical and creative work involved in allotmenting and the emotional fulfilment that allotmentees derive from their experiences. Moving away from the allotment plot for the time being, the next section explores the meanings that allotmentees ascribe to their produce and in the process, takes this idea of creative 'work' and the sense in which the practice of allotmenting nurtures practitioners (i.e. by providing them with a sense of accomplishment) forward.

7.3 Sensory Pleasures and 'Natural' Produce

Through our conversations at the allotment and during the interviews, many participants framed meanings around the value that they attribute to their allotment produce in fairly nuanced ways. Whilst this was briefly touched upon within the previous chapter (see section 6.3: challenging nature's rhythms), the value that allotmentees attribute to their produce was merely explored in relation to the 'flowing material qualities' of their produce and so the analysis focused on the

ways in which allotmenters try to preserve the fresh qualities of their produce, characterising them as carriers of responsibility. On the contrary, this section draws more attention to allotmenters' sensory appreciation of their produce. Within the extract below, Kirsty draws attention towards the sensory pleasures embedded within her experiences of harvesting and eating both her own home-grown produce and that from her brother's allotment:

Kirsty: They taste so much better, 'cause you've picked them fresh, even if you've picked them the day before, you know it's like, I'll say to the kids-, when they were little, I would say to them "go outside and get a courgette, go outside and get a cucumber, go outside and get a tomato" [...]. But, it [Tim's allotment and her home-grown produce] does taste so much better and it's like if I have to buy tomatoes now, people look-, somebody asked me in Booths the other day what I was doing, 'cos I was smelling [the tomatoes] [laughs], you know, when you pick the packets up? This fella looked at me and this woman said 'do you mind me asking what you're doing?' and I explained to her, 'I'm smelling them, I buy the ones which smell the best' and she looked at me and she said, 'oh I would never have though that'.

I: Ah right, okay.

Kirsty: But you see [smiles], if you don't walk into a greenhouse and pick tomatoes you have no idea of the smell of a tomato.

I: Right, I see.

Kirsty: You know, you get that funny greeney-yellow stuff on your fingers and you can smell the freshness in the tomato [smiling]. When I was a kid, my brother and I used to go in the greenhouse and I used to sit there with a packet of salt, you know, I used to sit on the floor when I was two or three-years-old, I used to go in and pull the tomatoes down and I used to hide and I used to sit there with salt and eat them [laughs].

I: [Laughs]

Kirsty: Absolutely loved 'em! But, you know, when you buy stuff in a supermarket, it doesn't have the smell, like a lot of flowers you buy, they don't smell.

I: Hmm

Kirsty: They've been imported from another country and they've lost the smell, they've lost-, some of them have lost the texture and the flavouring.

(Interview, Kirsty)

Kirsty's 'sensory appreciation' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010) of the natural, 'fresh' qualities; the definitive taste, the pleasant aroma and the 'greeney-yellow stuff' imbued within home-grown or allotment produce are, for her, intimately connected with her childhood experiences rediscovered through her more recent experiences of cultivating and harvesting fruits and vegetables at her brother's allotment. Moreover, Kirsty seems to suggest that this sense of awareness and appreciation for the sensory qualities of 'fresh' produce, *only* comes with first-hand growing/cultivating experiences. Her sense of profundity and perceptiveness becomes more apparent, through the comparison that she makes between her sensory experiences of consuming home-grown/ allotment tomatoes and commercially grown tomatoes. She seems to suggest that the latter tomatoes have *lost* some of their desirable qualities; their sensory appeal, their definitive taste and their smell (in particular), attributing this, in part, to the distance such produce has travelled. In this light, Kirsty implies that people who do not have experiences of growing, nurturing, cultivating and harvesting their own fruits and vegetables are deprived of these natural qualities, both in terms of knowing about them and experiencing them.

This idea of and ability to appreciate the sensory qualities of food that Kirsty has accomplished over time, strongly resonates with one of the main tenets of the Slow Food movement; an alternative food network, which encourages an aesthetic appreciation of food (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010). As highlighted in *Collective Forms of Consumption* (see sub-section 2.4.2.1) in the literature review chapter, the Slow Food movement, concerned with traditional gastronomy and regional artisan foods, espouses a sensory approach to food quality that is instilled with profound political meanings (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010). As Sassatelli and Davolio (2010) inform us, the Slow Food movement, which was born out of a sense of aversion towards the

development of the fast-food chain McDonalds in Bra, Italy, has grown sympathetic towards issues surrounding biodiversity and the environment, embracing a range of ecological and ethical issues in the movement's identity and their *pursuit of pleasure*.

Within Sassatelli and Davolio's (2010, p.219) research, the authors demonstrate how 'practical training', which involves savouring, smelling, cooking and presenting, is considered to be a political act which foregrounds diverse, yet corresponding notions of 'food quality'; 'from taste and pleasure as indication of cultural traditions, to conviviality as indication of healthy community/human relations, to landscape and environment protection and diversity as a way to guarantee food safety and security' set against the nature of society's industrialized food market.

Like consumers following the Slow Food movement, Kirsty's sensory appreciation of the 'fresh' qualities of both her own and her brother's produce appears to adhere to a notion of 'food quality' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010). Nevertheless, her sensory appreciation derived through her personal engagement; in cultivating, nurturing, harvesting and consuming such produce, appears to be an end in itself, rather than a need to convey underlying political concerns to others. Like Kirsty, other participants have also shown an appreciation of the sensory qualities of their allotment-grown produce, which stem from their involvement in growing, nurturing, cultivating and harvesting their own produce;

[Denise talking to Catherine and I] ...It is hard work, but it is so worth it and the taste-, the taste is so much better! Catherine, who was sat beside Denise nodded in agreement whilst both pursing her lips together and frowning, as a means to suggest that this was evidently true.

(Field notes, 22nd May, 2016)

The ways in which participants ascribe value to their ‘fresh’ home-grown and allotment-grown produce extends beyond their appreciation of the tastes⁵³, aromas and textures of such produce to include the specific ways in which they have cultivated their produce. This is evident within the following extracts taken from my interviews with Catherine and Arianna and Adrian around their allotment-grown produce and the *absence* of chemicals and other substances.

Catherine: It [our produce] hasn’t been sprayed; there isn’t any chemicals going into them [their fruits and vegetables].

Arianna: We know that it [our produce] is chemical free.

(Interview, Catherine and Arianna)

Adrian: I don’t think there is a difference in flavour to be honest, between our onions and bought onions but, you know, I know what’s gone into them and that’s basically nothing, you know and that’s the reason for it.

(Interview, Adrian)

In the extracts above, Catherine, Arianna and Adrian draw our attention towards the *natural* qualities of their allotment-grown produce (in Adrian’s case, his onions), which have been cultivated using methods that are free from chemicals and other pesticides. Moreover, it appears as though, for Catherine, Arianna and Adrian, it is their confidence in *knowing* that their produce is free from chemicals, which is important to them and stems from their personal engagement in the production process, consistent with some of the participants in Moraes et al.’s (2010) work exploring New Consumption Communities. This is particularly evident for Adrian, as he calls attention towards the purity of his onions, in comparison to ‘bought’ onions, which *may or may not* be contaminated with impurities. In drawing attention towards the purity

⁵³ Although, it is important to note here that a number of participants did not necessarily feel as though *all* of their allotment-grown fruits and vegetables ‘taste better’ than supermarket-bought produce as indicated below.

of the fruits/vegetables themselves, these extracts also suggest, albeit subtly, that these allotmenters do not want to consume produce that has been sprayed or contaminated with chemicals for their own *personal needs*, rather than the consequences that using 'chemicals' can have on the soils, wildlife or the environment, in general. Although, this is not to say that these allotmenters are not entirely unconcerned about the broader (environmental) implications of using chemicals.

Nevertheless, in the following extract (taken from the same interview with Adrian and his wife, Sophia) Adrian openly shares his suspicion about supermarket produce that is labelled organic, yet, in the same interview, Sophia (Adrian's wife) seemingly contradictorily draws attention towards their efforts to grow tomatoes, which involve their use of a 'chemical fertilizer';

Adrian: [...] You can't trust er, pesticides, herbicides that are in vegetables from the supermarket, unless you buy organic but I'm not even 100% trusting on something that is labelled organic to be honest, you know.

Sophia: Hmm.

I: That's interesting, what you've mentioned about products that are labelled organic. Can you tell me why you don't trust them completely?

Adrian: They still use pesticides.

Sophia: Yeah, see it's like take the tomatoes again, even though you feed them with the chemical fertilizer, they never get sprayed or anything like that with insecticides or anything.

Adrian: Oh no.

Sophia: So, the actual fruit itself, is as pure as it can be really.

Adrian: Oh yeah!

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)

Within this extract, Adrian and Sophia seem to be suggesting that pesticides, including herbicides and insecticides which are 'sprayed' onto plants are *not trustworthy*, whereas a 'chemical fertilizer', which they use to 'feed' their tomato plants *are*.

Like Sophia, Adrian also spoke openly about their use of a 'non-organic' fertilizer to feed their tomatoes, earlier on during the same interview. Nevertheless, he justified this by suggesting that they are giving the tomato plants the nutrients that they *need*, in order to produce a 'massive crop' and that without the use of a chemical fertilizer, they would have to compromise the amount of tomatoes that they produce;

Adrian: ...this is just the one area where we are not organic. You can't grow a massive crop of tomatoes without giving them loads of feed, they are just so demanding. This is one of the things that a lot of the beginners and people that have been there a few years don't realise that, if you are growing a plant or a flower or whatever, you know what I mean, garden plants. They don't take that much out of the soil because of the nature of the plants. As soon as you start growing vegetables, they zap all of the nutrients out so you've got to replace them and you can't just replace them with a bit, you've got to replace them a lot, you know. And obviously, it is different nutrients for different crops.

I: Ah right.

Adrian: But tomatoes are particularly hungry and they are hungry for erm potash.

Sophia: High potash.

Adrian: Potassium.

Sophia: Yeah.

Adrian: That's for fruit and flowers and that gives you good fruit and good flowers erm, so you need to feed tomatoes, which all of the commercial growers do, on a high potash feed basically. Like, to give you an idea erm, tomorite [*pause*] I don't know whether you are aware of this but when you talk about plant food, you talk about it in numbers, it's erm, there are three numbers, one's nitrogen, the second one is phosphate and the third one is potassium

I: Ah that's interesting.

Adrian: Those are the three main requirements and then there are lots of erm...

Sophia: Trace elements.

Adrian: Trace elements, but you get them with most feeds anyway so if you don't give er tomatoes loads and loads of potash, you end up with not a lot of plants and not a fantastic crop and this year has been the best ever, hasn't it?

Sophia: Hmm hmm.

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)

Relating this back to the previous extract referred to (see page 268), Adrian and Sophia appear to claim that whilst the chemical fertilizers are used to give the tomato plants the nutrients they *need* for the purpose of growing a prolific crop, these chemicals, synthetic or otherwise, do not affect the *purity* of the tomatoes themselves, leaving the fruit as '*pure* as it can be'. In this sense, it could be argued that Adrian and Sophia compromise and accept their use of a chemical fertilizer; a non-organic substance, insofar as it is used to feed their tomatoes under their provision and they can be confident that their tomatoes are not 'sprayed' with any other chemical substances. As such, they seem to be suggesting that using a chemical fertilizer *alone* is still better than buying mass-produced commercially grown tomatoes that have been tainted by pesticides (including herbicides and insecticides).

Despite Adrian's attempt to justify his actions, this example illustrates how meanings around what is considered to be 'natural' or 'free from impurities' can become more relaxed when we consider allotmenters' desire to nourish and cultivate a bountiful crop. This example indicates how allotmenters sometimes impute their own (flexible) ideas about what is and what is not acceptable, with regards to practices around food production processes.

7.3.1 'Natural' and Home-Made Foods

Within this section, I draw our attention back to the meanings that allotmenters ascribe to the natural qualities of their fresh fruits and vegetables (highlighted towards the beginning of the previous section). Beyond this, I also consider how these meanings embedded in the produce extend to their home-made foods (including their own sauces and preserves) that they have made with their own produce, before exploring how a sense of accomplishment derives from the process of making their own foods.

Within the following extract, as Kirsty talks about her homemade tomato sauces (see images 7.4 and 7.5 below), which she has prepared and cooked with tomatoes that both Kirsty and her brother have grown themselves;

Kirsty: If we have to buy a tin of tomatoes and make the salsa they [her children] are like 'eghhh!'

I: Oh, how come?

Kirsty: Because it's just not the same.

I: What is it that's different about it?

Kirsty: Because it's fresh...

I: ...Even if you've kept it for so long?

Kirsty: It's just-, I mean it's sealed, it's made fresh. You think about it, [when] you're buying a tin of tomatoes or you're buying a packet of salsa or a jar of salsa, it has been mass-produced, so it's probably full of sugar and all sorts of crap. That [pointing to her own tomato-based sauces in the photographs (see images 7.4 and 7.5 below)] is tomatoes, salt, pepper, oil and basil. That's it. That's all that's in it. Nothing else. But, because you've sealed it, no air can get into it, it's fine. And, like my jam, the jam is just basically pure fruit and sugar.



Image 7.4: Kirsty's homemade tomato sauces (photograph taken by Kirsty).



Image 7.5: Kirsty's homemade tomato sauces (photograph taken by Kirsty).

As demonstrated within the extract above, Kirsty makes a distinction between the taste of her home-made sauces; her tomato sauces that she uses as a base for making a bolognaise (for instance), and her tomato salsa (for instance), which are made using 'fresh' (home- and allotment-grown) tomatoes and the taste of 'tins of tomatoes', 'packets' or 'jars of salsa', which are subject to commercialised production processes and (in Kirsty's opinion), likely to contain additional undesirable substances. By making this distinction, she reinforces the fresh, natural qualities of her homemade sauces, which contain few ingredients and are made using her own (and her brother's) 'fresh' produce and are untainted by mass-production processes compared to the quality of commercial sauces, defiled by 'sugar' and 'all sorts of crap' that may be added during the production process.

Following on from Kirsty, Adrian and Sophia also reveal how much they appreciate the fine tastes of their homemade produce made from their 'fresh' produce;

Sophia: Yeah! We are foodies! In a big way! [laughs]

Adrian: I am just as interested in cooking as I am growing.

Sophia: Hmm.

Adrian: and I like to cook with what I've grown where I can, you know. And there are some things-, I mean, I do this red sort of Mediterranean type vegetarian minestrone soup.

Sophia: Mmm!

Adrian: And It is virtually 90% what we've grown, you know, isn't it?

Sophia: Yeah.

I: Oh right!

Adrian: I can't-

Sophia: I don't think there is anything that you've put in that we haven't grown.

Adrian: Yeah, but there will be, I do put stock cubes in

Sophia: Oh stock, yeah well, we don't make our own stock! [laughs]

Adrian: And it is absolutely amazingly delicious. I'm not just saying it, it's because it's all fresh.

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)

Besides drawing our attention towards allotmenters' appreciation of the fresh flavours of their soups that they prepare using their home-grown produce, within the second extract shown above, Adrian and Sophia also hint at their ability to produce a meal using 'virtually 90%' of what they have grown themselves. This brings into play allotmenters' close, intimate connection with more productive forms of consumption (Moisio et al., 2013; Moraes et al, 2010; Watson and Shove, 2008), and reinforces the idea that practitioners' *participatory* and *active* involvement in cultivating and harvesting the fruits and vegetables themselves creates value (Campbell, 2005) and gives allotmenters a sense of accomplishment. By cultivating their own ingredients and crafting meals on the basis of their own skills, understanding and commitment which derives from the process of 'doing' allotmenting, allotmenters have managed to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency.

Within the following extract taken from my field notes, Keith reveals how his homemade fennel, garlic and potato soup can be framed in terms of a sense of achievement, emanating from his practical experience of both nurturing and cultivating his own ingredients and subsequently cooking his homemade soup.

To the left of his sweetcorn, there was a large fennel plant growing wildly in one of his raised beds. Keith asked me to pick some of the seeds off of the plant and try them, before conferring about the flavour of this particular herb; 'they taste quite aniseed-y, don't they?' ...He went on to say, 'well last night...I made a soup, with potatoes, garlic and fennel'. I asked him how he'd made it and he proceeded to describe some of the procedures that he followed to make the soup with a sense of vivacity in his voice and his actions.

First of all, he boiled the potatoes in a pan and roasted a whole bulb of garlic in the oven, along with two fennel leaves/stems, as he stated. At this point, he mentioned to me that fennel leaves have a relatively potent taste, but the intensity of the flavour diminishes once the leaves have been roasted; 'it tends to mellow down a bit, which is good because you don't want it to overpower the flavour of the soup altogether...so once I'd boiled the potatoes, I kept the potato water and I used this as a base for my soup and then I seasoned it with salt, added a vegetable stock and the garlic and fennel and put it altogether [in a blender] and zzzzzzzzz [mimicking the sound of the blender when it is in use] and it was the best soup I've ever tasted'.

Seemingly proud of his culinary achievement, he went on to say that he sat there, with a bowl of his soup in front of him and thought, [whilst smiling], 'I've made this, I haven't made the salt or the stock but everything else I have!' before he started laughing.

(Field notes, 7th August, 2016)

In this extract, Keith describes the creative process of transforming his raw ingredients into his homemade soup, demonstrating his culinary knowledge about flavours; distinguishing between the potent taste of the raw fennel leaves of his herb plant (at his allotment) and the mellowed flavours of his roasted fennel leaves and the practical cooking techniques (boiling, roasting and blending) that he followed, which differ somewhat from the skills needed to 'cook' meals already pre-prepared (Short, 2006).

Within this extract, Keith draws our attention towards what it means to have 'made' his soup, which marry both his creative, practical efforts to prepare and cook his produce together with his experiences of and the actual labour involved in *nurturing nature* and cultivating his vegetables and herbs, both of which, carry sentiments around a sense of accomplishment. Indeed, as highlighted within the previous chapter, 'doing' cooking requires practitioners to engage with a variety of skills and different forms of competence. As such, the meanings that participants ascribe to their produce are not always inherent in the produce itself but rather, they are realised through their experiences and ways of 'doing' allotmenting. Home cooking,

as exemplified here, through the improvisation and creativity involved in combining their *own* allotment produce and other ingredients together, allows consumers to “realise their potential’ and ‘express their true selves” (Campbell, 2005, p.40). It provides allotmenters with the opportunity to showcase their culinary competences, which materialise through their authentic creations. This reinforces the argument raised previously (in section 7.2) about allotmenting as a process which nurtures allotmenters, in the sense that it provides them with a sense of emotional fulfilment.

Despite their ability to engage with practices of self-sufficiency (to an extent), allotmenters’ fresh, natural fruits and vegetables, will (more often than not) eventually blend with mass-produced, or commercially-sourced ingredients that have undergone some form of processing.

Arianna: That’s why I use that one because it uses all the vegetables that I have on the allotment [laughs]

Catherine: Yeah

Lynn: Yeah, throw it all in. I mean, like soups, like anything, you can throw most vegetables in, can’t you?

Catherine: Yeah

Arianna: Yeah, you can put in whatever you want. I just really like that recipe and it was so tasty, but I do put bacon in mine as well.

Lynn: Oh, do you?

Arianna: Yes, I cook a bit of smoky stringy bacon-

Lynn: Do you put er, tomatoes in?

Arianna: Yeah.

Lynn: Fresh ones or a tin?

Arianna: Any, whatever I’ve got. I usually put the jars in [pause] that I’ve kept from here, if I’ve got any, and if I don’t have any then I would put a tin in.

(Interview, Arianna, Catherine and Lynn)

'90% of the foods we eat for our [evening] meals do come from the allotment. It's like what we ate for tea last night. We had sautéed haddock with a leek puree and we had that with some champ. You do know what champ is, don't you? ...It's mashed potatoes with some spring onions chopped up and mixed in with it, oh but then I like to add decent handful of fresh parsley on top....so apart from the fish and oh, the crème fraiche, which is mixed in with the puree to thicken it, oh and the cornflour, you know, we have grown everything ourselves!'

(Field notes, 10th September, 2016)

As clearly indicated within the extracts above, what it means to put together a 'tasty' meal, requires them to blend or incorporate mass-produced, or commercially-sourced ingredients, such as 'stock', 'salt', possibly 'tins of tomatoes', 'smoky stringy bacon', 'fish', 'crème fraiche', and/or 'cornflour'. In a similar manner, allotmenters' effort to bake a 'fruit pie', combining their own 'raspberries, strawberries, white currants and red currants', for instance (Hayley, conversation) requires flour, sugar and butter. Equally, their efforts to make a 'beetroot and onion chutney' or 'pickled cabbage' requires sugar or salt and vinegar respectively (Interview, Catherine).

Therefore, in spite of their involvement with 'production-engaged practices' (Moraes et al., 2010), this manner in which allotmenters use mass-produced and commercially-sourced ingredients in their cooking, reinforces the understanding of allotmenting as a practice that is (more often than not) carried out by "mainstream"⁵⁴ consumers, who live and work within "mainstream" society. These "mainstream" consumers differ considerably from the 'environmentally-conscious' consumers, who live within consumption communities, draw upon each other's skill sets and work collectively to achieve greater levels of self-sufficiency (Moraes et al., 2010). Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out here (as I have already done so within chapter

⁵⁴ In terms of their outlook/ approach to everyday life.

2, section 2.4.1) that, unlike the majority of allotmenters explored in the current study, these consumption communities re-connect with food production processes (amongst other forms of production) as a means to redress the disconnect between the 'producer' and the 'consumer' and achieve a more harmonious balance between nature and society (Moraes et al., 2010; Szmigin et al., 2007).

Indeed, in the context of this research, allotmenters' use of pre-prepared, commercially-sourced or processed foods quite willingly, suggests that the practice of allotmenting should not necessarily be understood as a politicised form of 'consumer resistance', 'activism' or even as a means to deprecate globalised forms of production, as *other* alternative forms of (food) consumption have been (Lang and Gabriel, 2005; Moraes et al., 2010; Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a). Consequently, my analysis encourages us to quash the boundaries between what we take to mean by 'mainstream' and 'alternative' forms of consumption and appreciate that allotmenting, like other 'alternative' consumption practices (e.g. Freecycling) fall somewhere in-between (Eden, 2015). Aside from this, this study also encourages us to embrace broader meanings/ideas of 'consumption' *per se*, that appreciate the more 'productive-forms' of consumption, or rather, the understanding that different forms of consumption are inextricably bound up with forms of production (Ritzer, 2017).

Unpacking the meanings around the practice of allotmenting a little further, the following section draws our attention back to the allotment plot to explore the ways in which allotmenters craft meanings around the more leisurely aspects of the practice.

7.4 The 'Homely' Allotment Shed

The meaning of the 'homely allotment shed', reflects the material manifestation of objects typically found within domestic spaces that have been re-appropriated and used in a number of allotmenters' sheds. Some of the domestic goods that have been re-appropriated are second-hand; they have reached a point in their social (Appadurai, 1986), or indeed their physical lives (Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe, 2009) where their previous owner(s) no longer had a need for them, or they rendered them undesirable/valueless for whatever reason. In other instances, allotmenters have taken objects out of their own homes and relocated them in their allotment shed. This idea of re-using/ recycling materials will be discussed in more detail in section 7.5, later in this chapter.

The examples presented below help to illuminate this characterisation of the homely allotment shed as a space through which allotmenters craft meanings around some of the more 'leisurely' aspects of allotmenting. Whilst the allotment *per se*, could be typically characterised as a productive space; one in which allotmenters predominantly carry out agricultural work and engage in processes of nurturing and domesticating nature in the course of doing allotmenting, the following extracts, provide us with an insight into the ways in which the allotment shed attunes us to the more pleasurable, relaxing and leisurely meanings associated with allotment gardening.

I followed Linda into her shed... The walls on the inside had been painted a bright orange colour, although, she did inform me that she was thinking about changing the colour to one with paler tones... There were kitchen units fitted along two walls inside her shed, with a kitchen work surface and additional kitchen cupboards overhead. Although, contrary to their perhaps conventional use, some of her kitchen cupboards were used to store boxes of spare seeds left over from packets she has bought or seeds that she has collected herself,

alongside plant food and mixes and a *make your own plant fertilizer kit* that her daughter had bought her for Mother's Day earlier this year...

There was a single gas stove and kettle placed in the corner of her kitchen work surface, which she used to make us both a cup of tea...I noticed that one of the walls that some of her kitchen units were fitted alongside had been tiled, which I brought to Linda's attention. She then explained to me that, she had managed to salvage the tiles from a relative who was having their bathroom re-decorated and the kitchen units from someone she knew who was having their kitchen refurbished.

Whilst we sat down at the table in her shed drinking the tea that she had not long made...she also pointed out to me that the entrance door, leading in and out of her shed, was previously used as a bathroom door. She went on to say that, around the same time a relative of hers was looking to replace their bathroom door, she was looking to replace her shed door, which had started to look particularly 'weathered'. At this point, she un-hooked the door from the inside of her shed to show me the 'bathroom' sign that was still fastened to the door (which was otherwise hidden out of sight), before she started laughing at the realisation that she was using what was previously a bathroom door as a shed door. On the wall behind where we were sat, there were newspaper clippings providing gardening tips which Linda had cut out and pinned to her corkboard along with mementos from her grandchildren.

(Field notes, 1st May, 2016)

Like Linda, Arianna and Catherine (who occupy the same allotment together), also had a 'homely' feel to their allotment shed, with a doormat in the doorway leading into the shed, seating, a kettle sat on a gas stove, which was used for boiling water to make cups of tea (amongst other things) and kitchen work surface units and cupboards fitted alongside two walls. Although, unlike Linda's, Arianna's and Catherine's kitchen units and cupboards were of a relatively modern design. One morning at the allotment, Arianna had explained to me that a relative of hers; her brother-in-law, fits kitchens for a living and she had asked whether he could 'keep an eye out' for a second-hand kitchen that 'looked fairly decent' that they could have fitted in their allotment shed.

Within these examples, it becomes apparent that some of the objects, fixtures and fittings, that allotmenters acquire through various means work together to reproduce a particular 'aesthetic' (Miller, 2008)⁵⁵ which bears a resemblance to personalised domestic spaces and instils a homely atmosphere (to a certain extent). Thus, it is argued that they imbue a sense of comfort and familiarity to the practice of allotmenting. In Miller's (2008, p.293) book; *The Comfort of Things*, he contends that objects within a household convey what he defines as an 'aesthetic', that is, 'an overall organisational principle that may include balance, contradiction, and the repetition of certain themes in entirely different genres and settings'. In this sense, the ways in which allotmenters have creatively, expressively and/or purposively re-appropriated and made use of these various objects, fixtures and fittings work together to represent an 'aesthetic' of ordinary everyday life (Miller, 2008).

Reflecting upon the first two examples whereby Linda's 'weathered' shed door was replaced with a bathroom door that was in better condition and Arianna requested a 'decent' kitchen, it appears as though some norms around social respectability, which are evident within domestic spaces (Gregson et al., 2009), spill over into allotment sites, albeit not necessarily to the same extent. This idea of being particularly concerned about the way things look was also evident in another participant's shed; Janet had previously explained to me that she had bought some curtains second-hand from her local charity shop which she then altered (what Campbell (2005) refers to as customisation) on her sewing machine, to fit both the windows of her allotment shed and to cover the space below her workbench, so that she should keep an assortment of things stored underneath out of sight. Similarly, during one visit to Denise's and Jack's allotment, Denise who appeared to be concerned about the upkeep of her shed, pointed out to me that

⁵⁵ Whilst Miller's (2008) work explores material culture and everyday life within people's homes, his arguments are also applicable here.

she had not long finished trying to 'sweep up the [shed] floor' and 'put things back' in their rightful place before I came along, because her husband, Jack, 'tends to leave things around once he's finished using them' (Field notes). As such, it could also be argued that allotmenters 'domesticate' their allotment shed, in the sense that they have accustomed their shed to reflect familiar domestic surroundings and household affairs.

Such concerns also materialise within the design, layout and upkeep of the allotment itself. Allotmenters often carried out routinized maintenance work to their allotment, as a means to maintain certain standards. During my interview with Adrian and Sophia, who (as I have mentioned previously) have talked about their plot as though it was an artistic creation, Sophia reflected upon the onerous work involved in maintaining their plot;

It's having to cut it every couple of weeks or so and it is a big area and getting down those paths. He [Adrian] has had to get a small lawnmower and he just does all of the edges around the beds with the strimmer, you know, so it's like two jobs to do.

(Interview, Adrian and Sophia)

In another instance, Denise spoke about the character of an allotment, before expressing her concerns about both hers and her husband's (Jack's) not looking 'presentable' for the open day next month, where visitors will be able to have a look around. Owing to the pain that she has been suffering in her knees, Denise has not been able to visit the allotment over the past couple of weeks to tidy and clear the weeds away, which, as she explained, is one of her 'jobs' on the allotment.

When you have an allotment, I don't think it should be all neat and perfect, I even like the grass-like-weeds coming through the pallets, I think that they [the weeds] gives it character too...I don't mind some of the grass-like weeds

growing, they can look okay in the *right* places, but they don't know when to stop growing!

(Field notes, 22nd July, 2016)

In addition to social respectability, allotmenters' fixtures, furnishings and other objects/resources that allotmenters use or display (e.g. solar-powered mini fridge, floral net curtains, tables and chairs, doormats, kitchen units and cupboards), may not only be perceived as ways in which participants have re-created a sense of comfort and familiarity but also as a means through which relationships with other allotmenters can be realised, reinforcing the idea of the allotment as a social, leisurely space, shared with family, friends and other allotmenters (Crouch and Ward, 1997). Whilst objects and other aesthetics can create a comforting, 'homely' atmosphere (Epp and Price, 2008; Miller, 2008), they also facilitate, interact and are embedded within social practices (Epp and Price, 2008). There were many times during the course of my fieldwork when my participants would socialise with other allotmenters who occupied allotments nearby (and often drink tea!). For some participants, the relationships they had formed with others were particularly strong, as they would often visit their allotment during the winter months; a time when there is little activity on the allotment (in terms of cultivating and harvesting fruits and vegetables), to 'meet up with anybody that happens to be here' (Arianna) and 'drink tea' (Stanley). In this sense, the novel configurations within allotment sheds create a homely atmosphere through practices of comfort, socialising and accommodating others. In this sense, it is argued that this 'aesthetic' that allotmenters craft, comprised of a constellation of 'homely' objects, fixtures and fittings, nurtures the social relationships that allotmenters form with other allotmenters on the site.

7.5 Crafting the Meaning(s) of Allotmenting and Sustainability

This chapter explores the meanings surrounding the practice of allotmenting, which derive from the allotment plot; the physical space in which allotmenters engage in processes of nurturing and domesticating nature and the produce, which transpires through processes of nurturing and domesticating nature.

Drawing our attention towards the allotment plot first of all, my analysis illustrates how allotmenters craft the meanings of allotmenting around (creative) work and leisure. These meanings materialise in the physical composition of the allotment shed and the allotment plot itself, through allotmenters' engagement in processes of nurturing/domesticating nature, re-using/recycling or transforming⁵⁶ material resources and alternative, creative and practical forms of consumption (e.g. crafting their own polytunnels, greenhouses, assemblages and maintaining their allotment plot, for instance).

Bringing this discussion into the broader context of environmental sustainability, this idea of re-appropriating material resources (second-hand, reclaimed, recycled or otherwise) and re-using/re-cycling/transforming them in creative and imaginative ways reinforces and builds upon the arguments raised previously (see chapters 5 and 6, sub-sections 5.9 and 6.6) regarding unintentional environmentally responsible consumption.

In addition to the environmentally responsible consumption patterns that come about in the processes of nurturing nature and domesticating nature (i.e. efforts to build ponds, create

⁵⁶ Objects were 'transformed', in the sense that allotmenters created 'new uses for old things' (Parsons, 2008, p.392). For instance, on a small number of plots, old bathtubs were embedded into the ground and used to form wildlife ponds, farmhouse sinks were used as planters and in one instance, a glass shower door was used as a raw material to help craft a cold frame.

wildlife areas and avoid food waste), that emanate from allotmenters self-interested, personal needs derived from their involvement in the practice, my analysis in this chapter demonstrates how allotmenters actively acquire and add value to (second-hand/unwanted) objects that might otherwise drift into the waste stream (Parsons, 2008), by using them to craft assemblies like polytunnels and chicken pens, (which assist in processes of nurturing/domesticating nature), and the unique aesthetic of their allotment shed.

As such, this process of re-using/re-cycling or transforming second-hand objects, in various different ways demonstrates how allotmenters (in the process of 'doing' allotmenting) sustain wider 'regimes of value' and how the practice of allotmenting facilitates practices of 'moving things along'⁵⁷ (Gregson et al., 2007) and the 're-imagination' (Eden, 2017) of consumer objects and material resources. In turn, these processes can have positive implications for environmental sustainability, insofar that allotmenters and the practice of allotmenting work together to extend the life of objects (Cooper, 2005).

Consistent with the findings presented in the previous two chapters, these unintentional aspects of environmental sustainability are personal, embedded in allotmenters' involvement in nurturing and domesticating nature (i.e. their skills, judgement, practical effort in the creative work), which provides them with a sense of emotional fulfilment and accomplishment (i.e. nurturing of the allotment practitioner), rather than political/ideological.

Alongside the meanings of allotmenting that derive from the allotment plot, my analysis in this chapter also shows how allotmenters craft meanings around both the qualities and the fine

⁵⁷ Following the work of Munro (1995), Gregson et al. (2007) recognise that there are multiple conduits of disposal which can prevent objects from directly entering the waste stream.

tastes of their 'natural', 'fresh' produce and the meals that they have crafted, which transpire through their close, intimate and personal engagement in the process of nurturing nature. Framed in the broader context of environmental sustainability, the sensory pleasures and enjoyment that allotmenters experience in the process of doing allotmenting demonstrate how consuming in more sustainable ways can be an enchanting and pleasurable experience (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a) rather than being associated with 'colder', 'darker' and unpleasant experiences (Connolly and Prothero, 2003, p.282).

On another note, my analysis demonstrates how some allotmenters; those who place emphasis on their 'natural' produce, choose not to use chemical sprays for personal reasons (i.e. they do not want produce that has been contaminated with chemicals to enter their body), rather than environmental reasons (i.e. due to the effects that these harmful chemicals can have on the local wildlife or the environment (in a more general sense)).

Finally, by drawing upon his notion of craft consumption as an 'ensemble activity' and applying it to the practice of allotmenting, wherein consumers' involvement in the processes of design and craft do not necessarily result in an 'end product', the analysis presented in this chapter builds upon Campbell's (2005) work in two ways. Firstly, it demonstrates how craft consumption is not necessarily a means to an end but rather help consumers achieve other 'ends' (Schatzki, 1996). As such, in this chapter, craft consumption was performed as a means to assist in the process of nurturing and domesticating nature and also in the processes of nurturing their social relationships and themselves, rather than for its own sake. This idea is in harmony with Schatzki's (1996) understanding that activities within practices are hierarchized (see sub-section 3.3). Secondly, it allows us to think about what we identify as forms of craft consumption in a

much more broader sense that is not limited to those activities that produce what Campbell (2005, p.33) refers to as an 'end product'.

The following chapter synthesises the findings discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 in relation to the research question and concludes the thesis.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter concludes the thesis. To begin with, it provides an overview of the research and a summation of the key findings, in relation to the research question that this study set out to address. The chapter then outlines the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of this study, before highlighting the practical implications. Finally, I reflect upon the limitations of the study and detail potential directions for future research.

8.2 An Overview of the Research and a Summary of the Key Findings

This thesis set out to answer one broadly defined research question, that is, *how is allotmenteeing sustainable?* In order to answer this research question, I set the 'environment' to one side, so to speak and positioned the practice of allotmenteeing at the centre of the study. In so doing, I was able to (1) draw attention to the ordinary, mundane, routine, nuanced and often taken for granted 'ways of doing' that reflect people's everyday engagement in the practice of allotmenteeing and (2) contextualise the practice of allotmenteeing in the broader discourses of environmentally responsible consumption (Askgaard and Linnet, 2011) and thereby achieve the following: (1) a detailed understanding of allotmenteeers' unintentional environmentally responsible consumption patterns and the tensions/motivations underpinning the avoidance of waste, (2) recognise that environmental sustainability aspects of the practice of allotmenteeing are personal, rather than political/ideological and (3) identify negative implications of the practice for environmental sustainability, each of which I shall discuss below.

8.2.1 Unintentional Environmentally Responsible Consumption Patterns

8.2.1.1 The Emergence of a Reciprocal Relationship with Nature

Processes of nurturing nature demonstrate how allotmenters engage with environmental sustainability in subtle, nuanced ways. As chapter 5 demonstrates, allotmenters develop an acute awareness of nature's processes and form personal, intimate connections with nature. The emergence of a reciprocal relationship with nature, transpires through allotmenters' efforts to create wildlife areas (e.g. by planting plants and flowers) and wildlife ponds. Allotmenters' wildlife areas and ponds form essential habitats for bees (some of which are in national decline), other pollinators and 'beneficial' insects. In turn, they attract bees and other pollinators, which are essential to food production and 'beneficial' insects, which prey on garden pests, onto the allotment plot.

This idea of a reciprocal relationship that allotmenters form with nature extends to include home-composting; by composting their own fruit/vegetable peelings alongside other compostable material, allotmenters are nurturing their soil with nutrient-rich compost and at the same time, this 'intervention' (Evans, 2012a) into their household food waste disposal practices diverts some of their food waste from the waste stream. Despite the environmental benefits evident here, for the majority of allotmenters that took part in this study, their reasons for composting derive from their engagement in the process of nurturing nature, for the purposes of growing a bountiful crop.

As identified in chapter 5, these environmentally responsible consumption patterns (in terms of composting) spill outside of allotmenters' food waste disposal practices and intervene in the food waste disposal practices of others; as in the case of Paula, who composts her neighbour's

fruit/vegetable peelings and Keith and Linda, who obtain the 'green' materials necessary for composting from their local florist. These findings highlight how the practice of composting forms a bridge between the practice of allotmenting and waste disposal practices, at allotmenters homes, their neighbours' homes (as shown in Paula's case) and local businesses. In doing so, it demonstrates how the practice of allotmenting has the potential to instigate more environmentally responsible consumption patterns beyond the allotment and within allotmenters' personal networks. Although, as I have mentioned previously, it is worth noting that these environmentally responsible consumption patterns come about through the links between the practice of allotmenting and the (networks of) people who work to create and maintain the connections. Consequently, changes in these connections could mean that these environmentally responsible consumption patterns come to an end.

8.2.1.2 The Avoidance of Waste

My analysis of the practice of allotmenting in chapter 6 demonstrates how the natural life-cycles of fruits/vegetables (e.g. when they are ready to be harvested) do not always correspond with allotmenters' household consumption patterns/ needs, which in turn can create problems of co-ordination/synchronisation for allotmenters (e.g. the pressure of consuming voluminous amounts of fresh produce before spoilage sets in). Thus, allotmenters try to domesticate what I have referred to as the 'flowing material qualities' (e.g. the flavour, nutrients, and the natural process of decay) of their fruits and vegetables, before spoilage sets in. That is to say, allotmenters make *conscious* efforts to preserve their fruits and vegetables after harvesting them, to prevent any of their produce going to waste. Many allotmenters were found to preserve their fruits/vegetables in different ways, by drying them and/or making; chilli powder, jams, chutneys, pickles, soups and tomato-based sauces, some of which are then frozen.

Allotmenters' conscious efforts to avoid waste stems from two key aspects/ motivations, one of which, relates to their intimate engagement in processes of nurturing and domesticating nature. As I have highlighted in chapter 5 and 6, processes of nurturing and domesticating nature are characterised in part by experiences of ambivalence, anticipation, excitement, enthusiasm, defeat and frustration. This close, personal and intimate relationship that allotmenters form with nature, together with all of the hard work and care that they have put into nurturing and domesticating nature elicits a sense of responsibility towards the fruits/vegetables that allotmenters have cultivated, which fuels their efforts to preserve their produce and prevent it from being wasted. As my analysis in chapter 6 demonstrates, by preserving their fruits/vegetables in various different ways and/or using their freezers, allotmenters suspend nature's natural processes; essentially holding their produce in a state of abeyance, thus preventing spoilage. In this way, allotmenters are able to 'fit' their produce into their own food consumption patterns and needs, rather than having to act in accordance with the biological flows of nature.

The second motivation/aspect underpinning allotmenters' conscious efforts to avoid waste relates to the convenience that domesticating their produce in various ways provides. As I have shown in chapter 6, after harvesting, allotmenters often make batches of tomato-based sauces, which can be used a base for other dishes, or soups before freezing them or preserving them in jars. In doing so, allotmenters are redistributing the time, labour and effort (Shove and Southerton, 2000) that goes into cooking, so that when they need to make these various meals, during the week perhaps when time is more precious, less time and effort is required of them. Nevertheless, this idea of redistributing time and labour to make cooking more convenient in

their busy daily lives, still means that allotmenters have to invest a considerable amount of time initially. As Hayley demonstrates in chapter 6 (section 6.3), she and her husband Jason, who both work full-time, dedicate considerable time during their weekends to harvesting and 'processing' their fruits/vegetables to make sauces and jams, for instance.

As indicated in chapter 6 and mentioned briefly in the discussion above, allotmenters' ability to avoid their fruits/vegetables from being wasted also hinges upon their engagement in the practice of freezing. Drawing upon the work of Monica Truninger (2011), the relationship between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing (and the freezer itself) has been defined as an 'alliance'. As the analysis in this study has shown, the success of this alliance depends in part on the ability of consumers to consume some of their frozen produce throughout the course of the year, in order to create space for freshly harvested produce the following season. As the findings demonstrate, some allotmenters failed to 'fit' some of their frozen produce into their food consumption patterns which led them to throw some of their frozen produce away. This demonstrates the tension between having a glut of a particular kind of a fruit/vegetable and the desire for variety in their food consumption patterns.

8.2.1.3 Re-using Material Resources

Drawing attention to the allotment plot, the analysis in chapter 7 builds upon this idea of unintentionality (as illustrated in chapters 5 and 6) by illustrating how, through processes of crafting and engaging in alternative forms of consumption (so as to assist in processes of nurturing and domesticating nature), allotmenters add value to second-hand (or un-wanted) material resources and thus, serve to prevent these material resources from (potentially) entering the waste stream. These material resources become absorbed in allotmenters'

creative assemblies (e.g. greenhouses, polytunnels, chicken pens and allotment sheds) through which, they craft meanings around the (creative) work and leisure aspects of allotmenting, which lie at the heart of the practice.

Reflecting back on this discussion, my research chimes with Moraes et al.'s (2015) research on fine jewellery consumption. Within their research, the authors discovered that some of their participants who had redesigned old jewellery pieces to meet their aesthetic requirements, *unintentionally* recycled such jewellery in the process. Together, these findings challenge previous research that has placed significance on the relationship between consumers' attitudes, beliefs and environmentally responsible consumption behaviours, insofar that they demonstrate how consumers do not necessarily need to be concerned about the environment in a broad sense, in order to consume in environmentally responsible ways.

8.2.2 Personal Underpinnings rather than Political/Ideological

Unlike the 'environmentally responsible' consumers and groups of environmentally responsible consumers explored in previous research (see chapter 2, section 2.3 and 2.4), within this study, allotmenters' efforts to engage in environmentally responsible consumption patterns (e.g. develop a reciprocal relationship with nature, avoid waste and re-use/re-cycle objects) do not appear to reflect an ethos to live a more sustainable lifestyle or an aversion to existing global food production practices.

For instance, the purpose and significance of developing a reciprocal relationship with some aspects of nature, is less about 'protecting the environment' in general or 'reducing their ecological footprint' as such, as it is about caring for and nurturing *their* parcel of land on their

allotment, which in turn, enables them to grow a bountiful crop. Thus, whilst the allotmenters in this study do care for the environment, the manner in which they do so, is on a more personal and intimate level (i.e. within the confines of their allotment and the practice of allotmenting), rather than in terms of a political stance on the environment.

Similarly, their efforts to avoid waste by conserving their produce in different ways, also reflects their personal, intimate engagement in the practice of allotmenting. Through their engagement in the practice, allotmenters personally invest themselves; their time, effort and energy, which imbues them with a sense of responsibility to care for their produce and fuels their desire to preserve their produce in some way. Equally, allotmenters' efforts to craft creative, resourceful assemblies, using second-hand or un-wanted material resources, is less about their efforts to 'preserve the environment' than it is about their creative involvement in forms of craft consumption, which assist processes of nurturing and domesticating nature.

8.2.3 Negative Implications of the Practice of Allotmenting for Environmental Sustainability

Whilst the previous sub-sections recognise how allotmenting contributes to environmentally responsible consumption (albeit in small ways), there are a number of negative environmental implications that ensue from the practice, as follows.

As shown in chapter 6, the reciprocity that allotmenters achieve with some aspects of nature (e.g. plants and beneficial insects) is betrayed by other aspects of nature (e.g. burgeoning weeds, wildlife and invasive garden pests), which interfere in their efforts to nurture and cultivate their crops. Thus, the crux of the practice; to be successful and grow a bountiful crop, induces

allotmenters to prevent these interferences/disruptions from occurring (one sense in which allotmenters try to domesticate nature). Often the means by which allotmenters try to prevent these disruptions (e.g. using moles traps or slug pellets) can have deleterious effects on the local wildlife nearby. Whilst some allotmenters are conscious of the impact that using these harmful resources can have on the local environment (e.g. Sarah talks about the poison from slug pellets making its way down the gradient of the allotment site and into the water source of the local wildlife that reside near the mere), it appears as though growing a bountiful crop outweighs the negative impact that these substances/resources have on the local wildlife. Consequently, this analysis begins to unpick the complexity inherent in the practice of allotmenting and reveal some of the tensions that come about in the process of nurturing and domesticating nature.

Aside from their efforts to domesticate nature, my analysis in chapter 5 (see section 5.7) demonstrates how growing a bountiful crop can lead allotmenters to nurture nature in ways that negatively impact the environment on a much broader scale. Eric, an allotmenter who largely grows his fruits/vegetables for showing in horticultural shows uses peat, derived from peatlands which (as highlighted previously) are home to many rare and threatened species and provide a crucial resource for the environment in the sense that they store masses of carbon dioxide that is otherwise released into the earth's atmosphere.

Moving away from the allotment plot and into the home, my analysis also demonstrates how *less* environmentally responsible consumption patterns may transpire through the unstable links between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing. Reflecting back on the alliance formed between the practice of allotmenting and freezing and the issue of food

waste, my analysis in chapter 6 demonstrates how the success of this alliance (in part) depends upon allotmenters' ability to co-ordinate and synchronise their frozen produce with their food-related consumption practices, during the interim period, that is, before allotmenters need the space in the freezer to preserve their freshly harvested produce the following season. In cases where allotmenters have faced difficulties trying to fit their frozen produce into their everyday food-related consumption patterns, some of their frozen food was thrown away.

Aside from food waste potentially being an issue, my analysis also demonstrates how some allotmenters bought more precious space (i.e. a second freezer) to prevent their allotment-grown produce from going to waste. As Shove (2003) highlights within her work, people are becoming increasingly reliant on a repertoire of, what she has defined 'convenience devices', (including the car and the freezer), which allow them to achieve a greater control and flexibility over their personal schedule. Nevertheless, these 'convenience devices' and the benefits that they provide to individuals, come at the expense of increasing energy consumption (Shove, 2003). Consistent with consumers' ordinary consumption patterns that Shove (2003) refers to in her work, which underpin their *need* for convenience, my analysis demonstrates how the practice of allotmenting legitimises the use of freezers (for convenience reasons) and thus demonstrates how the practice can potentially 'trigger trajectories towards [more] unsustainable consumption' patterns (Truninger, 2011, p.52).

From an environmental-sustainability perspective, the alliance formed between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing (and the freezer) is somewhat ironic. Yet, for these allotmenters, the environmental implications of using this resource-intensive object and engaging in this resource-intensive practice) are hidden by their need to 'freeze' their produce

(i.e. freeze the biological flows of nature) and prevent their allotment-grown foods from being wasted. In this sense, the practice of consuming an energy-intensive resource is bound up in the routines that constitute the practice of allotmenting.

Reflecting upon the points raised here, the extent to which allotmenters engage in more or less environmentally responsible consumption patterns varies for individual practitioners, but as my analysis demonstrates, the extent to which allotmenters engage in more environmentally unresponsible consumption patterns appears to be exacerbated by the exigencies of growing for shows at horticultural competitions.

8.3 Theoretical Contributions

8.3.1 Contributions to the Field of Environmentally Responsible Consumption

By and large, academic research in the field of environmentally responsible consumption has tended to focus on individual (or groups of) environmentally responsible consumers as agents for change. As demonstrated within chapter 2, this substantial body of research centred around matters of agency is divided. Broadly speaking, there are studies that assume that, or at the very least attempt to demonstrate how, consumers can help to alleviate society's environmental issues through their consumption activities (i.e. their purchasing behaviour or through the alternative food consumption networks that they affiliate with). Alternatively, there are studies that maintain that consumers' consumption activities are constrained by their social needs/pressures, personal resources and marketplace constraints.

What is missing from these studies, is a focus on the practical, embodied processes of consumption as they occur in everyday life. By taking a practice-theoretical approach to the study of consumption, this thesis moves 'theoretical conversations' (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014, p.1203) and debates around environmentally responsible consumption beyond the (self-confessed) environmentally responsible consumer and beyond groups of (self-confessed) environmentally responsible consumers and follows an approach that concentrates on consumers' everyday routines. In doing so, this thesis makes a number of theoretical contributions.

Firstly, as per my discussion in the previous section, this study has shown that environmentally responsible consumption patterns ensue from allotmenters' close, personal involvement in the practice of allotmenting, rather than an espoused political ideology vis-à-vis consumption, the environment or society. That is to say, whilst some of the activities that allotmenters engage in can be described as being 'environmentally responsible', they primarily engage in them, because they provide a means through which they can grow a more bountiful, prolific crop, prevent their produce (and in turn their time and effort investing in the practice) from going to waste and exercise their creative skills and abilities. In other words, allotmenters in this study primarily engage in 'environmentally responsible' activities for their own self-interested needs, which derive from their involvement in the practice, not because they share an 'environmental consciousness'.

Somewhat connected to this point, my research has shown how environmentally responsible consumption patterns transpire in 'unintentional' (Moraes et al., 2015) ways, through allotmenters' practical, routine and intimate engagement in allotmenting. As such, it

illustrates how environmentally responsible consumption patterns are performed not just by 'environmentally responsible' consumers, who are aware of and concerned about the impact we have on the environment. Although, it is worth pointing out here, that whilst the allotmenters in the present study engage in 'environmentally responsible' activities for their own self-interested needs *primarily*, there were a few allotmenters who did appreciate the environmental benefits that derived from their involvement in these activities. Nevertheless, this is not to say that these allotmenters engage in these 'environmentally responsible' activities for environmental reasons, broadly speaking. Rather, the environmental benefits that they are aware of adds to the sense of achievement that they derive from the practice.

Turning our attention back to the point in question, by demonstrating how allotmenters' environmentally responsible consumption patterns are motivated by their self-interests and their desire to practice allotmenting proficiently rather than the environment *per se*, this study suggests that merely looking at society's environmental issues as a motivation for engaging in environmentally responsible consumption patterns (as many of the earlier studies exploring environmentally responsible consumption have done so)⁵⁸ fails to acknowledge *other* ways in which environmentally responsible consumption patterns transpire. This study therefore challenges previous research that has placed significance on the relationship between consumers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and environmentally responsible consumption behaviours. In turn, it contributes to the field of environmentally responsible consumption by showing how taking a practice-theoretical approach can illuminate ways through which practices can instigate more environmentally responsible consumption patterns.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 2, sub-section 2.2.

Secondly, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating how the practice of allotmenting; a practice generally perceived to be 'environmentally responsible' (see chapter 1, sub-section 1.2) can sometimes lead consumers to engage in less environmentally responsible consumption patterns. As my analysis in chapter 5 and 6 demonstrates, some allotmenters use slug pellets, traps and/or commercial sprays containing harmful chemicals, as a means to prevent and/or eradicate diseases, insects or wildlife from potentially spoiling their crops. My analysis in chapter 6 also demonstrates how, despite consumers' conscious efforts to avoid waste (owing to their intimate, personal engagement in the practice and the convenience it provides), allotmenters sometimes end up throwing some of their frozen produce away. Beyond this, chapter 6 also shows how engaging in the practice of allotmenting promotes/leads consumers to engage in more resource-intensive ways of consuming.

It is my contention that, for the most part, studies within the field of environmentally responsible consumption typically draw attention to the ways in which various consumption activities, or their involvement in consumption communities/networks/systems allow consumers to address the environmental effects that society faces. In doing so, they have largely downplayed the negative environmental consequences that can arise in such consumption activities. Consequently, it highlights how these studies risk romanticising what they consider to be forms of 'environmentally responsible' consumption.

Aside from these two points raised here, this study also contributes to the literature insofar that it demonstrates how, despite consumers' *conscious* efforts to avoid waste (owing to their intimate, personal engagement in the practice and the convenience it provides) food waste still becomes an issue. That is to say, whilst 'environmentally responsible' consumers may

consciously make the effort to engage in environmentally responsible consumption patterns, as a means to alleviate some of the impact that they have on the environment, they may not be able to for whatever reason. As a result, it draws attention to the highly-contested idea of consumer agency and again, it reinforces the importance of looking beyond individual behaviours and beyond ‘motivation’, ‘attitudes’ and ‘beliefs’, and thinking about behaviour change more broadly (Moraes et al., 2012). For instance, by looking at the ways in which all of the elements that compose a practice work together.

8.3.2 Contributions to Practice Theory

This study contributes to practice theory insofar that it, explores the links between ‘related’ practices; the practice of allotmenting and kitchen-related practices (i.e. storing, cooking, preserving and freezing practices). Whilst the ways in which practices (in a more general sense) relate to one another has been theorised (see Shove et al., 2012), these relationships have not yet, to the best of my knowledge, been explored empirically in the field of environmentally responsible consumption.

By looking at the ways in which the practice of allotmenting and kitchen-related practices relate to one another, this study demonstrates how we can identify moments within, what Shove et al., (2012) refer to as, ‘practice complexes’, which may lead consumers down certain pathways that result in less environmentally responsible ways of consuming. In particular, the present study draws attention to the importance of the ‘temporal relationship’ (Shove et al., 2012) between the practice of allotmenting and the practice of freezing. As demonstrated within chapter 6, the practice of allotmenting relies upon the practice of freezing and the ability of the freezer to freeze copious amounts of produce, which is harvested over a relatively

short period of time. However, relying on the capabilities of the freezer to freeze their freshly harvested produce the following season, depends upon allotmenters to *conveniently fit* their already-frozen produce (harvested last season) into their morning, daytime and/or evening meals (see figure 6.4 in Chapter 6). As such, it draws our attention to the way in which this relationship (between allotmenting and freezing) and the ability to preserve their produce in this way, depends upon the 'efficient and effective sequencing of multiple practices' (Shove et al., 2012, p.86).

As this study has shown (see chapter 6), when the links between the practice of freezing and allotmenting break down (i.e. allotmenters do not consume their frozen produce before they come to harvest their *fresh* produce the following season), frozen produce may be thrown out, in order to 'make space' for freshly harvested produce. Consequently, this study empirically reinforces the importance of looking at the ways in which practices relate to one another, particularly when thinking about how we can address less responsible ways of consuming and support more environmentally responsible ways of living. Beyond the context of allotmenting, exploring the links between practices of comfort and cleanliness within the home and the practice of parenting could help us develop our understanding of more and less environmentally responsible ways of living.

8.4 Methodological Contribution

As I have highlighted within the review of the literature (see chapter 2), there are only a small number of consumption studies (in the field of consumer research) that follow an ethnographic approach in an attempt to explore, understand and situate consumers' experiences of

environmentally responsible consumption in an everyday context (e.g. Bekin et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 2011; Moraes et al., 2010; Moraes et al., 2012; Vannini and Taggart, 2016). In line with these few studies, the current study allows us to move away from rational, individualistic perspectives that predominantly explore consumers' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours or rather, *what they say they do*, and place more emphasis on *what consumers actually do*.

Over and above this, this study calls upon ethnography as a means to capture the more nuanced, taken-for-granted 'ways of doings' allotmenteeing over the course of an entire growing season. That is to say, besides documenting moments of everyday practice in natural settings, this study also demonstrates how adopting an ethnographic approach in this study, allows us to appreciate; A) the natural timescales of the fruits and vegetables, B) changes in weather conditions and C) the various challenges that allotmentees face throughout the growing season, which are intimately bound up with the practice. In turn, as I have shown within the three analysis chapters, this study demonstrates how taking an ethnographic approach helps to ground our understanding of the practice in reality and draw attention to the complexity and contradictions inherent in the practice, that come about over the course of an entire growing season. In doing so, it also reinforces the importance of paying attention to the temporal dimension of a practice beyond this study.

8.5 Practical Contributions and Implications

This thesis has illustrated how environmentally responsible consumption patterns transpire through practitioners' personal, intimate engagement in the practice of allotmenteeing, rather than *via* an espoused political ideology or conscious effort to preserve the environment in a more general sense. These findings therefore lead us to question whether more environmentally

responsible consumption patterns could become normalised and integrated into consumers' everyday consumption activities, as they have done so for allotmenters in this research.

Another practical implication ensuing from my research relates to the pertinent, environmentally-significant issue of 'food waste'. As I have already discussed (chapter 6, section 6.5), despite allotmenters' deep, personal and intimate engagement in the process of allotmenting and the sense of responsibility, which impels them to care for, manage and preserve the produce that they have grown themselves, food waste still becomes an issue. My analysis demonstrated how food waste is embedded in the links between the practice of allotmenting, the practice of freezing and household food-related consumption patterns and needs. Therefore, another practical implication that relates to the issue of food waste concerns societal marketing and policy approaches that isolate 'food waste' as an issue. Doing so, would be to misunderstand the circumstances in which food waste occurs.

Reflecting upon the current research study and the understanding that food waste is embedded in the links between practices encourages us to consider whether perhaps practical, legitimate interventions may help to alleviate (at least) some of the amount of food that is wasted. For instance, it might be advantageous to develop feasible and accessible schemes through which, allotmenters can give or swap some of their produce (i.e. produce that exceeds their current needs), with other allotmenters, either those who occupy a plot at the same allotment site or allotments close by (within a five-mile radius, for instance), to prevent/overcome some food waste. Similarly, it might be beneficial for allotments (or allotmenters at individual sites) to establish connections with local foodbanks, which could act as another conduit (Gregson et al., 2007), through which excess/surplus food could be consumed, before they begin to spoil.

Alternatively, it might be valuable to address the tension that can arise in allotmenters food-related consumption practices, relating to their desire for 'choice' and having a glut of a particular fruit/vegetable, to encourage allotmenters to fit more of their frozen produce into their morning, daytime and evening meals and in turn 'create space' in the freezer for produce harvested the following season. For instance, it could be beneficial to show allotmenters how fruits and vegetables that are harvested at similar times can be prepared together (or at least partially prepared) before they are frozen, in preparation for an array of dishes that add variety to their meals and break the pattern of making the same dishes.

Another implication that arises from my research concerns the importance of *knowing how to* engage in certain activities. For instance, as highlighted previously, allotmenters' engagement in the practice of allotmenting has prompted them to preserve their fruits/vegetables once harvested, to prevent them from spoiling. Yet, the practice of preserving fruits/vegetables in different ways, requires them to *know how to* do this. Similarly, whilst, to a certain extent, the process of composting does extend naturally into allotmenters' homes (e.g. through the use of compost caddies or an equivalent of a compost caddy), it requires them to develop an understanding of what is required to 'make' compost and as highlighted in chapter 5 (section 5.6.3.1), the process of making compost is not always a straightforward affair and therefore even some allotmenters may give up! Indeed, developing these skills around preserving and making compost are all a part of learning and becoming a competent practitioner. Nevertheless, these points still highlight the complexity of integrating more environmentally responsible consumption patterns within consumers' everyday practices for environmental policy-makers and the importance of considering the *active* integration of the elements that compose a

practice to understand how more environmentally responsible consumption patterns might be brought into effect among more mainstream consumers.

Besides the practical policy implications that this study makes, this study urges us to (re-)think about how we make sense of 'environmentally responsible consumption' and encourages us to embrace more fluid conceptualisations, which allow us to move away from A) efforts to categorise consumers in definitive terms (e.g. the 'environmentally responsible', 'green' or 'ethical' consumer, for instance) and B) efforts to narrowly define what we take to mean by the terms 'consumers' and 'consumption', as research in the field of environmentally responsible consumption has done previously. As this study has shown, embracing more fluid conceptualisations allow us to look more broadly at the contexts and circumstances in which more and less environmentally responsible consumption patterns come about and thus, highlight opportunities and challenges that future research/ interventions could target and seek to address.

8.6 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The main focus of this research was to explore and develop an understanding of the practice of allotmenting in the broader context of environmental sustainability. In order to do so, this study, focused predominantly on the practice of allotmenting in the context of the allotment, *per se*. Therefore, whilst this study does trace allotmenters' produce back to their homes (to a certain extent) and demonstrates how allotmenting 'fits' into their everyday routines (e.g. how managing allotment produce at home can demand allotmenters' time, for instance), the ways in which the practice of allotmenting overlaps with other practices that take place at home could be explored to a greater extent. Consequently, further inquiries could be made,

which place more emphasis on the ways in which the practice of allotmenting fits in with allotmenters everyday routines and the organisation of domestic life, as a means to determine the practicality of 'doing' allotmenting for 'mainstream' consumers.

Secondly, drawing our attention back to the realisation that, in the context of the present study, food waste (and allotmenters' dependence on the freezer) transpires through the links between different practices, future research could explore the links between related practices in other contexts, where consumers are found to engage in less environmentally responsible consumption patterns, as a means to identify 'moments' in the performance of practice that policy makers could intervene and precipitate more environmentally responsible consumption patterns.

Thirdly, the findings presented within this thesis are focused around the embodied, practical experiences of the allotmenters who participated in this study (based at two allotment sites primarily) and so, cannot be generalised to a wider population. Whilst I will stress that the current study is exploratory in its nature and thus did not intend to explore the practice of allotmenting on a significant scale, it would be useful if future research could explore the processes of 'doing' allotmenting on a practical everyday level (as I have done so here), in relation to other allotments, in different parts of the UK, to discern the extent to which my findings can be generalised.

In a similar manner, with the rise, development and interest in other 'types' of allotments in the UK, such as community gardens (Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, 2015a; 2015b), it would be interesting for further research to explore how these compare to the

allotments examined in this research, in relation to issues around environmental sustainability (e.g. whether excess produce is an issue and if so, how it is dealt with in community gardens).

Finally, further research could also take the approach adopted within this study and explore whether and how other everyday practices (e.g. sewing), encourage consumers to engage in more (and/or less) environmentally responsible consumption patterns. This would allow us to advance our understanding concerning whether and how consumers' engagement in other everyday practices promote a shift towards more environmentally responsible ways of living on a practical, routine everyday level.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Sample Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Charlotte Hadley

Project title: An Ethnographic Study of Allotmentteering: Practising Sustainability?

Please tick in the boxes provided

I have had the research explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I have received enough information about this study	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that I may withdraw myself and any data provided from this study without having to give an explanation, providing this is feasible* <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that any audio recording material of me will be used solely for research purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that only the researcher will have access to the research data collected and this will be store on the researcher's personal computer and backed up on their external hard-drive	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	
I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed (participant): _____

Signed (researcher): _____

*It may not be feasible to remove your data from the study once findings including your information have been published.

Appendix B – Sample Letter

Hi, this is Charlotte,

As you know, I have been visiting your allotment site for several months now as part of my research. Aside from talking to you, hearing about your experiences of having an allotment and getting involved in what happens on site, I am also interested in what happens to your produce once you have harvested it. So, I wondered if you would mind taking this disposable camera I have left for you and taking photos around the following themes; storing, preserving and conserving your allotment fruits and vegetables, home composting and cooking, which can help to provide me with an insight. There are 39 exposures on the camera I have provided, but by no means do you have to take that many photographs! And of course, I would not expect you to get the photographs developed.

If you are happy to get involved, I was also hoping to meet up with you at a later date to talk to you about your photographs in relation to the themes that I have mentioned above. Your photographs and our discussion would be treated confidentially and used for academic purposes only (for example, in journal articles, conferences, presentations or my thesis) and so they would not be shared with others on the allotment site.

I have left you with my email address and my mobile number below - please contact me, by any means if you have any questions about getting involved in this part of my research or if you are happy to take part, so that we can arrange to meet and talk about the next steps.

Email Address: charlottehadley91@hotmail.co.uk

Mobile number: 07521711952

With many thanks,

Charlotte

Appendix C – Sample Interview Transcript

Adrian and Sophia's Interview

Before each interview began I asked the interviewee if they were still happy for me to record our conversation (having asked them prior to the interview already) and informed them of the general purpose of the research.

Interviewer: (I) Okay, so firstly, could you tell me how long you've had your allotment for?

Adrian (A): Erm, how long have we had it [directed towards Sophia] [Laughs] well hang on

Sophia (S): 12 years.

A: The first year was 2007 so that's 11 years.

S: 11 years.

A: Yes, that's about right.

I: So, you've both occupied your allotment for quite some time now then. Could you tell me a little about your first experiences of having an allotment?

S: Well, to start with it was really hard work because we inherited a derelict allotment and we just had to clear everything, didn't we?

A: Yeah, but it was enjoyable.

S: Oh yeah! It was enjoyable but it was very hard work.

A: Oh yeah, it took us [pause] probably two seasons to start growing anything of significance, because it was that bad. We were digging up beds, digging up carpet, big bonfires, ten trips to the tip, you know. [Words in both square brackets and *italics* illustrate actions]

S: Hmm.

A: and that is just before you get started, but that's besides the point really erm er,

S: We were advised to start with, just to clear a section and to plant potatoes so that we had something growing, you know.

I: Ah right okay.

A: All our experiences have all been good. I mean, I was up there the first year in the winter building the shed, in the snow [Words shown in *italics* illustrate my participants' emphasis].

I: Oh right.

A: Because you needed shelter obviously.

S: Yes, and somewhere to put tools.

A: But that didn't bother me, I mean I even enjoyed that. It doesn't bother me going down in the winter, you know as long as you are well wrapped up because alright you don't do as much during the winter [pause] but there is still plenty to do.

S: Well, I mean, we were full of enthusiasm and we were getting encouragement and advice from a lot of the established...

A: The older people.

S: the older allotmenters down there.

A: A lot of them have gone now.

S: and yeah we loved it, didn't we?

A: Yeah and we still do.

S: We still do yeah.

A: I mean we've only had, I'm not going to go into details, but we have only ever had one really bad experience, haven't we? And that was, I don't really know whether I should put this on tape to be honest

I: You don't have to say anything if you don't want to.

A: Er, well can you just turn it off for a minute?

I: I can pause it, yes.

[tape paused whilst Adrian spoke in private about his experience]

A: Other bad experiences are the floods but I quite enjoyed that

I: You enjoyed the floods?

A: You know because it's, I find it quite interesting, everything looks different, sounds different erm-

S: Yeah.

I: How did you deal with the flooding?

A: I think the last one was in September, a September,

S: It was a September and most of the things had been already harvested, hadn't they?

A: But even the stuff that was in, after two or three days, the water goes down and it's not a problem, you know. But now, what they've done is fix the pumps at the mere, because that was the problem.

I: Ah right, I see.

A: Because the water was backing up and now, well I don't think it is going to happen again, is it?

S: Hopefully not, touch wood.

A: But you never know, but it doesn't do any harm.

S: Nooo [exaggerated] you stand at the fence in your wellies and think oh I can't get on there today, I better go home [laughs].

A: The only [pause] the only harm it could do, is if you have got electrical equipment that gets wet, but you know I just went down there and lifted everything up onto the table as a precaution you know

S: Yeah.

I: Yeah, I guess, in that sense, they could damage some of your electrical equipment.

A: Erm, but as far as bad experiences go no, everything good, you know, our life since getting that allotment, has revolved around the allotments.

S: Yeah.

A: And, we are virtually self-sufficient for certain vegetables; potatoes, carrots, no not carrots.

S: Onions.

A: Onions, er, [pause] peppers, tomatoes, apart from one saul of fresh tomatoes, have gone and we've still got the frozen ones for cooking as you know and it's just a part of our life and if we didn't have it, you know there would be a big void in our lives now, if we didn't have it, you know.

S: Yeah, we wouldn't know what to do, would we?

A: No, no.

S: You know, it's the good life [laughs] without the animals!

A: Yeah, it's hard to explain really you know it's [pause]

S: Yeah

A: We just love it, you know

S: it's, it's a hobby, well, more than a hobby,

A: We'd never and before we went down there, I'd never grown a vegetable in my life

S: Hmm

I: Was that a challenge for you?

A: Not really, no, no, no because [if] we don't know, you Google it, I've got umpteen books [At this point, Adrian ran his hand across the spines of the allotment and vegetable growing books that he has displayed in the bookcase beside him]

S: Oh yeah

A: You know what I mean. I've always been interested in plants anyway, you know, so and yeah, I mean, allotment books and [pause] this is a great book, if anybody wants, if I would recommend one book about growing your food that's the one [Adrian pulled one of his books from a shelf in his bookcase]

I: [I read out the title of the book he has directed towards me] 'Food from your garden'

A: I've recommended it a few times to a few people

S: Yeah

A: The reason that I like it [he opened the book and starts flicking through the pages] is because it is so simple, look for instance [he brought the book over to me to give me an example and shows me some of the first few pages]

I: Ah so is it in alphabetical order then.

A: Yeah, yeah er [he stopped on the page with 'leeks' displayed] just trying to see, ah leeks, let's say you want to plant leeks, it's all done in pictures of when to sow, when to transplant, when to earth up, when to harvest, you know and every vegetable, and it's actually Reader's Digest that [closed the book to look at the spine of it].

S: Yeah.

A: The best book.

S: and at the back, it has got sections on freezing, preserving, all that kind of thing so once you have grown your produce, it tells you how to process it, so you know

A: And we have been, everything is really successful, erm [pause] my most enjoyment that I get out of it is growing tomatoes

I: That's interesting, why is that then?

A: Er, I think it is because I haven't seen anybody's tomato crop better than mine [*Sophia laughs*] and mine is better than most! I've tried to tell people how to do it and they just don't seem to get the crop that we get you know and

I: So, do you think other people are taking on board what you are saying?

A: Yeah, I think, I think what it is, this is just the one area where we are not organic. You can't grow a massive crop of tomatoes without giving them loads of feed, they are just so demanding. This is one of the things that a lot of the beginners and people that have been there a few years don't realise that, if you are growing a plant or a flower or whatever, you know what I mean, garden plants. They don't take that much out of the soil because of the nature of the plants. As soon as you start growing vegetables, they zap all of the nutrients out so you've got to replace them and you can't just replace them with a bit, you've got to replace them a lot, you know. And obviously, it is different nutrients for different crops.

I: Ah right.

A: But tomatoes are particularly hungry and they are hungry for erm potash.

S: High potash.

A: Potassium.

S: Yeah.

A: That's for fruit and flowers and that gives you good fruit and good flowers erm, so you need to feed tomatoes, which all of the commercial growers do, on a high potash feed basically. Like, to give you an idea erm, tomorite [*pause*] I don't know whether you are aware of this but when you talk about plant food, you talk about it in numbers, it's erm, there are three numbers, one's nitrogen, the second one is phosphate and the third one is potassium

I: Ah that's interesting.

A: Those are the three main requirements and then there are lots of erm...

S: Trace elements.

A: Trace elements, but you get them with most feeds anyway so if you don't give er tomatoes loads and loads of potash, you end up with not a lot of plants and not a fantastic crop and this year has been the best ever, hasn't it?

S: Hmm hmm.

I: Right.

A: You know, I mean, I'll show you in the freezer afterwards.

I: Yes, okay then.

A: How many tomatoes, you know, and we use them all the time. We use them, as we have said before to you [at the allotment] about cooking, you know, we go through a lot of tomatoes, don't we?

S: Hmm.

A: We never waste any.

I: Well I've seen from the photographs that you have taken that you've made passata from them and you've dried them out in the oven and then frozen them in individual bags.

A: Yeah, yeah.

S: and I make small cubes of tomato puree as well.

I: Small cubes?

S: Yeah, I just put them in little ice cube trays, you know, for [making cubes of] tomato puree.

A: Yeah, you just juice them and then just reduce it [in a pan], so you are making your own.

S: [*Talking over Adrian*] Yeah, reduce and reduce and reduce, until it is as thick as a tomato paste

I: Ah right

A: You know, tomato puree, yeah.

S: And it is really intense, the flavour!

A: Yeah and I'm into cooking and that is what I'm after, it is flavour

I: It sounds delicious.

A: Yes, and you learn don't you

S: Hmm

A: As you go along, but when we first went there, we knew nothing and we just seemed to pick it up, for some reason, when we start talking about growing, all the needs for different individual vegetables, it seems to stick. I can't remember people's names but when it comes to growing stuff, you know and that makes me feel as though I'm doing what I should be doing, you know [chuckles]

I: Ah right, yes

A: Does that answer the question? [*laughs*]

I: Yes, that's great.

A and S: [*laughs*]

I: Now that we are getting closer to winter, I was wondering if you could tell me what you would generally tend to do over the winter months?

A: Well at the moment, we are in the second week of November, erm I'm saying this for the tape, and we've still got sprouts, which should be ready about Christmas. The sprout plants need looking at, they need some of the leaves taking off, [pause] to let more light in and we've still got erm, beetroot in there, haven't we? Which we will probably leave till next February. They are generally safe in the ground.

I: Right.

A: Because they are still growing, you know, they are quite a hardy vegetable.

I: Ah and does there come a point when perhaps you may need to harvest them?

A: Yeah, well it's the slugs mainly...

S: Yeah.

A: That may start attacking them.

S: Yeah yeah, that can happen.

A: and the other thing I've still got in is erm, all of my celeriac. That is ready to come out now

I: Ah right okay

A: And in the past, I have been storing it, like you would store carrots or whatever, you know in damp sand.

I: In damp sand?

A: Yeah, they, the farmers leave the carrots in the ground till they are ready to harvest and they may have grown them in the summer and they are still in there in February and that is when they will start harvesting then you know, they have [started harvesting] before then but the last harvest will be then [in February], they just cover them up with straw and tarps to prevent them from freezing if there is any bad weather, you know. So they will keep and that's the same, in a way, as storing them in damp sand, you know, but with the celeriac I tried that and some of it worked and some of it didn't so this time, I will be blanching and freezing the celeriac. Erm, the leeks are still in, those can stay in till [pause] next spring actually!

I: Oh that's quite a while.

A: Oh yeah

I: So, they don't bolt?

A: Well they will do but not till next spring, you know what I mean, not until it starts to warm up, yeah but we will be taking those out within the next few weeks I suppose.

S: Probably.

A: Probably, maybe early next year I don't know and then just, what we don't eat, it'll get frozen, you know, blanched and frozen. Erm and what else have I still got in? Er, I've still got some tomatoes on the vines, not many now though.

S: The carrots

A: The carrots, they should have come out a few weeks ago actually, but again, they will be alright as long as the carrot fly hasn't got them or slugs really.

S: Hmm.

A: I have got a pond on the allotment and that prevents a lot of the slugs because there are loads of toads and frogs and they do deal with a lot of the slugs.

I: Do you see many of them?

A: The frogs? Oh yeah, you see them all of the time, I could take you down there now, I know where they reside, if you know what I mean, not in the pond, it's where there is a lot of foliage.

A: They just hide in, and in the pond, I've got a wild area at the back and that's for them to sort of [pause] live in really isn't it? You know, but, because they don't actually live in the ponds. What they do do, they go, when winter time comes, which won't be that long actually, they actually go into the pond and bury themselves under the soil at the bottom of the pond and hibernate over winter and it's weird, they go into a sort of stasis, you know where the heart beats once every five minutes or something.

S: It's like hibernation, isn't it?

A: Yeah, it is really, so they don't need to breathe as much, well obviously they get some oxygen from the water, but I find it amazing and when you have a deep freeze, which we have had once unfortunately, even though the pond is the required depth erm, if it freezes all the way down, it will kill them. Erm, so they deal with a lot of the slugs and there are lots of toads but they are always hidden you know. Yeah, you have a piece of wood that sits on the soil for six months and then lift it up, you can guarantee there will be s-

S: [Moved her hand in front of her face]

A: What were you doing then?

S: I had a little fly-

A: Oh, we suffer from fruit flies, we've always got fruit flies [laughs]

S: [laughs] because there is so much food all over the place all the time!

A: Yeah, erm and so the leeks are still in at the moment and the point I'm making, a part from dealing with all of those, the other things that will go on during the winter, digging all of the beds over, putting and spreading muck over them, covering them over if you want to cover them over, then doing some repairs and what have you. But there is not as much to do in the Winter as there is in Spring and Summer, you know, but there is still plenty to do.

I: Yeah.

A: I could go down there, a couple- say a couple of times every week and not be just sat there, I would be doing something you know so-

S: Yeah, yeah.

A: But, it is mainly Summer but there is always that to do in the winter.

I: So, it is still important?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

S: and once you have put the manure on the beds then you will have used that up and you have to collect more for the following year.

A: Yeah

S: So, there is always that to do as well, building it back up so- because when it gets delivered there, it is quite new, so you put it in the midden and it matures and it all breaks down into a really good fertile soil.

A: You know what a midden is, don't you?

I: Yes, another name for a compost heap.

A: Yeah, it's basically a compost heap or a rubbish tip.

S: Compost heap.

I: Yes, yes.

A: Yeah, and erm, to answer that question, there is loads to do all year.

S: Yeah, there is cleaning the greenhouse out as well.

A: Oh yeah, that is another thing, yeah.

S: With Jeyes [fluid]

A: If you can grow tomatoes properly and peppers, because I've got that other smaller greenhouse and the pepper crop this year was just phenomenal.

S: [chuckles]

A: I mean, the peppers were that big [used his hands to give an idea of the size that they were]

I: Ah, I think I saw some of them in your greenhouse.

A: Yeah.

S: Have you got a full one in the fridge?

A: Er I don't know, there might be, but I don't think they are any giant ones in there.

S: [Sophia walked through to the kitchen - relatively open plan kitchen and dining room (where we were sat) to go and have a look in the fridge]

A: Erm, but what you have got to do is erm, disinfect the greenhouse

I: Ah right, can you tell me why that is?

A: yeah, because-

S: There you go [Sophia held a pepper up that was in their fridge, so that I could see]

I: Oh, that's quite a large pepper!

A: and that is just about three quarters the size of- it's not just size,

S: This is a small-ish one.

A: It's not just the size that is important it's the weight [*At this point, Adrian went over to Sophia to take the pepper that she currently holding*]. That is not as heavy as some.

S: No, it's not, that is one of the smaller ones.

A: The heavier they are, the thicker the flesh and that is what you are after [*he passed the pepper to me so that I could feel the weight of it*].

I: That is quite heavy.

A: But yeah, they have been good and I- those long red ones like what Eric grows

I: Yes, the sweet ones?

A: Yeah.

S: Oh, there isn't any of those [*She glanced in the fridge*]

A: No well, what I've done- I've just frozen them all, you know, erm [*he sat back down again*] oh where was I up to, what was I saying.

S: Oh, about cleaning the greenhouse.

A: Oh yeah, because you get, I mean, I won't go into how to grow good tomatoes, but you need to allow-, you can't have them crowded in. If they get crowded in, you get a thing called botrytis and it's a common thing, it's like a grey, greeny- grey mold and that will attack your tomatoes and it will attack the plant and that is down to not having enough air going through. It can be very damp in the greenhouse when it is cold so you need air space but you st-, I mean, there is a little bit on ours and that is down to the time of the year.

S: Yeah, because it's coming to the end.

A: and it is a dusty thing, if you move, say a tomato with it on, you see it go into the air, all of the spores, you know, so it spreads really well so- and that will live through the winter until next year and so, you have got to disinfect it. So, you just disinfect the entire greenhouse. with Jeyes fluid, you know.

S: Just use a big brush and just brush it all over.

A: and that is another thing-

S: and then use the hosepipe to rinse it off.

A: Yeah.

I: Ah right okay.

A: So, you do that, either in Winter or spring time, you know, before the growing season. So, there is still loads to do in the winter really. You know, not quite as much, but there is still a lot to do, isn't there?

S: Yeah, it is more maintenance, though, isn't it?

A: Yeah, it is yeah. But, it is important, you know it really is. If you want good crops consistently, it is important that you do the required things. And there are people down there, I mean, I'm not knocking them, but they don't do all of the required things and then they end up with the problems two or three years down the [line]. You know, it's like er, crop rotation, so important, you know, the crop rotation. You know, eventually, if you didn't rotate your crops, then everything would stop growing, you know, that's how bad it is yeah.

I: Can you tell me why that is then?

S: Because the soil wouldn't have the right kind of nutrients in it for a particular thing that you want to grow.

A: and- and you'd get a massive build up in the wrong kind of bugs and creatures

I: Hmm okay, so what happens then?

A: Erm, well basically if you don't er, rotate like say- er the main threat to potatoes is erm-

S: Blight.

A: No.

S: No?

A: No, the creatures that are in the soil, it is a nematode type thing er-

S: Eelworm?

A: Eelworm! Yeah.

I: Right okay.

A: So, if you grow potatoes in there, in the same spot the following year, you will still have eelworm in there and they will- they will increase and if you grow them another year, they will increase to epidemic proportions but if you don't grow potatoes in there and-, you should follow potatoes with say brassicas or beans or something and the eelworm doesn't like them so they will disappear

I: Ah right that's interesting.

A: And ideally, it is a four-year crop rotation but because of the size of allotments, I tend to just do three years.

S: Yeah.

A: But, I haven't had any build-up of bad creatures. Also, things like beans put nitrogen in the soil, so if you have got a crop that requires high nitrogen then that is the crop to plant after your beans, you know.

I: Is that how you plan your allotment?

A: Oh yeah.

S: Yes.

I: Because, I remember you saying that you do plan the layout for your allotment and you mentioned that you tend to plan it around this time of year for the following year's crops.

A: Yeah.

S: Yeah, we have charts of the allotment where all the beds are and put in, write in what we are going to grow the following year.

I: Right.

A: This is what we've grown.

S: We keep a record of so many years so we know what has to come next.

A: This is what we've grown over the last few years, we keep a record of it so we know what we've grown where.

I: do you tend to follow the same pattern?

A: Yeah, that's right yeah.

I: So, once you've sorted that out-

A: It's simple!

I: Yeah, I guess there is a lot to think about because there is quite a lot that you grow.

A: Oh yeah.

S: Yes.

A: That book there that I told you about, that one [*showed me the book he pointed out to me earlier on*]. That book tells you all about crop rotation, it tells you everything you need to know, you know. Erm, but some people don't rotate enough, so they're not getting the best out of the ground, for that reason.

S: And some people that have only got half plots, there is no way they can rotate anything.

A: This is my argument against half plots, you can attempt to rotate.

S: Yeah, you can do it up to a certain extent but when you've got such a small space and there's so many things that you want to grow, it's restricting.

A: If you've only got half a plot, whether it's through choice or it's been forced on you, but that's beside the point, if you've only got half a plot, the ideal way to grow things is the old fashioned way, dig the entire plot up, have one piece of growing area and grow stuff in rows.

I: Right, okay.

A: But you can't grow that much, you know, you're limited. You know what I mean by the old-fashioned way?

I: Growing everything in rows in one patch because people never used to have raised beds.

S: It was just everything in rows and things in blocks and something else next to them, as it went on.

A: In theory, it's easy to rotate that way, because you just move the rows on each year.

I: Yeah, I guess so.

A: Then you end up back at the same spot.

I: Although, like you mentioned earlier, of say potatoes are moved from one row to the next one along then, you might still have the problem with eelworms?

A: No, that's true.

S: That's true.

A: I've never actually grown them following that method, but yeah, I see your point about the potatoes, yeah, I never have potatoes in the same bed for three years.

S: No, no.

A: But, we are lucky because we have got the space.

S: Mmm.

I: I was wondering if you describe a particular instance, in which you are unsure about how to go about doing something?

A: Right! Well-

S: That's an easy one, isn't it?

A: Yeah- my first thing, would be to look at one of my books [looking across to his bookshelf next to him, pointing out one in particular]. That one is quite a good book, the RHS allotment handbook.

I: Ah a Royal Horticultural Society book.

A: Yeah.

S: Yeah.

A: But that one is the best and if I can't find-, but what I tend to do is not- if I want to know something, I have found from experience and I'll give you an example, growing grapes, right, I wanted to know how you grow grapes so I googled it. Every article that you looked at, told you something different, every book you look in tells you something different, and because there are lots of different ways of doing it.

I: What kind of things are the Internet pages and books telling you that is different?

A: Well, just everything about it if you know what I mean eh.

S: Well, how to cultivate the vine into a certain shape [for example]

A: Yeah.

S: And how many, what do they call them, cordons

A: Yeah

S: You let grow off of the main stem

I: Right

S: And there are so many-

A: Yeah

S: So many different ways of doing it

A: So, the point I'm making is, I wouldn't just go to one source for an answer to something I didn't know or even- and I refresh my memory all of the time. I'll just read these books, I'll just, to refresh my memory you know, on how to do things. Erm, but the main sources are books, not necessarily in this order, books that I have already got and er google and also if I'm ever at anywhere, where they have got second-hand books, I'll go through them and any book on growing vegetables, I'll just automatically buy them!

I: Really?

A: Yeah because there will be something in there that is not in the others and I've found that from experience.

S: Yeah, and also, we'll, we will talk to the veteran people

A: Eric.

S: People down there [at the allotment]

A: Eric [*laughs*]

S: Yeah, that have been there a long time and may have the experience

A: But, Eric doesn't know everything.

S; No, he doesn't.

A: I grow better tomatoes than-

S: Well nobody knows-

A: I grow better tomatoes and better peppers than Eric.

I: Does he come to you then for advice about your tomatoes and peppers?

A: Well he-, he comes to the greenhouse when they are all there and he will say, 'oh they are doing well' [*laughs*]

S: [He] doesn't say much.

A: But Eric has got an incredible amount of knowledge

S: Oh, he has, yeah.

A: But it is mainly around what he particularly specializes in.

S: Yeah, with his potatoes and leeks.

A: Yeah, Eric doesn't grow the range of vegetables that a lot of people do

S: No, he does a lot for exhibition and competition.

A: Well that's the main reason he does it!

S: Yeah, that's his hobby, competitions, whereas we do it for a food source, you know. And I'll add this as well one of the reasons we do it for a food source is because we know what is in it and we not what is not in it.

S: Hmm.

A: whereas you can't trust er, pesticides, herbicides that are in vegetables from the supermarket, unless you buy organic but I'm not even 100% trusting on something that is labelled organic to be honest, you know.

S: Hmm.

I: That's interesting, what you've mentioned about products that are labelled organic. Can you tell me why you don't trust them completely?

A: They still use pesticides.

S: Yeah, see it's like take the tomatoes again, even though you feed them with the chemical fertilizer, they never get sprayed or anything like that with insecticides or anything.

A: Oh no.

S: So, the actual fruit itself, is as pure as it can be really.

A: Oh yeah!

I: Right, I see. Are there any instances in which you have ever started growing anything that you haven't previously bought from, say, a supermarket?

A: Yeah

S: Well yeah, celer-

A: Celeriac. I think it is the most under-rated vegetable in existence. It is absolutely beautiful, to eat and people don't tend- they've- a few people have started growing it down there [on the allotment] because they have seen me growing it, which is good, you know erm, but, have you ever eaten celeriac?

I: No I haven't.

A: You do see it in the supermarket, seasonally, seasonally

S: But it is very seasonal yeah and also beetroot as well because you can buy cooked beetroot in the shops but you never see it raw.

A: No, not very often.

I: Why is it that you chose to grow celeriac then?

S: From watching cooking programmes.

A: From watching MasterChef really.

S: [*Laughs*] MasterChef and things like that!

I: Really?

A: Yeah.

S: To see what kind of meals that they are coming up with.

I: So, it is about the food?

A: Oh absolutely!

S: Yeah! We are foodies! In a big way [*laughs*]

A: I am just as interested in cooking as I am growing.

I: Oh right, that's quite nice then.

S: Hmm!

A: and I like to cook with what I've grown where I can, you know. And there are some things, I mean, I do this red sort of Mediterranean type vegetarian minestrone soup.

S: Mmm.

A: And it is virtually 90% what we've grown, you know, isn't it?

S: Yeah.

I: Oh right.

A: I can't-

S: I don't think there is anything that you've put in that we haven't grown.

A: Yeah but there will be, I do put stock cubes in

S: Oh stock, yeah well, we don't make our own stock [*laughs*]

A: And it is absolutely amazingly delicious. I'm not just saying it, it is because it is all fresh.

S: Yeah.

A: You know, it's-

S: Yeah and its spicy as well, we put a bit of chilli in,

A: Yeah.

S: Just to give it that little bit of a bite, it warms you up! [*laughs*]

A: Yeah so, are there other things- grapes, I would never have even thought about growing grapes till I'd been on the allotment and we were *lucky enough* to inherit one.

I: Oh, so your grape vine was already there?

A: Yeah.

S: Yeah, that was when we took over that second plot.

A: and it wasn't doing very well.

S: Oh, it was atrocious!

A: And I managed to er, I managed to erm, prune it properly and train it and we have a really good crop of grapes now, don't we?

S: Yeah.

A: Erm, what else would we not-

S: Well there are the figs, isn't there?

A: Oh figs!

S: We have got a small fig tree in that [particular] greenhouse as well, next to the grapes.

A: I'll show you them in the freezer, because you can freeze them, and they are beautiful, that is something else we wouldn't of er, normally-

S: Oh, and there are strawberries because we never- in the strawberry season, we might have bought, say a couple of punnets or something like that whereas now we are overrun with them! [*laughs*]

A: Yeah.

S: Because of the nature of strawberries, the way they grow with the runners and everything, it is very difficult keeping them under control [*laughs*]

A: Yeah.

S: So, we have got more than we really need and we are going to be cutting back next year.

A: There are things like, you wanted some borlotti beans, didn't you?

S: Yeah, I wanted to try some borlotti beans.

A: You know so we've grown them which we wouldn't, I wouldn't buy, I wouldn't even know whether you could buy them.

S: Yeah, so we are up for trying different things.

I: Yeah.

A: Hmm.

S: I try- in a way we try to grow something a little bit different every year just to try it. We grew globe artichokes one year and-

A: Yeah.

S: We realized that we didn't really like them and they were a waste of time.

A: For the amount of room the plant takes- the plants are beautiful, but, you have got all that space taken up by the plant and you might get a dozen globes on there.

S: Oh, if you are lucky!

A: Yeah, if you are lucky, on each plant, if you are very lucky actually.

S: Hmm.

A: and then, you've got the globe like that [demonstrates the globe with his hand and starts removing 'invisible' pieces of the plant to reveal the heart of the globe inside] and the bit you eat is that

S: Yeah, you have to pull everything off it!

A: I can think of better use for the space.

S: Yes, and you have two globe artichoke plants and that takes up a full bed, it is a lot of room and they are not worth it.

A: Er, melons.

S: Melons, we've grown.

A: Well yeah you have.

S: Yeah.

A: Er a few times, I'm not that keen on-

S: Cantaloupe melons.

A: Yeah, those have been quite successful.

S: Yeah, yeah.

A: But I'm not a great lover of [pause] melon.

S: No, see what I would do, I would go down there and cut one off when it is ripe and cut it up and eat it in the greenhouse, you know [laughs].

I: Okay so I'll move on to start looking at the photographs that you have taken now. [I displayed two photographs; one of their allotment and a close-up photograph of their pond on their allotment] So, you included this photo of your allotment and this one of your pond as well.

A: Yeah.

S: Oh, with the frog yeah.

I: So, could you tell me why it is that you wanted to include these photos?

A: Just to give you an idea of where the photographs of the vegetables came from really and you know and I just took a picture of the pond because it was so nice.

I: So, when was this photograph of your pond taken?

S: That was last Summer, wasn't it?

A: Yeah, I already had it, yeah, I think it was last summer yeah.

S: Yeah it was last summer.

A: And I just gave you a shot of the allotment, because then it gives you an idea of where the vegetables have come from, that's the reason for it but- and it's a nice picture isn't it?

I: It is, it's a lovely view.

A: Yeah, yeah, cause the thing is that was, that was a tip, it was a dump and there weren't any trees in there or anything like that when we came, you know.

S: No, there was nothing.

A: And I put, you notice that I put my big greenhouse on an angle and, as I've said before, that was just for aesthetic reasons really.

S: It was just the way we designed it and we thought 'oh it would look nice on an angle, just there'.

A: And every- and when we did it, everybody was saying [scrunches his face slightly to exaggerate his point] 'what have you put that on an angle for?'

S: 'Why's it like that?'

A: You know, they thought we were mad, but everybody loves it now [laughs]

I: and you have decided to keep grass in between your raised beds too.

S: Yes, it is a lot of maintenance that though.

A: Two reasons for that. One, it doesn't get muddy during the winter, because of the grass, the grass soaks it all up, well most of the water, you do get muddy patches but not that much, not compared with other plots where they haven't

got grass, you are walking through mud and I don't like that. And the other reason is, is erm, because it does look nice. [*laughs*] you know, it's like a garden.

S: It is quite high maintenance in summer though, isn't it?

A: That is one of the problems.

S: It's having to cut it every couple of weeks or so and it is a big area and getting down those paths. He [Adrian] has had to get a small lawnmower and he just does all of the edges around the beds with the strimmer, you know, so it's like two jobs to do.

A: So, basically, they [the photos] were just there to, for you to have in your mind where those vegetables came from and I took the- I gave you one of the pond, not just because it was a nice picture but, it's so- if you have got the space on a plot, you are not just er- giving somewhere for the amphibians, the frogs to live, you are also generating beneficial insects in a wildlife pond. If you read about wildlife ponds, they bring so much to a garden that people don't realise, so erm, hover flies love ponds, hoverflies are one of your friends, that's what you want because they eat greenfly and other bad creatures and you-, anyway that is what it is there for [he starts to laugh], beneficial insects and the frogs! Yeah, not just because it is a pretty picture.

I: [I displayed the photograph of their 'growing plan'] This is your growing plan, isn't it?

A: Yeah, loosely.

I: Right, I was wondering how-

S: Yeah, those are the main vegetables that we grow every year, some of them we don't.

A: Yeah and there are also some that I haven't actually added on that have become regulars on there, because I don't feel the need to do it really, but it just gives you, at a glance, when you should be doing things, that is the reason for it.

I: How did you go about putting this together then?

A: Well, [*pause*] I didn't copy it off anybody, I made the grid and made a list of all of the vegetables that we grow at that time and then went through the books to give me an idea of when to plant the seed, when to plant in the ground and when to harvest, and it is a 'just at a glance' thing, just in case you have forgotten something and then once we have got say erm, like you've done the leeks haven't you? [directed at Sophia]

S: Yeah

A: Right so, on next year's list, we'd just tick that they have already been started and so on and so forth.

S: Yes, and as we get the seeds going, I'll go through the list and I'll tick off what has been started and-

A: I believe, to be successful on an allotment, there is more than one thing you need. One is, you need to be- what's the word.

S: Organised?

A: Er, yeah, organised and make lists and make sure you don't forget, there is a lot to do so you can forget things.

S: Especially when you get to our age [*A and S both laugh*].

A: And if you forget things, sometimes it can be too late to, er, to do it, you know, so you need to be doing things at the right time of the year [emphasized] erm, and the other thing that you need, which doesn't relate to this [the growing plan] is you need to be practical.

I: Hmm.

A: You know, you do need a practical head on because there are a few people down there that don't have 'practical heads' and they are struggling. They can't even repair beds or they don't even weed in an organised manner, do they?

S: No.

A: You know, they run around the plot like headless chickens, I've seen them, taking a few weeds out here and there, you know.

S: Hmm.

A: and the other thing is, another requirement is, you've got to be prepared to put the time in. I mean, during the summer, I'm probably down there every day.

S: Every day.

A: Even if it is just for an hour or two hours

S: Yeah, just to do some watering or-

A: In the winter time, it is probably going to be twice a week unless something comes up but you know.

I: You still spend quite some time down there during the winter, don't you?

S: Oh yeah.

A: Yeah.

S: What else would we be doing? [*laughs*]

A: And when I say there a couple of days I think it is going to be for about four or five hours and we are lucky in the respect that we only live down the road. That is a massive advantage.

S: Oh yeah

A: I mean, if I want some rosemary or something, if we are having fish, and we haven't got any in the garden, I can just nip down and get it.

S: Yeah, if it is something we have forgotten, we can just nip down there and get it.

I: [*I displayed the photographs of handwritten lists of meals*] So, I was wondering if these are recipes that you have put together since you have had your allotment?

A: No, no, no, what it is, sometimes er we have found that, [*pause*] 'what shall we have for our tea?' or whatever, which is our main meal, our evening meal and 'ah, I don't know what I fancy' or-

S: 'I can't think'

A: You know, especially, if you have just had some crumpets or something, you know, where you are not hungry, so what I did, I wrote it- this is a book that I put recipes in [*Adrian held the book out in front of him*] and I've had it a few years, that's where the photos have come from and erm, we just did the list, so if we can't think of anything to eat, just go through the list and I saying 'oh yeah, that is what we will have', you know.

S: Find something that we fancy

A: I could go through them, the lasagne is our recipe, pizzas are our recipe, bolognaise is my mother's recipe, basically isn't it, erm, pasta and basil sauce with pesto, that-, that's really ours, you know just, that's our combination of things, I mean the recipe for the er pesto would have come out of a book, erm egg and chips with peas or green salad, which, I've got to admit, I mean we eat some fairly fancy food at times-

S: Well we do, yeah.

A: That's my favourite meal guaranteed, I love it [*referring to egg and chips with peas*]

S: Last night, we had seabass with a bit of mixed salad and a bit of bulgur risotto, which is bulgur wheat and we put all different vegetables in it and it's, oh, it's lovely isn't it?

A: Yeah, [*Adrian looked as though he was concentrating more on the list of meals*] erm, beans and egg on toast, that's something you feel like having something-

S: Quick and easy.

A: But most of them, I don't think that there are any that are there that I have got out of books. The basis of recipes may have come out of books, but, I don't do that.

S: Well, you put your own slant on it, don't you?

A: Yeah.

S: Yeah and adjust it and maybe add something or not put something in and put something else in instead.

A: Not that we have this very often but, cauliflower cheese, erm we'd always do a cauliflower cheese by cooking cauliflower-, this is in the past.

I: Right.

A: Cooking cauliflower, steaming it probably, making a cheese sauce, put the cauliflower in a dish and pour the cheese sauce over it. That would be our cauliflower cheese.

I: Ah right.

A: But, I have learnt how to make it so much nicer.

S: Hmm.

A: and basically, oh, and there are mushrooms that go in there.

S: And broad beans.

A: Yeah, cook the cauliflower, half cook it, er, cook the mushrooms all separate and then assemble them and put broad beans in there that have been shelled and then put your sauce on and then on top, put a mixture of cheese mixed with breadcrumbs and you get a, crusty sort-of cheesy topping for it.

S: Yeah, you put it in the oven for 20 minutes and it crisps it all up.

A: It's basically the same thing, but the method of-, just the method of doing it is-, what I've found just recently. I'm getting onto cooking now.

S: He just gets side-tracked.

A: Because we don't eat meat, we do eat fish and two of my favourite fish are seabass and salmon-, fresh salmon, but it has got to be wild salmon, not farmed salmon, and the reason for that is because Scottish Norwegian salmon is polluted, terribly polluted. Don't ever eat it. Anyways, if we eat salmon, it is going to be wild Alaskan salmon, erm, but coming to the point sometimes- I like a crispy skin and also by cooking your fish with a crispy skin, it just adds so much flavour, doesn't it? And sometimes when I'm cooking it crisps and other times it doesn't, so why? You know, and I found out, it is non-stick pans. Right, Teflon-, Teflon isn't too bad for getting a crispy skin on fish, but Teflon has been found to be bad so they have stopped using it, erm so this new non-stick surface, this black, I don't know what it is- it is er, I can't remember what it is called but er that doesn't work! Your skin won't crisp up, right so, then I tried a ceramic pan, which, I like cooking in ceramic pans because they are white, that sort-of half worked, so then I googled it and this woman, immediately is saying, stainless

steel, so I did some in stainless steel, the flavour and the crispiness, absolutely amazing.

I: Ah I wouldn't have thought it would have made that much of a difference.

A: No.

S: I know, different cooking surfaces.

A: Not just the way it cooked, but the difference to the flavour as well.

S: Mmm.

A: I don't know why, I wish I knew why actually, there will be a scientific reason for it.

I: Hmm.

A: Anyway, so coming back to the recipes, er, they are virtually all of our own recipes.

I: Right.

A: But even then, I mean, I've got recipe books [*Adrian pointed to the recipes books on his shelf next to him*], Leith's cookery bible, Leith's how to cook, simple cooking, by Leith's.

S: Swear by Leith's.

A: If you are going to buy a recipe book, buy Leith's recipe book

I: Leigh's?

A and S: Leith's.

A: Yeah, this is the one to have [*At this point, Adrian goes to his bookshelf to pull one out and show me*]

S: What is she called?

A: Prue Leith

S: Prue Leigh

A: Yeah, she started a cookery school, twenty-thirty years ago down in London, which is the main cookery school in this country really. If you want to be a Michelin star chef, you go to Leith's.

S: That's where you go.

A: You go to Leith's, but she doesn't own it anymore. She is still on the er-, as a judge on the Great British menu.

S: You know, the competition, where they have the big banquet at the end?

I: I don't think I've seen it, no.

A: Oh, well, it's on every night when it's on, it's on every year, it's only just finished actually, for this year, it's probably because it's on about 6 about half 6. And she judges it.

S: Yeah, and they get chefs from different regions of the country, like Wales and the North-East and-

A: What it was, I am a great fan of MasterChef, always have been and the only that is on at the moment.

S: The professionals.

A: Yes, that's the best and it inspires you, it does inspire you. I mean, they are not actually cooking it to show you the recipe, but just watching it inspires you, but the thought came to me, where do they get these-, you get these amateurs on amateurs and I'm thinking, where do they get these recipes from, you know they look like restaurant, Michelin inspired-, and then I came across, one of these [*he pointed to one of Leith's books*] and it was Leith's, that one there, Leigh's cookery bible, which was the first main book that they did.

I: Ah right okay.

A: and there are no pictures in it, it's erm, it's just all recipes but then you realise, erm, that's where they get it all from, all Michelin star meals are in there.

I: Really?

A and S: Yeah.

A: And then because I like the book, I bought loads of others and this is the latest one, it's a bit more modern because it has got pictures in.

I: Right.

A: Erm, but, if you are going to buy a recipe book, that's the one to buy [*Again, he pointed over to the same book*]. Well that one actually and this one, those two, that [*he pointed to another book*] is more for the home cook.

I: Right okay.

A: and that [*he pointed back to the first book he introduced me to*] is a general sort of cookbook to Michelin star standards if you are that skilled, which I'm not [*laughs*].

S: [*Laughs*]

A: But, don't forget that Leith's, that is fantastic. The difference between this book and that one [looking at the first and second book that he has introduced me to], if you are going to use mustard, in a recipe, you would be expected to

make it. This one, it's-, just get a jar out, that's the- that's why it's called simple, it is more for the speed-quickness and cooking at home.

S: There are even products in the supermarkets now that, it's- actually says on the packets like-

A: Leith's.

S: Approved by Leith's.

A: In fact, I'll show you [Adrian stood up and walked into the kitchen]

S: I was surprised when I first saw them, have we got some-

A: [*Adrian opened one of his kitchen cupboards to look for some linguine*] It's er-, linguine, you know linguine? Erm, yeah that's it [he finds the packet of linguine in the cupboard and pulls it out to show me], that is the linguine from Asda and it says on it [the packet], extra special linguine, Leith's cookery.

I: Ah yes, I see.

A: And you find-, I have found-, this one [he takes another packet of linguine out of the cupboard], this one is an Italian linguine, but it is different than that [stating that there is a difference between the two packets of linguine that he has bought], that's got a- oh it is open, [he pulls one piece of linguine out to show me], you see the difference in the colour, but if you feel this [the one branded with Leith's cookery], it is rough and it stays sort of rough and because of that, the sauce sticks to it.

S: Yeah, it picks up all of the sauce into it more.

A: Whereas, if you use spaghetti like that [he pointed over to the very long pieces of spaghetti kept in an airtight tall glass cylindrical tube on his kitchen work surface] the sauce won't stick to it.

I: Right.

A: So, if you see stuff with Leith's on them, in our experience, it's always good stuff.

S: You might pay a few more pence for it, but I found that the quality is better.

A: And Prue Leith, even though she has sold her cookery school now, she is still looked upon as a very important food critic so she's on the panel as one of the judges for the Great British Menu.

I: Ah right, okay.

S: Hmm.

A: They really are our recipes and we try to incorporate as much as we have grown if every meal we've had and I was just saying to you last night [referring to Sophia] I just wish you could grow fish on trees.

S: [laughs]

A: Or bushes.

S: Grow our own fish!

I: That would be interesting! Okay so looking at these next photos that you have taken [shows the photographs of the small sun-dried tomatoes and the larger tomatoes in the foil trays that Adrian had taken in their kitchen].

S: Yes, those are our sun-dried tomatoes those

A: Our 'take' on sun-dried...

S: Yeah, we just cut them in half, lay them on a tray and in the oven for about two and a half hours, on a *really low* heat, either number one or number two gas, you know, because we always cook gas.

A: The reason they are called sun-dried tomatoes is because traditionally in Italy, they would spread them out on a tarp

S: Outside and let the sun dry them out

A: And what it does, it evaporates all of the moisture out of the tomato and intensifies the flavour and that's what- so if you get sundried tomatoes, they are going to be a lot more tomato-y than normal tomatoes

I: Right, so is that why you do this then?

A: Yeah, and it is a way of preserving them

S: Yeah, and we use them in fish, if we buy a whole seabass or something like that, we will put some inside where the gut has been, with some rosemary and some lemon and we will lay some across the top

A: And the reason for that is because-

S: It's lovely

A: Because they are dried, not totally dried, but almost er, the tomatoes will soak up the juices from the fish and er, they have also got a very intense tomato flavour so, but if you put ordinary tomatoes in, you are adding a lot of water, which you don't want to do.

S: Yes, the water from the tomatoes would be coming out

A: Also, if I'm doing a quick erm, sauce and I don't want too many tomatoes in, but I want a lot of tomato flavour, I'll put some of the [tomato] puree in and some of those

I: The cubed puree?⁵⁹

A: Yeah, the cubed, yeah, I'll show you [gets up to get the cubed tomato puree in the 'ice tray' from the freezer]

I: and [from looking at the photographs I've got] I can see here in this photo that you freeze them in plastic bags with labels

S: Yeah so, we will just throw it in and it defrosts within minutes.

A: [He opened the freezer draw and shows me the ice tray with cubes of tomato puree in]

I: Ah, was it your idea?

A: Sophia's idea.

S: Yeah well, we had all of these tomatoes and it was like 'what are we going to do with them?' I know [laughs]

A: So, it is not just another way of preserving them, there is a specific use for them

I: Yes

S: I mean, before we got the juicer, what I had to do, I had to get all of the skins off, so I would have them in boiling water, then in cold water and then take all of the skins off and then I'd put them all into a pan, mash them down, boil them up and then start straining them through a sieve, to get all of the pulp away from the juice, you know and then put them back in the pan and then reduce again further.

A: It is a lot of work, I think when you see people on the allotment, don't realise how much work is involved when you've actually harvested your crops. There is still loads of work and sometimes, when harvests are ready at the same time, you are never out of the kitchen, you know.

S: You can be in there all day and all night.

A: The thing is you've got to preserve them ready for the freezer or dry them or whatever, as soon as you get them.

I: Oh, do you?

A: Yeah, well, if you don't, the flavour will start to disappear straight away.

I: Do you think that the case with everything you harvest?

A: Oh yeah.

S: Yeah, in the first twenty-four hours, you've lost about 25 % of the flavour.

⁵⁹ At an earlier point during the interview with Adrian and Sophia, they described the process that they go through to make small iced cubes of tomato puree from the tomatoes that they have grown.

A: Yeah what happens is-

S: And the goodness.

I: You lose the 'goodness' as well?

A: Well eventually yeah. It is erm- biologically, suppose you have got any fruit or any plant, anything that's-

S: Any vegetation.

A: Any vegetation, right, as soon as you stop it growing, it starts to decay. That sounds extreme but it does, in some cases this process can be very quick. Erm, what happens is, as soon as it stops growing, there are enzymes within the plant or the fruit or whatever that kick in and if left to its own devices; so not preserved or stopped in any way, then those enzymes will eventually make the fruit decay, which it is meant to do. Otherwise, you'd have mountains of-[produce] you know, it's part of nature, but the first thing, once those enzymes kick in, the first thing to go is the flavour and then the second thing to go is the actual nutrients in there, but the first thing to go is the flavour, so if you want to keep the flavour, you've got to store them or freeze them straight away.

I: Ah that's quite interesting.

A: Like the advert for Birdseye peas. They are frozen within hours of them picking and that is the reason for it and that is the reason why we don't grow that many peas, do we?

S: No, it's not worth growing peas [*laughs*]

A: Peas are very labour-intensive, they take up a lot of area, there is a lot of work picking them and then podding them and for me, I've got to admit, Birdseye frozen peas are just as nice as what you grow.

S: And for what you get out of each pod, it's not really worth it.

I: Once you've harvested something, when is it that you go about trying to preserve your foods in the different ways that you have talked about?

A: Usually the next day.

S: Either the same day or the next day.

A: Yeah, but it is usually the next day because well, we will get home with a crop at teatime and then we have got to start cooking for our tea and what have you, so it will probably be the day after but I always say this to new people who have got allotments; there are two particular things that are incredible if you pick them on the plot and eat them there [at the allotment], cook them and eat them. One of them is first early potatoes, because just the trip from there [the allotment] to here [5-10 minutes walking distance] and leaving them for a day, they don't taste the same as when you first pick them and that is these enzymes working and the other one is sweetcorn isn't it? [directed at Sophia]

S: Hmm.

A: If you take a sweetcorn off a plant down there, which we don't tend to grow that much, we have grown it on and off-

S: Yeah, we have done in the past but we tend not to.

A: But if you take a cob of sweetcorn and boil it on the plot and just drizzle loads of butter all over it, oh it is incredible, it is a new experience and it is the same with potatoes.

I: Yeah, I think someone else has cooked their sweetcorn on their plot earlier in the summer this year

A: Yeah, so basically, you harvest a crop and fetch it home and then deal with it as quick as you can really.

S: Yeah, to retain all of the goodness and the flavour.

A: Yeah which in our case, it is usually the next day.

I: Looking at the photos of the smaller tomatoes and the larger tomatoes together-

A: I can go back to the larger ones because there is another story there. Erm, the larger ones

I: I'll just show them to you [I showed the photographs that Adrian had taken of the larger tomatoes on the trays].

A: Right the larger ones, erm the reason we do this is, I mean we do have bags of tomatoes in the freezer that haven't been blanched, just straight in a bag and straight into the freezer. They [the tomatoes that have been frozen without blanching them first] are okay if you eat them or make passata out of them within a couple of months. You don't really want to be leaving them any longer. Because these are cooked, they will keep for 18 months.

S: Well yeah, 12-18 months.

A: In the freezer and that's because they have already been cooked. Erm so that's one reason for roasting the larger tomatoes but, by roasting them on a high heat- erm, you brush olive oil over them, bung them in the oven for I don't know, half an hour max and the tops of the skins burn.

I: Oh, I have a photo of your tomatoes slightly burnt [*I showed the photograph of the 'burnt' tomatoes*]

A: That's it.

S: Yeah.

A: [Referring to the tomatoes in the photograph] They are straight out of the oven there and then you let them cool a bit so that you can handle them and then just grab the skins and all of the skins will come off.

S: Yeah, they just pull off.

A: But, because they have been slightly charred, it adds another flavour, like a smoky flavour, you know and then those just get thrown in a bag, which I think I took photographs off and straight in the er [pause] in the freezer.

S: Yeah

A: When it comes to the time when we need more freezer space, which we do at the moment, what I'll do, is I'll take the bags of roasted tomatoes out, juice them to take all of the seeds and any pith or whatever out and boil it up and turn it into passata and put it into a jar and they reckon, if you do it properly, it'll keep in the jar unopened for about two years

I: Is it like two different processes then?

A: Yeah it is, I mean, I could make the passata out of them straight away, but this is just the way we do it.

S: And then the other thing that we do with them is make like, big batches of bolognaise or chilli or other things like that. And that'll be from frozen from one of those bags [of roasted tomatoes] and because we make a big batch, we may use two of those bags in one batch.

A: The freezing process is kind to certain vegetables and unkind to others. Erm, tomatoes don't mind, they don't lose that much flavour if you freeze them quickly. But mind you, we have roasted them, and the process of roasting them intensified the flavour anyway, you know.

S: Yeah you do get some juice coming out onto the tray but that just gets poured into the bags with the tomatoes as well because there is a lot of flavour in that juice that comes out.

A: Things like climbing French beans, which I absolutely adore fresh, I can't abide them once they have been frozen. They go all limp and watery.

S: Yeah, so they get used [fresh], mainly for stews.

A: Yeah, yeah, but it's the same with cabbage, cabbage doesn't freeze very well.

S: That's something we tend not to grow, we don't eat much, we don't eat an awful lot of cabbage.

A: Sprouts aren't bad, you know, Brussels sprouts can retain the flavour in sprouts, but the texture goes, they don't have that crunch, you know.

S: Yeah, they go a bit softer but to start with, we pick them fresh and cook them.

A: Oh, yeah to start with.

S: And then what's left, when we know they've got to come out [be harvested], those are the ones that we will blanch and freeze.

I: Ah right okay, I see.

A: Basically, what we do is eat as much of the stuff that we grow fresh, as much as we can and it is just the surplus that will be frozen, and that applies to everything.

S: Yeah everything really.

A: I mean, I have still got tomatoes on there [he points over to the bowl of cherry tomatoes on the side counter near us], that's going to be-, there are a few [tomatoes] down there, but not many, so that [in the bowl] is going to be the last of the fresh tomatoes and unfortunately if I want fresh tomatoes in the winter, I've got to buy them from the supermarket you know [pause] you can't win them all.

S: But, it's not very often because we don't have that many salads during the winter really.

A: Not as many no.

I: [*I displayed the photograph of the frozen broad beans that Adrian had taken*] So, looking at this next photo, would you be able to describe how you go about preparing your broad beans before you freeze them?

A: Well, when you harvest them, obviously take the pods, you know, harvest all of the pods and-

S: Take all of the beans out of the pods and I sit there for half of the afternoon podding them and getting all of the beans out.

I: So, is it quite time-consuming then?

A: Oh, it is yeah.

S: Oh, it is, but I love sitting there, I love sitting down there on a summers day with my tub of broad beans that have just been picked, with a little bowl to put all of the beans into and then another bucket for all of the empty pods and then when they are done, the pods just go straight back onto into the compost and I put the beans in a bag and bring them home.

A: And then when it comes to actually using them, broad beans are a lot nicer if you actually take that shell off, you know the skin off.

I: Yes, they have like an extra, skin-like layer, don't they?

A: Yeah and what we do is, take them from the freezer and put them into boiling water immediately.

S: For about 10 minutes.

A: If that, and then they will just- you squeeze them

S: and the skins just come away from the actual bean

A: But, on of the things about broad beans, you don't tend to see broad beans in the shops and the reason for that is, you can have a carrier bag full of broad beans, sit there podding them, right and then skin them and from that bag of broad beans, you've got that many [*he created a bowl shape with his hands so suggest the small amount you get in comparison to the bag of broad beads straight from harvest*] you know so, if you were going to buy them from the shops by weight, you are paying for the waste.

S: The excess.

A: Yeah.

I: Hmm.

A: And what we generally do with them is either bung them into stews and soups and things or make a beautiful broad bean.

A and S: puree.

S: Hmm.

A: It is dead simple, you just get some shallots and cook them in a frying pan with a bit of butter.

S: But chopped really small.

A: Yeah chopped really small, with some er garlic and then just throw all of your broad beans in and they will cook in their own sort of steam and then you either mash them up with a masher or if you want it really smooth, you can do it in a blender, you know.

S: Or you can do it through a sieve.

A: Obviously yeah yeah, but that is delicious.

S: Oh, it is lovely and that is nice with fish, isn't it?

A: Yeah, puree [*pause*] again, purees, you make the same puree with erm peas as well exactly the same, you know, onions peas and garlic and frozen peas and I think that came off MasterChef.

I: Oh, did it?

A: Yeah, they are always using vegetable purees, celeriac purees, broad bean purees

S: They will show it as they put a little spoon on the plate and go 'vumph' [*she used her hand to suggest that they smear the puree on the plate for effect*], you know, to make a swirl or something.

A: But, you do get an intensity of flavour. Erm labour-intensive broad beans, but it is worth it.

I: [*I showed them the photograph of the frozen broccoli*] So this is a photo of your frozen broccoli and I've noticed that the bag that the vegetables are in says 2015.

A: Yeah, that was last year's crop that.

I: So, I was wondering what you do about space, in this case? I know you mentioned earlier about your tomatoes.

A: Well, we try to use as much as we can, don't we?

S: Yeah, we do try to use as much as we can but there does come a point when they get kind of-, if you haven't used them after 12 months and we are getting the new crops coming in, they will be discarded, unfortunately, that's the only thing to do with them.

A: In fact, broccoli is a good example actually because this year I have thrown about three big bags, those bags actually [*he pointed to the photograph of the frozen broccoli*] away. They would probably be alright but we are not going to use them because we have got this year's going in there already and this year, for some reason, our broccoli crop is phenomenal.

I: Is it?

S: We have had heads on that size [Sophia used her hands to give a visual idea of the size of the heads of the broccoli].

A: And the biggest cauliflowers too, it's calabrese really, they call it broccoli but it is actually called calabrese.

S: Because there are a few different types.

A: What you might do is, you take the main head [off the broccoli plant], once they are ready and cut it off and then you get side shoots growing on it and there are about 4-, 4 crops aren't there altogether? [question directed at Sophia], and so because of throwing those away this year, which is heart-breaking because you have gone to all of the trouble to grow it, erm, we are only going to grow half the amount of broccoli.

S: Next year

I: Right okay, so you are cutting back?

S: Yeah, we have decided that we are adjusting.

A: Half the amount of plants.

S: We do try to plan our meals according to what we have got in the freezer and what needs using up

A: And another thing, over the years, it's like, your recipes might change, your taste might change so you adjust what you grow accordingly and we are not eating as much broccoli as we have done in the past

A: Half the amount of plants.

S: We do try to plan our meals according to what we have got in the freezer and what needs using up.

A: And another thing, over the years, it's like, your recipes might change, your taste might change so you adjust what you grow accordingly and we are not eating as much broccoli as we have done in the past.

S: Hmm, because normally we would have it as a side vegetable, say with sausage and mash or something like that, vegetarian sausages [*laughs*]

S: But I do make quiches with them as well.

A: Oh yeah

S: But alternatively-

A: I use them in fritattas, yeah broccoli goes fantastic with egg, you know because of the iron content.

I: Yes. [*I showed Adrian and Sophia the photograph of frozen blackberries*] okay, so moving onto your photograph of your frozen blackberries, I've noticed that you have 4, 5, 6 containers full of blackberries here.

A: Yes, we have just been talking about that [*before I arrived*], again, if we don't-, we have two black currant bushes.

S: Three black currant bushes.

A: No, no I took one out.

S: Did you?

A: Yeah and put those other berries there.

S: The raspberries.

A: But, we've still got two big bushes and it is too much for us and rather than throw them away, we will just pick what we need and the birds can have the rest.

I: Kind of sharing them?

A: Yeah, so they are not being wasted.

S: Yeah.

A: And it is the same with blackberries as well, or give them away or even tell people [on the allotment], 'look, I've got loads of black berries come and help yourself'.

S: Yeah because somebody might come and pick them and make jam for the open day or something like that.

I: Oh right, that's quite nice of you both.

A: And we don't tend to eat that much jam but Sophia makes a beautiful bramble jelly, out of black berries and I tend to give jars away to the family.

I: I wanted to ask you about giving food away-

A: Oh yeah, we give loads of food away, especially if you can't er-

S: Store.

A: Store.

S: Yeah, like salad things er and cucumbers.

I: Can you tell me how you decide what it is that you end up giving away?

A: Er, it is just a surplus, I mean, like strawberries-

S: Yeah, just a surplus that we know that we are not going to use, when we have more than we can cope with.

A: Strawberries, you can freeze strawberries and make a compote out of them afterwards.

S: Yeah or make jellies.

A: Of which we will do, because I make fruit compotes, if I have made a cheesecake or something- there's nothing- and it is a sweet cheesecake, there is nothing nicer than a tart compote to go with it.

S: With a few different fruits.

I: Right, that's quite nice.

A: Yeah.

S: Like a summer fruit.

A: Or blackberry, blackberries, blueberries, [directed at Sophia] you make blueberry muffins, don't you?

S: Yeah [pause] I mean, I've even made trifles with blueberry muffins in the bottom and then I will make a blueberry jelly, I use vegetarian er, not geletin, it is-

A: edgar-agar-

S: Something like that, it is an alternative to make the jelly set.

A: But to give you an idea of the compote, that isn't on that list, erm suppose I've made a cheesecake, say, a lemon and lime cheesecake or a vanilla cheesecake or something [*pause*] erm and I want a compote with it, I'll take a handful of blackberries and a handful of blueberries, raspberries if we have got them and erm-

I: Out of the freezer, is this?

S: Yeah from the freezer.

A: Yeah, and some blackcurrants, straight in the pan, erm, I tend to adjust the sugar afterwards, you know, after I have tasted it.

I: Right okay.

A: I won't put any sugar in straight away, erm but I always put a splash of Amaretto in, you know amaretto what amaretto tastes like? Almond.

I: Yes, I've tried Disaronno Amaretto.

A: Yeah that's what we use and it's only cheap, not really that expensive, so that just brings the flavours together and it makes a wonderful compote, doesn't it?

S: Hmm.

A: So that's the fruit really. Oh, as far as giving away, if we have got a massive erm- I mean our son and his wife and daughter only lives-, well the daughter has left home now, Sophie, our grand-daughter, erm, but she is into cooking and vegetarianism and everything so whenever she is here, she will go home with-

S: Oh, she will get a carrier bag full of stuff.

A: And it's the same, if we've got surplus, we will take them down there, you know, it's like before I froze those peppers, I took some down for them.

S: They only live 9 doors away.

A: So, it is a matter of erm, any surplus that is fresh or whatever, we will just give away to basically family and some friends.

S: I mean, it's like the cucumbers that we have grown in the greenhouse, we keep saying one plant is enough and every year he [Adrian] puts two in.

A: Hmm.

S: So, it is like we have got cucumbers coming out of our ears and we give them around to people on the site that have only got half a plot and haven't got a greenhouse.

I: Yeah.

S: Or anybody that we see that we know coming up the street, 'do you want a cucumber?' *[laughs]*

A: I would go as far to say that everything we grow, we give probably about a quarter of it away.

I: That's quite a lot then.

A: Well, that's only because, you can't erm-

S: You can't store it, there is nothing you can do with a cucumber to store it, it has to be used fresh, they only last so long.

A: And it's like I said with strawberries-, you can also cook with cucumbers, I think a lot of people aren't aware of that but it is absolutely wonderfully beautiful. You know courgettes?

I: Yes.

A: And you know what they are like when you cook them?

I: Yes.

A: Well, cucumbers are similar actually, erm but the one main difference is that cucumbers don't fall, they don't fall and they taste wonderful. Cooked cucumbers, you know, just use it in, say in place of courgettes in a meal, you know, it is fantastic. And a lot of people don't tend to do that, do they?

S: No, no, and you can also pickle it as well.

A: But, we tried that and I'm not a great fan of vinegar me

I: Ah right I see.

A: Just coming back to the fruit, the strawberries will freeze if you want to use them in a compote, but it doesn't taste anything like fresh strawberries, so a lot of strawberries get given away, a lot of strawberries.

S: And the produce we give away tends to come straight from the allotment.

A: A part from the odd jar of jam.

S: Or I'll make a bramble jelly and I'll give it to the kids.

A: Or if Sophia has made a load of say mm- because I don't bake me, *[directed towards Sophia]* but if you make a load of blueberry muffins, you would give them away.

S: Yeah, I'll take a few down.

A: To family and friends really.

S: It all gets spread about *[laughs]* which is better really.

A: Yeah

S: Because if it is stuff which is too much for us, that is the only thing that we can do with it, really, so it's not wasted, because that would be a shame.

A: Yeah.

I: Okay, looking at the next photograph [I displayed the photograph of their haricot beans]

A: Ah yes, those are canaletti beans, or are they?

S: No, they are the haricot beans.

A: Haricot, yeah those are what you get from French climbing beans, they are baked beans, basically.

I: Yes, they are, aren't they?

A: Haricot beans.

S: So, they are, we will pick them fresh to start with and then as it gets towards the end, what's left, I will leave-

A: For the beans.

S: So, the beans can develop and then, once the beans have developed, I'll pull them all off in the same way that I do the broad beans and I'll sit there podding them and-

[Adrian stood up by this point to get a tub of their dried haricot beans and then showed them to me]

I: Ahh, you've got quite a few, haven't you?

A: These are dried – so you can dry them.

S: Yes, these are dried.

A: We started off, first freezing them, which I prefer because you can take them straight out of the freezer and put them into food.

I: Hmm

A: Whereas these [referring to the dried beans] you have got to soak overnight

S: For them to rehydrate and this year, the French beans, I only did one variety, those have actually come out of purple climbing beans and the ones that I grew this year, were just the green ones and the beans out of those are actually black.

I: Oh right, that's interesting.

S: So, we got black beans this year, [directed towards Adrian] what did you do with those-

A: Those are dried chillies [*he pointed over to the dish of dried chillies on the kitchen work surface before bringing them over to me*], you just let them dry out and then bung them into a jar. These are ones that are just about ready to go into a jar now really [*he brought over the dried chillies for me to take a look at*].

I: [*I picked one of the dried chillies up*] They feel almost as though they aren't real.

A: Yeah, they do, and they are just as tasty and hot even though they are like that.

I: Oh really, that's interesting.

A: Hmm, you don't lose any of the heat and I'm not joking those are nearly two years old, we haven't grown any for two years.

S: No, no, because we have grown so many, and we can store them, there is no point in growing any.

A: Once you take all of the moisture out of a vegetable like that, desiccate it, you take all of the enzymes with it.

I: Right.

A: and so, it won't decay.

S: And [*Sophia left the room to get their tub of black beans to show me*] those are the beans from the French beans this year and they are all dried so they can just be stored up on a shelf.

I: and they keep?

S: Oh yeah, they will keep for years really, yeah you know until they are re-hydrated and then I can cook with them then, you know chilli and things.

A: And those dried chillies, you put them in the processor and then grind them up for cooking.

I: Ah so once you've left them to dry out, then you put them in the food processor

A: Yeah when we need them.

S: Yeah, we put them in a grinder and grind them up.

A: You know, like the way a coffee grinder works.

I: Was that something you bought especially?

S: No, no it is something we use anyway for sort of- things like doing pesto and things like that.

A: It is just one of those Braun things, isn't it? [*directed at Sophia, whilst he headed towards the kitchen to try and find it*]

S: Yeah, it is one of those little things and it has an attachment on the top with a button.

A: You know, one of these, [Adrian showed me the blender from the kitchen] one of those.

I: Oh yes.

A: And you get attachments with it, it's er [*he routed around for the attachment*] and that's the grinder bit [*he showed me the attachment and then attached it to the blender*] so you just put that onto there and it is a coffee grinder come whatever you want really.

S: Yeah, we use it for erm, things like nuts, grinding nuts up, pine nuts for pesto.

A: I wish we could grow pine nuts.

S: [*laughs*] We can't grow everything.

A: Pine nuts are the most expensive nuts that you can buy.

I: Are they?

A: Yeah [*he showed me an opened bag he has in the cupboard*] it can be like £2.50 for that, I mean these are open but- and you can't get them any cheaper than that, but you roast them and as soon as you start roasting them, the flavour, and it is an essential part of pesto you know.

I: Okay, well moving onto the next couple of photographs [I displayed photographs of the leeks (first of all), followed by the peppers, sprouts and the fennel]

A: Are those the leeks?

I: Yes.

A: Well, once we have got a surplus and we can't eat anymore fresh leeks, because we have had enough, then they will just get all chopped up, put into bags like that, but they are weighed.

I: The bags are weighed?

A: Yeah but I won't- that bag, I'll make- the main source of food that comes from leeks is leek and potato soup and the recipe is the same weight of potatoes to leeks. So, I know how big my pan is, and I know how much I want to make so I'll weigh them and put them in the bags the correct weight, so when I make a batch of leek and potato soup, then it is just one bag, I think I write the weight on them [the frozen bags], and then I weigh some potatoes, after they have been peeled.

I: Yeah.

A: And that is the correct recipe, you know. And it is the same with other things in there as well you know, it is the same with elderberries, isn't it? If I'm making elderberry wine, I will put them in bags of a certain weight because I know how many pounds of elderberries I need for making one gallon of wine, mmm [pause] Those-, they are something quite unusual really, because we don't blanch them.

I: The leeks?

A: Yeah, I just wash them, clean them, cut them up and straight into a bag and they will probably last 9 months like that. Any longer than that and you risk them going off because they haven't been blanched.

I: Why is it that you don't blanch them?

A: Well, you know the reason for blanching, don't you? Well, the main reason, you know the enzyme I'm talking about?

I: Yes.

A: That takes away the flavour and eventually makes-, well, when you blanch something, it kills 90% of that enzyme.

I: Right, so you haven't blanched them here.

A: I haven't done that no. And I don't do it with fresh tomatoes. But they won't last as long. You know the freezing slows the enzymes right down but it doesn't- they haven't been killed if you know what I mean and blanching does.

S: Hmm.

I: Ah right okay. [pause] okay, moving along to the next photo that you have taken, of your sprouts. [*I displayed the photograph of their sprouts again*]

A: Those have been blanched, because they will go off very quickly even in the freezer

I: Right, how it is you came to discover this?

A: Well some we have learnt from experience, but mostly, we have read about-

S: Yeah mostly read about.

A: Because you can buy books on freezing and storing. Those [pause] unfortunately, they do lose their texture, I like a- I like Brussels sprouts with a bit of a crunch or a bit firm anyway but once they have been frozen, the nature of freezing things breaks up all of the molecules and makes them soft once they have defrosted.

S: I mean, they are still nice, they still have their taste, but they are just that little bit softer. I mean, I don't mind them soft, I like them.

A: But, I'm going to experiment though, with cooking them differently. Generally, I would steam sprouts, fresh, fresh sprouts and I'm going to start cooking them in a frying pan.

S: Yeah.

A: With a bit of butter.

S: Because they'd only take a few minutes.

A: and because they tend to be a bit watery, you know, so that's what I'm in to at the moment, is experimenting with different ways of cooking frozen foods basically, or our frozen produce, which I haven't done yet, it's just an idea.

S: And it may give us some more ideas for other meals as well or other accompaniments to meals.

A: There is one recipe that I have noticed and it is sprouts, this is fresh sprouts, Brussels sprouts with erm chestnuts. Erm, what you do it, apparently, I'm not-, you put the sprouts in a pan with some er, a little bit of butter or even a little bit of water and you'll get water coming out of the sprouts anyway, as long as you put a lid on and it doesn't evaporate, but when you put chestnuts in you get oil coming out of the chestnuts and so the sprouts are cooking in this chestnut oil and they are supposed to be really really nice so- and we've never had them yet, have we?

S: No.

A: So, it's not just about techniques of freezing, it is techniques of cooking the frozen produce as well [pause] and we are learning all the time, aren't we?

S: Well, you never stop learning do you, you never stop.

A: No, no, I mean I will occasionally look through these erm, I've also got masses of recipes on here as well [*he picked up his electronic notepad*] I'll just show you, er, you know flipboard?

I: I think you have mentioned it to me once before.

A: Oh yeah, it is a fantastic thing, I'll show it to you, it's very, it is an American thing so it is very erm- but this is where I keep my recipes off of the web.

I: Oh, you store them altogether?

A: Yeah, this is flipboard as it comes up and it's like News things, these are all different articles, I'll just er click on one just to show you what it is like, these are all today's articles on health, [*swiped across his electronic pad right to left with his finger to reveal the next article*] it's like a newspaper really. And different people put them there and you get your own flipboard page. This is mine and these are my 'magazines' [term used in flipboard to group articles within particular subject areas] as they call them, erm [*read out the various topics that he has within his flipboard*] one on music, one on health, cooking, our allotment,

with a picture [*laughs*], art, because we paint and what have you and guitar because I play the guitar as well, and then there is guitar repairs and maintenance, which- well I do that as well, don't I?

S: Yeah, yeah.

A: Erm, just coming on the cooking, so these are what I have 'flipped' into here, [*Adrian started flicking through various recipes he has saved*] erm, I just saw that the other day, er a chocolate dessert that's, er, have you seen that? [*he shows the recipe to Sophia*] it is made out of ganache, which I thought was really-

S: Oh right, ooh that looks interesting.

A: Yeah, [*directed at Sophia*] because you like the curry sauce that we get from the chippy and 'occasionally' we will have chippy and you always have curry sauce, so I wanted to know how to make it, so that's why I downloaded that [*recipe for chip shop curry sauce*] and if you click on it, it will come up as the recipe.

S: It was alright actually, yes.

A: Yeah and this is the recipe for it, that's it really and er, these are all my recipes, 29 foods never to put in the fridge, that is an interesting one, and one of them is tomatoes.

I: Really?

A: Yeah because being in the fridge activates those enzymes and [*both A and S*] they lose their flavour. That's why supermarket tomatoes don't taste as good as ones you've grown because they have been kept in cold storage.

I: Ah right.

A: Erm, this is just a guide to eating beans er again, we have got broad beans so I saw that. We haven't actually done that. Grilled salmon with ginger that sounds nice, that was- er because we are into fish and what have you erm and-

S: See, he does all of this and never tells me, it's like his secret.

A: [*laughs*] and that's the recipe anyway for this and these are other recipes.

I: You can keep them all in one place.

S: Yeah

A: Exactly, yeah, these are just- any recipe that you see on the web that you might fancy, you just-

S: You just flip it.

A: 'Perfectly crispy skinned fish'! and that was the one that told me about-

S: Stainless steel.

A: Yeah stainless steel, er [*read the titles of other recipes he has*] different salads, Brussels sprouts, with bacon and maple syrup.

S: Oooh, we wouldn't have maple syrup.

A: We wouldn't have bacon!

S: [*laughs*] Yeah, but we have our own vegetarian bacon and sort of stuff, it has the taste but-

A: Basic frittata recipe, carrot soup recipe, we've got loads of carrots er, red and green pepper soups. We were experimenting with truffle oil, weren't we? Which I have tried in the past and it just tastes like chemicals to me.

I: Oh, that's a shame.

S: Yeah, I don't like it

A: And I thought I'd give it another go but no, it's not for us. Erm swordfish, because we had some swordfish, didn't we?

S: Swordfish steaks.

A: So, I used that, I didn't know how to cook it, so I just looked it up and that was the recipe and that was nice.

S: Yeah it was nice yeah.

A: Er, that's another swordfish one, butter and sage sauce which is one that you would have with ravioli.

S: Hmm, yeah that's what you need to make-

A: I was starting to look into Mexican food, but it is too 'bitty'.

S: Yeah, it's like a bit of this and a bit of that.

A: Even to the point of how to bake a potato. I looked that up because we used to do ours in the pressure cooker, and then I thought, the flavour isn't really there so I started to roast them traditionally, you know and they are amazing, aren't they?

S: Hmm.

A: And that is basically it.

S: But, you put a coat of olive oil around them don't you before you put them in?

A: Yeah and salt and pepper.

S: Before he wraps them in the foil, so the skins aren't quite as tough.

A: That one's, '18 fresh fish dishes, perfect for spring', 'how to cook haddock', you know different fish erm, that is the recipe and that is the picture on the front, from Italy's best chefs erm, and then there will be loads on pasta because I bought a pasta machine and learnt how to make pasta, didn't I?

S: Yeah.

A: So, these are all.

I: do you make your own fillings then?

S: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I bought a pasta machine.

I: Is that something you've bought recently?

S: Yes, well-

A: Yeah it was last year.

S: It was this summer.

A: Oh, was it this year?

S: It was this year, yeah.

A: Yeah, because I wanted to make ravioli, but you've got to make your own pasta really to make it. So, what I do is, make a big batch of ravioli's and then freeze them.

I: Ah right-

A: Can I, can I just show you, suppose I'm browsing the web [*looked back at flipboard again*], I'll try and show you quickly, I'll just browse the web and er give me something you might want to eat?

I: Er, spinach and ricotta ravioli?

A: [Adrian typed 'spinach and ricotta ravioli' into the search engine]

S: That is actually one thing that he makes.

I: Oh, is it?

S: Yeah [*laughs*]

A: Yeah, so there, it has brought up loads of recipes, right so we will just hit on that one [*clicked on one of the options within the browser*] this is what I do, so we've got it there [*pointed to the flipboard icon*] that's the recipe and if I want it in here [flip board] because I don't like reading stuff on here [his laptop] I'd rather read it off here [his electronic notepad] er, you just hit 'flip it' right and you watch. This is my flip board, I want it in 'cooking' which it has 'ticked' [options for where to locate the web page in 'flip board'] that is the magazine I

want it to go in you just 'add' and now I've got that here [*moved on to show me his personal flip board on his notepad*].

I: That doesn't take long then, does it?

A: No, but you have got to set it up, it takes a bit to get there but all the information is there. And so, you could do that, you could have flip board on your laptop here and then suppose you are browsing the web, and there is something about allotments, you could have a magazine on allotments and you just 'flip it', I described it, like a scrapbook almost.

S: Yeah, and everything is categorised into different sections, so you know exactly where to look for it.

A: As long as the web stays there, you'll never ever lose it because it's in the cloud and you are not using storage space.

S: And you can actually have your own flip board open for other people to look at what's on your flip board and if they see anything they like they can flip it from theirs to yours.

A: Oh yeah, if I knew your username and you had an interest that I had the same interest in and you knew my username, you could look at my flip board, book, magazine or whatever on that particular subject and I could look at yours and in America it is used in education a lot and I don't understand why it has never taken off here. It is very American-orientated because it is an American thing.

S: Maybe it's early days.

A: No, it's been going for a few years.

S: Has it? Oh.

A: Yeah, some people are obsessed with it as well, flipping articles into it all the time, aren't they?

S: They just browse the web all day looking for articles to flip in, it is a bit obsessive.

I: Hmm, so just coming back to the photographs [*I displayed a photograph of their figs*] I think we've already talked about the figs, haven't we?

A: Yeah, just basically pick them, when they are ripe, bung them in the freezer, use them within 3 months. You can't really do anything to them, because if you blanched them they would spoil, you know, you would end up with a puree basically.

I: Okay then. [*I displayed the next photograph of their garlic hanging in the kitchen*]

A: That is the garlic, which is up there [Adrian showed me where their garlic was hung up in the room that we were in], what is left of it.

I: Oh yes.

S: Which wasn't very successful.

A: No.

S: We have decided that we are not going to grow anymore garlic because it is just not worth it.

I: Why do you think it isn't worth it?

A: There are a lot of problems down there [on the allotment] with rust and it really-, that-, I had to harvest them early because they were covered in rust and they haven't developed properly, you know, they should be a lot bigger than that.

S: Yeah.

I: Ah, yes, I remember you telling me about the rust when I was at your allotment.

A: and at Aldi, you can buy three garlics, that are nice big ones for about 40 pence.

S: And they are quite strong as well.

A: And they are a good strong flavour as well.

S: So, there doesn't really seem much point.

A: You find, asking people about garlic, down there, one year, you can have a fantastic crop and the next year, it's not so good and nobody seems to know why and I don't, but I use a lot of garlic. And I mean some of those cloves- er those bulbs they look alright, don't they? But the problem is, because they haven't-

S: Developed

A: Developed the way they should, it's full of tiny little cloves and so with peeling.

S: Yeah, it is a lot of trouble.

A: Takes you half an hour to peel a garlic when you are doing a meal you know, I may be exaggerating but-

S: So, we'll buy them [*laughs*]

I Ah right, okay then. The next photograph I have is of your passata. [*I displayed the photographs of their passata*] Would you be able to tell me about the process that you went through to make the passata?

A: Well, basically I roasted the tomatoes to give them that extra flavour and it does take some of the liquid out of it, doesn't it? The roasting process?

S: Mmm.

A: And then they go into the juicer, which takes away any of the thicker pith and seeds

S: Yeah and a little bit of the stringiness that runs down the middle, the stalk-

A: Then as I'm juicing them, I've got a big pan about this big [*at this point Adrian used his hands to gauge the size of the pan he uses, for me to visualise*] and I'll make a pan full, that big, of passata, but I'll boil it, it's boiling, as you are doing it you know, to thicken it up and it is just evaporating water off really and then you sterilize the jars and then you put the jars in the oven to warm up, because if you put hot liquid into the [cold/normal temperature] jar, it is going to break, so the jars have got to be hot. So then, you've got a hot jar, you put hot liquid into it, if you put the cold liquid in, it doesn't seal properly.

I: Ah right.

S: Yeah, it has to be hot.

A: So, you've got- you warm the jar up in the oven, then you put the hot passata in and then you put the lid on and as it cools, it contracts and seals it and that's why it'll last for 2 years. And sometimes it's a real hard job to get the lid off, isn't it?

S: Yeah because it seals down so tight.

A: But if you live in Alaska and you are collecting fish to eat for the winter, you are collecting fish during the summer, erm that's what they do, they 'jar it'. And they jar it in exactly the same method and it'll keep it perfectly.

S: It's the same process as making jam.

I: How is it the same process as making jam?

A: Yeah, because the jam goes in hot as well.

S: It has to be hot to make sure it's sealed on top, so that it doesn't start to decay.

A: You know the little bubble, you have on the lids, it pulls that in and you know that as long as that is down, then whatever is in the jar is perfectly sealed. I mean those jars [with the button on top] I haven't actually got them but there is a slight dome on the lid. [*Adrian stood up to go into the kitchen to show me a jar they have currently with their preserves inside and brought it over to me*] Can you see it? It has concaved there.

I: Yes, I can see.

A: So, if that was up then you wouldn't be eating it.

S: Some of them, the jars of jam, they've got the button in the middle and you can press it down and if it has been opened, it will pop back up again.

A: So once, that's open, if I don't use it-, it's got to go in the fridge and it will only last 2-3 days. [Referring to the passata sauce]. [*Adrian sat back down in the same room as Sophia and I*] That passata gets used for bolognaise, the Mediterranean soup I use, whatever.

I: So, it is just a generic-

A: Yeah yeah, and then it's used-

S: Yeah, it's used for different things.

I: Okay, so there are two pictures that I to take a look at next. [I displayed two photographs of the juicing process]

A: That is juicing, that-

S: Juicing the carrots.

I: I can see that there are two containers, underneath the juicing machine in the photograph and so I was wondering if you could tell me what is happening here?

A: I'd have to show you- [At this point, Adrian stood up and headed back into the kitchen] I've done some juicing today.

I: Oh, have you?

S: Yeah.

A: It is actually in the sink. But this is the juicer and it's not- they are not cheap. You know this was erm [*pause*]

S: That, how much was it, £180 pounds? [question directed to Adrian]

I: Is that expensive?

S: Well, you can get them cheaper now.

A: Yeah about £50.

S: They have come down in price quite a bit, but we have had that for a couple of years.

A: It's got a promotion on it, 7-year guarantee, it goes through a lot of hammer, you know. [Adrian pulled out the two containers from the sink, semi-covered in washing up soap and bubbles and he placed them on the kitchen counter]. I'd just thrown them in the sink because I'd just finished before you came. Those are the two containers and I'll just show you quickly.

S: [laughs] You could have shown her from the pictures you know.

A: Well, yeah but there is nothing like seeing it for real is there, er, the juicer comes apart, so for er, cleaning

S: Yeah, we did buy a good quality one because we wanted it to last, using it every day.

I: So, is this something you have bought for your allotment produce?

S: Well, yeah.

A: Yeah, it was really, yeah.

S: It was yeah, so that we can use-

A: That is the screw [*he pointed to one of the components of the device*] it's called masticating, that's-

S: He is just putting it all back together for you and if anything happens to any of the parts you can buy them separately.

A: Erm, this has different settings on it according to what you are juicing, 1, 2, and 3. The hardest stuff, you will have it open slightly more, the softer stuff you'd have it on number 3

I: So, carrots would be on number 1 then?

A: Yeah, yeah. [*once Adrian had finished fitting all of the components back together, he gave a demonstration of where the vegetables would go; down an opening in the top and fed through the 'screw' and into the juicing compartment*] You see that little shoot there – where my finger is, well what happens is, you put the vegetables in there and then they are forced through this-

S: Screw.

A: No, through that.

S: Yeah, it comes down and through the screw and then through that.

I: Like a channel going around?

A and S: Yeah yeah.

S: And it screws it down, and then it goes through that mesh.

A: And then all of the pulp ends up in there, through here.

S: And it separates it out, the pulp and the juice.

A: The juice comes out of this shoot into there and if you use a centrifugal juicer, you are not getting all of the nutrients out of it because it works so fast, it works on a centrifugal force and also the blades are going so fast that it actually creates heat and destroys some of the nutrients and vitamins that are in there.

I: Oh right, that's interesting.

A: So, this is what is called a slow juicer. I'll switch it on, even though there is nothing in it [Adrian turned the juicer on] Can you see the screw going?

I: Right, yes.

A: So, the vegetables are pushed through there [he demonstrated what happens during the juicing process again]

S: And also, using that screw mechanism, when it-, when the food is squeezed through so tight, it actually helps to activate all the enzymes in the food and then you drink it straight away so you're getting all of those live activated enzymes in your system.

I: Ah right.

A: Did you know that- [pause] what are carrots renowned for? Which vitamin? I don't know whether you know that?

I: Is it vitamin A?

A: Yeah, the biggest beneficial vitamin in a carrot is vitamin A, but there is no vitamin A at all in a carrot. It only comes from the chewing process, and it is the beta carotene that turns into vitamin A. So, if you were to just swallow carrots without chewing them, you wouldn't get any vitamin A.

I: Right, that's interesting that you say it is the process of squeezing or chewing the carrot that activates it.

A: Yeah, and it's the same with a lot of other vegetables and a lot of fruit, a lot of things you eat. It's the same with garlic.

I: Garlic?

A: Yeah, there is a thing called lecithin, which is the active ingredient in garlic but you only get that lecithin from chewing it, from masticating it, or smashing it up or whatever. If you were to just eat garlic and swallow it, you wouldn't get any of that. Very interesting.

I: Ah, yes it is.

S: Hmm.

A: Er, so that's one of the reasons, the main reason, whereas a centrifugal, er, you know like a bullet [like a nutri-bullet]

I: Yes.

A: That's why that doesn't work, you are not chewing it, you are just smashing it up and flinging the bits to the outside. And the juice goes down the middle.

S: I mean there is a lot of goodness in-,

A: Don't get me wrong-,

S: But that [referring to their juicer] is a lot better.

A: In certain circumstances, I'd have a bullet, but if you can, that's [their type of juicer] the type of juicer that you want.

S: We are actually buying the grand-daughter one for Christmas and what is it? It is £56 pounds.

I: Oh right, so that's quite a bit cheaper than yours then.

A: Yeah, they have come down, that one was £180, that was the cheapest on the market at the time.

I: Ahh.

A: It was, it was yeah, because that's what a professional would use, that style of- I don't mean that one, I mean that style but then you are talking £500 to £1,000 for a professional one, you know, but that's American isn't it? And it's proven to be really good, yeah.

S: Is it? I thought it was French.

A: Nah, they've just put a French name on it, 'le Quip'. [pause] if you want to know about juicing, just google it on erm YouTube. There are millions of videos on juicing.

S: Millions! everybody is starting to do it.

A: I'll swear by it, because we have gone through phases of taking er vitamin tablets and I don't think they work.

S: Never felt any better from them at all.

A: Your body doesn't absorb the vitamins the same as you do in fresh [pause] vegetables, fruit and juice.

S: Raw, nothing cooked.

A: I- do you want a taste of some juice?

I: Erm, I could do yes.

A: Well, this is one I made this morning. [laughs]

S: [laughs] This is one I made earlier.

A: [Adrian pulled the bottle of juice from the fridge and started pouring me a small glass]

S: This is what I was drinking when you came actually.

I: Ahh, I was wondering what it was that you were drinking.

A: What it is, there is a big beetroot in this juice. It's raw.

S: Yes, everything is raw.

A: So, this is beetroot in that bottle, when it was full, it was er a big beetroot, a kilo of carrots, just in this one bottle, two oranges, I didn't put any apples in because I was pushed for time.

S: A bit of ginger.

A: Er, yes, some root ginger.

S: We need some more of that, don't we?

A: Yeah, er, root ginger and three pears I think I put in there and I think that's it.

I: It is quite liquidy isn't it, I would have expected it to be thicker.

A: Well you can have it thicker if you want, generally in juicing you get that [He showed me the sieve] if you let the juice run through that, any of the bits will end up in there.

S: You do get a certain amount of pulp through.

A: If you want to let some of the pulp through then you don't use that mesh.

S: And I've got to admit it is easier to drink without the bits.

A: Do you like beetroot?

I: Yes, I do.

A: Just try that. [He placed the glass of their homemade beetroot juice in front of me, for me to try]

I: Oh, that's lovely!

S: Different.

A: If you market that-

I: I can taste the ginger.

A and S: Yeah.

I: It is very light too.

A: Hmm, it goes down easy, doesn't it?

I: Hmm.

A: And in that, you've got beetroot which lowers your blood pressure, it is known for it, you know, medically for doing that so that's good for you and all the vitamins in, there are loads of vitamin B in there as well, you've got the oranges which are vitamin C and various other things, you've got the pears which contain similar sort of vitamins to apples so that's boosting your immune system and the carrots, they are renowned for boosting your immune system,

beta- there is nothing better than beta carotene and then you've got all other little bits of things in it, you know.

S: Yeah and we put a little bit of ginger in just to take that earthiness away from the beetroot

A: So, you end up with a ginger flavour as opposed to beetroot.

I: Yeah.

A: But once you get into juicing, the hardest thing about juicing is doing it every day, you've got to-

I: Do you make some of this juice every day?

A: Yeah.

S: Yes.

A: Well they could be slightly different but yeah, it probably takes about an hour.

I: That's quite a long time

A: Yeah, but once you realise the benefits of it, you do it. I've got another one in the fridge which is just pure grape juice as well.

S: That might be a bit sour that.

A: No, that's only from yesterday, no, it is incredibly sweet to be honest, that's what I did yesterday, I'll drink that later on, that's pure grape, there is nothing else. And that follows the same process.

I: Right okay.

A: When it comes to making this one [the beetroot one], there is a bit more work in that because I like to leave the skin on say the beetroot so you've got to give it a good scrubbing and you've got to scrub all of the carrots, you know, it does take a while. And then you've got to cut the carrots, you can put them in whole but I don't like straining the machine, so I cut the carrots up into quarters or whatever you know.

I: I have three similar photographs of your onions here [presents them to both Adrian and Sophia]

A: In the shed, that is our drying rack.

I: At your allotment?

A: Yeah.

S: Yes, that's in the shed, where the other wooden greenhouse is, it is attached to it.

A: Where the grapes are.

I: Ah, where the grapes are, I see

A: Erm, what you do is, draw your onions, take them out when they are ready, or at the right time and just cut some of the foliage off and- I built that rack

I: For your onions?

A: Yeah.

S: Yeah, it's just strips, individual strips that run along from one side of the shed to the other, with gaps in between. I think there are about 6 individual rows going back [pauses, examines the photographs more closely], oh no five.

A: So, when you dry onions, you've got to dry them upside down so-, and moisture comes out.

S: It runs down as opposed to going the other way and running into the onion

A: Because if you were to try and dry them stood up, you might end up with moisture staining the neck and it might go mouldy. They are very prone to mould. [*He picks up one of their onions that they have in a wicker basket behind me and holds the stem/neck of the onion with his other hand*] once that bit [the neck of the onion] has gone completely dry, they are ready and you can put them anywhere then.

I: Ah right.

A: [Referring to the onions in the wicker basket] These are ready to be- Sophia plaits them.

S: No, I don't plait them, I get a string and then the surplus stork bit goes through, wrapped into the string and pulled down and I'll do about 12 on top of each other on the string, so you can hang them up somewhere to store them.

A: To give you an idea, this year, I actually had some, I was just using the last of last year's when I harvested these so they will last all year them. Hmm we don't buy any from the supermarket, do we?

S: No, no.

A: I don't think there is a difference in flavour to be honest, between our onions and bought onions but, you know, I know what's gone into them and that's basically nothing, you know and that's the reason for it.

S: They are a very easy vegetable to grow though, aren't they? You just put them in the ground and that's it.

A: Yeah, it's that bit, it's the drying bit that spoils it.

S: and the storing as well, yeah.

A: Because they need to be stored somewhere that is cool and dry.

I: Mmm, okay.

A: If it is a damp environment, they tend to develop mould, you know, and if they are too warm, they will start growing again.

S: Yeah, they will start to shoot [roots out] from the middle, at the bottom of the onion.

A: Alliums are very forgiving vegetables, all of the allium family. You know, er, leeks, garlics, onions and there are others and you can get a leek right- a big leek, pull it out the ground like that [demonstrates the movement of pulling a leek from the soil with both of his hands firmly pulling the imaginary leek upwards], cut all of the roots off, and cut all of the foliage off, stick it back in the ground-

S: And it will start growing again, it'll form more roots and start growing again.

A: So, if you keep your onions too warm, when-, which can be a bit difficult, you know, to find a cool, dry place.

I: Right.

S: Yeah.

A: You'd need a cellar really, that's what cellars were for.

S: Yeah, yeah.

A: But if you don't-, the warmth, they will start growing again and that ruins the onions really.

S: Yeah, and he has fetched them all home and put them down there so I can start stringing them, as soon as I'm properly right.

A: Yeah, when you are better.

S: Because I can't strain this side [of her body] because you have to pull them [the onions] down so that they are really tight on the string.

A: Is there anything else you wanted to know about that?

I: I don't think so. The next photo I wanted to take a look at was your bag of compost. Where is it that you tend to keep this bag?

S: He shoves it outside [*laughs*]

A: I'll show you. [Adrian stood up and headed towards the back door leading outside from his kitchen] I haven't been down to the allotment for a few days, so [he opened the back door leading into their back garden and picked up his bag of compostable material to briefly show me]

S: Yeah, he just keeps it in the carrier bag out there until he goes down.

A: It's all peelings and waste and you know and that just gets thrown onto the compost heap.

S: Yeah, next time he goes down, he will just take it down with him and throw it on the compost heap.

A: There's two out there, two of those [laughs] [Closes the back door after putting the bag back outside]. What I try to do though-, any peelings, any vegetable waste that hasn't been cooked goes back down there, so you are returning it to the soil, it's brilliant, I love it.

S: Yeah.

A: You know, I like the idea of it, nothing is wasted.

S: And within a year, once you have 'turned' it and what have you, you've got compost again.

I: Yes.

A: Yeah, it's good.

S: Hmm.

I: Okay, so these are your potatoes [*I displayed the photographs of their potatoes*], I think this is my last question now looking at your photos, can you describe to me what it is that you do once you have harvested them?

A: Well you harvest them, dig em' up. Ideally, on a sunny day, then you spread them out on the ground to dry 'cause they are going to be damp from the soil, 'cause you don't store potatoes that have got any wet or damp on them 'cause they will go rotten.

I: Right.

A: So, you dry the potatoes out and you bung them in a sack that is gonna stop the light from getting in.

S: But it's got to be breathable.

A: But it's got to be breathable, yeah.

I: Hmm.

A: If you put them in a plastic bag, they will eventually rot.

S: They'll start sweating, you know.

I: Hmm. Right.

A: That's it and they're all in the wash house now.

I: Do they keep for long?

S: Yeah.

A: You do, you check 'em maybe twice a year.

I: Right.

S: Throughout the winter and what have you.

A: Just in case. There might be one that's going rotten from the inside that happens naturally.

S: Yeah and you just don't know.

A: You just don't notice.

I: Ah, okay.

A: If one goes rotten it will send 'em all rotten and you can smell it.

S: Yeah, so periodically he'll just open the bag and you know have a rummage about to see if there is anything.

S: And then just pull that out and you know.

A: I have them in the shed, but I always have a few in here.

S: Yeah, he always fetches a few in.

A: Ready for cooking, you know.

I: Oh, right. Yeah.

A: Those are different types, those are erm, what do you call them?

S: Wilgers.

A: Wilgers, yeah. Those are Désirée.

I: What happens to the potatoes that you find that do have holes in them?

A: You just cut out the bit that's bad and eat the rest.

I: So, you still use them?

S: Oh yes.

A: It's a known fact about juicing, you go and collect all the wind fallen apples, that have been eaten with bugs and what have you and you can still juice them.

I: Yeah. [the telephone rang and Sophia left the room to answer it]

A: You just cut out the bad bits and juice the good bits, it's the same with potatoes, you know, erm, I don't think there'll be anything wrong with that it's just normal potato, you know.

I: Does it bother you that there could have been something in there that?

A: Oh no, no, no it doesn't bother me at all. It's nature innit, you know.

I: Yeah.

A: You're giving other creatures a meal as well, aren't you? You know.

I: Yeah [*laughs*].

A: I am a great believer in er, ecology. Everything's got its place, but what I'd like to know is, what place have green fly got on this planet! Because I like growing these, the streptocarpus [*he showed me the plant on the table behind me*]

I: Oh.

A: And I've got two new varieties, one there, that's why there's no flowers on it, 'cause the green fly have had 'em.

I: Ah, really?

A: And the green fly won't touch these, but they'll go for that variety.

I: Ah, that seems strange.

A: And my little propagator, there it is, I'm just developing some, new species, varieties for me. For myself, look, this is one [*he showed me the plant*].

I: That's beautiful.

A: Innit? It's called Elsie that, I love streptocarpus and they flower all year. You just keep dead heading them and they flower for six months.

I: Oh, beautiful.

A: And that's what those are in there for, 'cause they're new plants. What you do is just cut a leaf up, put it in some soil and you get new plants growing from it, you know. But I wanted those purple ones.

I: Yeah.

A: So, I got a leaf from one that I knew was that flower and just did it in some cells [cell trays] and I ended up with about six or seven plants.

I: Oh right.

A: But I won't take them out of there till next year, because I only did em this year. They need to develop a bigger root system, so I'll leave them there. But the bloody green fly have got at em [the first variety he referred to] and I've never seen green fly on plants before.

I: Ah, what a shame!

A: Yeah. All I've had to do, 'cause they go for the flowers, see that's where the sweetness is, erm, so I just keep cutting the flowers off and hopefully get rid of

the er, but I have developed my own, er, well it's not my own, I got it off the web, erm, insecticidal soap.

I: Oh, that's interesting.

A: Well it's 100% er, organic. Basically, you just get some unscented soap, that has no dye in it, no perfume or dye or you know, just plain soap.

I: Yeah.

A: And you grate it up, mix it with cold water over night until it's all dissolved and just spray it on the what's a name.

I: Oh, right.

A: What it does, it attacks the cuticle around the insect, you know soft bodied insects, like green fly, they have this thing called a cuticle, which protects the body and the soap dissolves it, so it kills the greenfly. And the thing is, you can spray as much on a plant or a vegetable as you want without it actually doing any harm and you are hopefully helping the environment, you know.

I: When did you make this soap then?

A: That's just this year I've done that. I started off by planting my peppers and when my pepper plants were about that big [*he showed me the measurement using his hands*] they were totally infested with green fly.

I: Oh, yeah, I remember you saying actually when I was there in the summer.

A: Yeah, and I had to go down every day and spray every part of the plant, underneath the leaves, on top of the leaves; everywhere and it took me about, I don't know about a fortnight and eventually I got rid of 'em. And those peppers that Sophia showed you, that was the results of it.

I: So, it is worth it?

A: Yeah, it was in this case, but it's a bit more difficult on plants like that to get rid of them. If you miss an area and there's green fly on it, tomorrow you've got another twenty, you know.

S: [Sophia returned from taking the telephone call]

I: They can be quite difficult to manage then.

S: Yeah, greenfly.

A: Anyway, back to what we were doing-

I: Okay, well there is just one last thing before we finish up – I was wondering if we could go back to the plans that you have drawn out that we were talking about at the beginning?

A: Oh yeah, we generally do a new chart round about Christmas, don't we?

S: Yeah, or just after.

A: And plan out what we are gonna grow for that year.

S: We are always forgetting things, aren't we?

A: That's why we are quite meticulous about lists. And even to the point of doing the chart with the beds on and writing in it what we are gonna grow there next year.

S: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I mean sometimes we do adjust it because we might change our mind or something or we might add something extra and so something will have to go somewhere else instead, or you know.

I: Yeah.

A: It will get to planting time, to give you an example of something we may have forgotten and get to planting time and because we've been so busy with other things on or whatever and we haven't set off the broccoli seeds'. Right, well we plant broccoli, erm from seed, it's probably going to take, what six weeks to two months, before you can put it in the ground.

S: Before it's ready for planting, 'cause it has to be a certain size and then you have got to harden it off as well around the cold frame.

I: Okay.

A: We are late, so if we were to set the seeds when we remembered, er, it would be too late for growing them, you know.

I: Oh right I see.

A: So, what we'll do, we'll go to the erm, [*pause*] what do you call 'em...

S: What, a garden centre?

A: Garden centre, or-

S: Got to be a mind reader!

I: [Laughs]

A: Yeah, but what's the other name?

S: Nurseries.

A: The nurseries.

A: Or garden centre and buy a punnet that they've already started off, they will be the right size to plant.

I: Right, okay.

S: So, it's cheating sometimes.

S: No, no.

A: It's not cheating at all, it's just more expensive.

S: Yeah, yeah.

A: You are having to buy the plants.

S: And they are ready to go in, as opposed to-

A: You've asked about collecting seeds in the past, it's like we've got some fennel, you can't see it, in this light I don't think [currently dark outside] but there's some finishing and it's full of seeds. I am sat here looking at it and I am thinking I am going to have to go out and collect those fennel seeds for cooking, you know.

I: Yeah.

A: Erm, you did show frozen fennel, Florence fennel, there's two types of fennel.

I: Yeah, I've got a photograph.

A: Yeah, there's erm [*pause*] there's the herb fennel, which grows about this tall, there's one in the garden there.

S: Yeah, it grows to about five or six ft. tall, in general.

A: When you take the fennel seeds off for oriental cooking.

S: That's the herb fennel that you use the feathery kind of leaves, it's a tall plant.

A: The seeds want collecting out there before-

S: Before they all start dropping, 'cause we'll end up with millions of plants.

A: Florence fennel is like a bulb.

S: It's a white bulb.

A: It's got a real aniseed flavour and you use it as a vegetable, especially in Italian cooking, so once again, er we've had, they're all ready to harvest. They bolt very easily, so you've gotta take em out when they're ready. So, once we've had a couple of fresh ones, with an Italian meal or whatever, 'cause that's the taste of Italy. People don't realise, see red and green peppers, tomatoes and fennel is the taste of Italy, you know, and people don't realise it. And olive oil, erm they just get blanched like any other vegetable and frozen and they're not much different actually.

I: Right.

A: Yeah, but fresh you can actually grate it and just have it on a salad or whatever. This is what I meant about the seeds, they're fennel seeds [He showed me some fennel seeds that keep in the kitchen] You can smell them as well. Just smell them.

I: Oh, you can smell the aniseed in there.

A: And that would be used for cooking that, you know. I'll just put them on there for a minute. So, we do collect certain seeds, you know and it's like, er I've got one pepper plant down there, F1's you can't take the seeds, you know that, don't you?

I: Hmm.

S: The hybrid.

I: The hybrid, yes.

A: Erm, but when they're not an F1 and they're just normal, erm, you can take the seeds, so I've left one pepper plant in there; those green peppers that Sophia showed you, to ripen up into red, it will go red eventually.

S: If it does!

A: And then we'll take the seeds and we'll grow them next year.

S: Yeah, and use those seeds for next year's crop.

I: Right, so it's like a cycle, isn't it?

S: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah, we do it with the tomatoes as well.

S: I do it with the broad beans as well.

I: Oh, right.

S: And the French beans.

A: Also, these are some pepper seeds, just in case those don't ripen, those are the pepper seeds for next year.

I: Sweet pepper seeds?

A and S: Yeah, yeah.

A: So, we do, do that as well.

S: We do it with everything that we can really, you know like French beans like I said, broad beans and things like that.

A: That's it isn't it, is that it?

I: Yeah, that's it.

S: It is.

A: Is there anything else you can think of?

I: Erm, not off the top of my head.

A: I will just reiterate though what I said at the beginning. For us, having an allotment is a lifestyle.

I: Yeah.

S: Yeah, it is, it's a way of life.

A: It takes up so much of your time and your life is involved, like having onions in here.

S: Yeah, you have things all over the place.

A: It becomes part of your life and if that was to disappear then I don't-, you know.

S: And the thing is as well, it's exercise, it's being out in the fresh air, you know, it's an interest, you're learning. It keeps your brain working.

A: We have got a static caravan, a 30ft static caravan in the dales and before we got the allotment we used to go up there every weekend, it's only an hour away.

S: Just an hour!

A: Just towards Settle, beautiful, near Pennygent, beautiful!

I: Ah.

S: Yeah, hmm.

A: And then we got the allotment and I had a big motorbike.

S: [Laughs]

A: Stopped using the motorbike. Stopped going to the caravan and all that time was spent on the allotment. That's how much it grabbed us, you know.

S: Yeah.

A: You know, you think 'shall we go to the van this weekend' and then you think, 'oh well this has got to be done, that's got to be done', so it gets put off and if we do go to the caravan and during the summer then we've got to make sure that everything's watered and it's not going to dry out for the length of time we are at the caravan.

I: Yeah, I see.

S: So, we've got to make all these preparations for going to the caravan.

A: So, I absolutely drench the greenhouse as deep as I can, so I know it's going to last say 4 or 5 days without watering it. Anything that's in pots, I've got some of them capillary mats, you know, them capillary mats?

I: Erm...

A: What you do is, it just basically, looks like carpet.

S: It looks like underlay.

A: You lay it on a tray and put one end of it into a bucket of water.

S: A big bucket of water. And it will soak up the water and it keeps soaking it up and you put all your pots on it and then the moisture from the capillary mat, it just keeps the soil dampened underneath the pot and the soil soaks it up.

A: What a lot of people do on the allotments when they are going on holiday, they will get somebody else to water the stuff for them. Another way to do it, if you ever want to go on holiday and you've got house plants and you think 'oh there won't be anybody to water my house plants', all you have to do is put a towel down in your bath, leave the tap dripping and put all your plants on the towel.

I: And it does the same kind of thing?

S: It's the same.

A: They will be perfect when you get back.

S: Yeah, they will be fine.

A: And that's what we do for all the plants in here, bung them in the bath. That's if we're going to be away for more than say 3 days, but that's how it grabbed us though [the allotment]. And even now, you know it's the main thing.

S: Oh yeah, yeah.

A: You know I've got massive workshops there, Sophia's a ceramicist you know, this is one of Sophia's [*he showed a ceramic piece on the wall behind him*]

I: Oh, that's lovely.

A: Erm, I make furniture and what have you and I used to paint and sculpt and what have you and erm.

S: We don't have time for any of that anymore.

A: We are quite happy, I suppose that's what I would go back to, if we lost the allotment, I would go back to sort of making furniture and what have you.

S: Yeah, and art and stuff like that.

A: Yeah and we're into antiques, we collect antiques.

I: Oh really?

S: Yeah. We've got all sorts of junk all over the place.

A: I am just trying to weigh up what period style wise the Baroch, the campus leaves, grapes, this little daisy like flower that's typical of the period about 1780 for the following 50 years something, Baroch it's called.

I: Right.

A: Very fancy period.

At this point, I stopped the recording and thanked both Adrian and Sophia for giving up their time to talk to me about their allotment and their own produce.