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The Role of Socially Driven Community Food Projects in a Networked Approach to Tackling Food Insecurity

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Food insecurity, commonly defined as the inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so (Dowler et al, 2001), has come to the forefront of UK political, media and public attention. Neoliberal policies are often cited as a determinant of food insecurity, ultimately leading to inequalities. However the current UK reality of a 'leaner welfare state and an ever-increasing reluctance to interfere with any kind of market' (Lambie-Mumford, 2015, pg. 19) requires the pressing problem of food insecurity to be addressed not only by the State or individual stakeholders but rather by taking a 'networked approach' (ibid).

Community food projects may have a role to play in this networked approach. These socially driven, locally based, grass roots organisations are often located in low income communities and undertake a range of initiatives which may have outcomes including increasing economic and physical access to food, improving participants confidence, reducing social isolation (McGlone, 1999). They may also undertake advocacy and lobbying (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). Whilst 'shifting the responsibility' for tackling food insecurity away from the State toward civil society has been criticised (eg. Fabian Society 2015) the recognition of the current need for a networked approach re-energises the identification of other stakeholders. Therefore, utilising an ongoing case study approach, this research reports on initial findings as to the extent which community food projects can contribute to a networked approach to tackling food insecurity.