

A taste of food insecurity:

towards a capacity for eating well

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Summary

This thesis considers food insecurity in Bristol through an analysis of taste.

Using a bricolage of ethnographic methods designed to bring the sensory elements of food practices to the fore, I worked with three projects in the city to examine the socio-materialities of food insecurity as they are felt within people's daily lives. Working with an Emergency Food Aid charity, a community bus scheme and a cookery course for socially isolated people, I contribute to geographical understandings of food insecurity by looking in places and attuning to senses, feelings and affects that are otherwise invisible. Inspired by material-semiotics – where nonhumans *matter* – and including ideas of affect, I move away from a static definition of food insecurity as 'access to a good diet' and instead develop ideas of *taste*, which I define as *capacity for eating well*.

I use *capacity* to ground a critical analysis of inequality within the social and material relations of embodied life. I use *eating well* to bring the more-than-human collectivities into the frame, accounting for the care-full socio-materialities at play in food encounters. Importantly, I move beyond an ontology of individual rational agents and a focus on empowered choice as a solution to insecurity.

The empirical material shows that practices of good taste are contingent and fragile, shaped by the material-affective conditions of food encounters; that interdependencies rather than individual empowerment enable us to eat well; and that precarious living conditions produce affects that can be decisive factors in whether we eat well or go hungry. Ultimately, this *taste-full* approach places a critical analysis of food insecurity within the *messy entanglements* of food practices and opens up new spaces for understanding and tackling the issue.

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This thesis is dedicated to all those hungry for change and to those we lost along the way.

DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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One. Introduction

A taste of food insecurity

We need to change how we think about food insecurity. With inequality consistently on the rise across the OECD countries (Rayner and Lang 2012), the recent turn towards a politics of austerity has been accompanied by the arrival of foodbanks in the UK, signalling a new era in the study, politics and experience of food insecurity. This increasing inequality is a challenge that requires academics to not only understand how these processes come about and measure these increases (Lambie-Mumford and Dowler 2014) – thereby helping to intervene in the political-economic landscape – but it also requires empathy and support in the daily experiences of the ‘meantimes’ (Cloke et al. 2016). To date, those who experience food insecurity have barely featured in academic and public discourses on the topic (Wells and Caraher 2014). Yet, it is not only their voices that have been silenced but, more profoundly, the *lived experiences* of these inequalities. Calls for research into the lived experiences of poverty in general (Lister 2004) and food insecurity or food poverty in particular (e.g. Garthwaite et al. 2015) have begun to shift this tide but most importantly, the study of food insecurity has overlooked the most vital element of how we humans relate to and make sense of food: that of taste. This study is therefore motivated by a need to understand food insecurity not simply by including the voices of those affected but, more profoundly, by accounting for the affective, visceral, messy and sticky materials and relations through which food features in our lives. The starting point for this analysis is that food is not simply a resource, and that *food* insecurity – while inherently caught up with political economy – is not simply an issue of money. As others have shown, food is not a resource like any other (Kato 2013); rather it is always ‘more-than-

food' (Goodman 2016) implicated in a set of *messy entanglements* that opens up new questions about our place in the world.

Therefore, in order to change how we think about food insecurity and to account for the socio-materialities of food practices within the context of daily experiences, in this study I tackle the issue of food insecurity in Bristol through the lens of *taste*. Taste brings the 'brute physicality' of our need to eat together with the diverse socio-cultural forms of human life that relate to eating together (Simmel 1994). It allows for a material, sensory and visceral analysis of the ways in which food features in our lives. Theories of new materialisms (Bennett 2010), posthumanism (Barad 2003) and also theories of affect (Clough 2008) have shown that matter *matters*, and that *foodstuffs* matter (Roe 2006). They matter not in and of themselves but through the networks in which they are enrolled (Abrahamsson et al. 2015). Taste in this study is therefore a materialist concern in that it is a way to approach food inequalities that 'make[s] present, vivid and mattering, the imbroglio, perplexity and messiness of a worldly world, a world where we, our ideas and power relations, are not alone, were never alone, will never be alone' (Stengers 2007, 9).

To get to grips with these issues, I embark on this research project with two aims in mind. First, I am determined to understand the ways in which those affected experience insecurity and second, I want to approach the issue of hunger by placing food and food practices at the heart of the matter. However, in doing so, I am particularly aware of the need to approach food practices *critically*. Indeed, work on food studies sometimes falls into a trap of normativity (for critiques, see: Born and Purcell 2006; Guthman 2008; Slocum 2008), and while food *can* be multifunctional, offering the means to escape silos of thought and practice (Morgan 2009), we must be wary of assuming that

food practices offer solutions to complex problems and sensitive to the inequalities and uneven effects of even apparently benign food practices. Consequently, in this study, I contribute to agro-food studies and geographies of health and wellbeing by pushing these disciplines to be more *curious* about *how* food, inequality and wellbeing are related. Drawing on, and contributing to, material-semiotics of food practices (Mol 2013) and literatures on affective life (Anderson 2014; Berlant 2011; Stewart 2007), I use this study to consider how food inequalities might be understood if we are more *speculative* about food practices, interrogating the materialities of encounters where foodstuffs and bodies affect one another. Importantly, moving from *functionality* and *effect* towards the Spinozist potentialities of *capacity* and *material-affective* (Clough 2008) relations, this tasteful analysis draws attention to the practices and processes of *taste-making* (Hennion 2007; Teil and Hennion 2004), where things might always be otherwise.

This speculative approach enables us to consider different issues, practices, places and relations that are often considered by studies of food insecurity. Indeed, how might we understand food insecurity when we consider how it feels to skip meals in order to feed your child? To wait anxiously at the checkout hoping that you have calculated the cost of your shopping correctly, so that you don't have to endure the embarrassment of putting some items back on the shelves? To scrounge for pennies on the street so that you can buy a loaf of bread that has been reduced by the supermarket? Moreover, how might we better understand the materials that play a role in both mitigating and perpetuating food insecurity and the tactics that people use to get by? Put simply, how might we get a *taste* of what food insecurity is like? All of these examples point towards an understanding of food insecurity as being

fundamentally distinct from other forms of inequality and poverty. This is not to say that it is worse or better than other inequalities, nor that all experiences of food insecurity are the same, but rather that the that the lively materials and practices of getting food, eating and cooking can tell us something that is distinct from and in excess of a mere description of the external effects of financial poverty.

With these issues in mind, in this study I approach the issue of food insecurity not in terms of *access to a good diet* – as is normally the case – but in terms of a capacity for eating well. This shift enables an approach that is grounded in the daily experiences of those affected. Also, it does not assume a separation of object and subject a priori, but rather investigates the ways in which a capacity to eat well is shaped in the press and presence of everyday material-affective encounters with food.

Contextualising this study

I consider these issues in the context of the city of Bristol. A city with a progressive food policy landscape as well as a culture of innovation in sustainable food systems, it is also a city with increasing levels of inequality between wards (see Chapter Four). This rising inequality is emblematic of a wider trend in the UK, particularly in the wake of changes to the welfare system, which have hit vulnerable groups hardest. The stark inequality between wards in terms of deprivation and wellbeing – as well as the rise of food insecurity in a city that has a reputation for a forward-thinking food policy – is a warning that recent progress in sustainable food systems and local, urban food governance are not enough to address the pressing issues humans face in an environment of political austerity (Guthman 2008; Minkoff-Zern 2014). The

recent arrival of foodbanks in the UK and the emerging discourses around food poverty are marked with a certain tragic irony, as the UK in general (and Bristol in particular) is generally well supplied with good food, yet increasing numbers of people here are unable to eat well. This apparent contradiction makes sense when we move away from a productivist logic of food insecurity, where hunger can be addressed by making more food (Sonnino 2016), but also requires that we do not assume that being near to food is enough to eat it.

Moreover, while increasing reliance on foodbanks is the most striking feature of this new food inequality, this is only the tip of the iceberg: those who use foodbanks can often only do so for a few weeks at a time. All of these issues mean that there is a need to study food insecurity with an open mind if we are to embrace the complexity of the social and material relations in which food practices are embedded. This open mind becomes even more necessary when we consider the moralising narratives that often pervade discourses on poverty and inequality (as well as food more generally). In the face of neoliberal reforms to welfare and health care, it is important to avoid a response that shifts the responsibility onto the shoulders of those affected.

Outline

To apply this speculative interest in experiences of food inequalities to this study, I first ask: *how has food insecurity been made to matter?* Moving towards an ontological politics of food insecurity, I reflect on the ‘mundane practices’ through which this issue has been put together and consequently enable the possibility of ‘intervening’ in these processes (Mol 1999). Here I show three framings of food insecurity: the political-economic (commonly referred to as *food poverty* and epitomised by foodbanks), the spatial (as

manifested in the *food desert* hypothesis, where access is a matter of distance) and the nutritional (where a good diet can be ensured through nutritional education and cookery skills). I contend that by focusing on *access to a good diet* the concept of food insecurity has had post-political effects, closing down the scope for tackling it – specifically because this framing is prefigured on ideas of choice and independence.

In Chapter Three, I develop a methodology that can account for taste. I show how using a bricolage of methods that aim to get to grips with sensory experience can help us examine food inequalities in a new light. While there have been some calls for greater participation of those who are food insecure in this scholarship (Wells and Caraher 2014), and ethnographic work around particular elements of food insecurity such as foodbanks has begun to emerge (Garthwaite et al. 2015), the richness of the embodied visceral (Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013; Longhurst et al. 2009) and more-than-human (Miele and Truringer Forthcoming; Whatmore 2002) have yet to be included in the study of food insecurity. In particular, the role that sensory experiences such as taste play in forming a relationship with foods (enabling and constraining food practices) has remained completely absent from the literature on food insecurity. This thesis addresses this gap by taking a sensory ethnographic approach to food practices in different contexts of insecurity.

In Chapter Four, I go on to give further context to the study, giving details on the city of Bristol and introducing the three case studies: the Emergency Food Aid (EFA) centre, the community bus and the lunch group. In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I use the empirical materials from these case studies to consider *how* food inequalities emerge through practices.

Chapter Five asks: *how does food insecurity taste?* I draw on a processual and contingent understanding of taste-*making* to argue that good taste is not a fixed property but rather that it is emergent; that is, it relates to all of the materials and bodies within a setting (Hennion 2007; Teil and Hennion 2004). Here I look at two cookery courses designed to improve the wellbeing of socially isolated and food-insecure attendees through improving their food knowledge, skills and practices. Contending that such courses are not simply imposing ‘hegemonic nutrition’ (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013) on vulnerable people, but that instead they offer settings that support experiments in taste-*making* (Hennion 2007; Teil and Hennion 2004) and proliferate articulations (Latour 2004) of *eating well*, I emphasise that food and food practices have a contingent and fragile role in bringing about wellbeing. Indeed, the benefits of these courses were not straightforward in terms of social interaction, commensality or nutritional benefits; rather, they have only limited effects outside of the class. This has important consequences for our understandings of the ‘multifunctionality’ (Morgan 2009) of food practices because it shows that their function is often contingent on the setting in which they emerge, having limited long-term effects.

In Chapter Six, I go on to consider the ways in which people get food. Moving away from fixed, spatial understandings of access, and taking seriously the relationality of food practices as an emplaced folding of heterogeneous bodies (Abrahamsson et al. 2015; Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010; Pink 2011; Probyn 2012), I draw attention to the practices of *getting food* and how these are shaped, enabled and constrained by their material-affective settings. Using encounters at the EFA centre and on the community bus, I argue that these organisations share the burden of getting food through the formation of

interdependencies. Indeed, while these organisations were interested in improving people's independence, when attuning to the ways in which encounters with these organisations shaped *what a body can do*, it becomes clear that these interdependencies were not only vital in enabling people to get food but also that this was an uneven process, helping some more than others. Again, this adds critical nuance to understandings of the ways in which charitable organisations help people, and also underlines the limitations of framing the practices of *getting food* in terms of spatial access and choice.

The third and final empirical chapter, Chapter Seven, looks at domestic food practices to consider the 'hidden geographies' (Dyck 1995) of food insecurity. Again using food encounters that took place within the micro-geographies of kitchen spaces (including the back of the fridge, the kitchen cupboard and the worktop), I consider how the material-affective conditions of these encounters were *constricted* (Anderson 2014) by affects of isolation and anxiety.

Importantly, by attuning to the material-affective, I show that anxiety and isolation can reduce a body's capacity to act and that, consequently, *eating well* is harder to achieve. I show how living precariously generates material-affective encounters in which a body's openness and vulnerability offers the potential for harm as well as good. Here affects are not only 'the hinge where mutable matter and wonder ... perpetually tumble into each other [but are also] densely intermingled with world-weary dread' (Gregg and Seigworth 2010 p.9).

Specifically, domestic spaces for those living precariously contain 'hidden geographies' because these vulnerabilities – the precarious interdependencies of all life (Tsing 2015) – are not shared out equally (Butler 2004), but weigh more heavily on those who are less well-off.

Research questions

The aim of this study is to use a *taste-full* approach – defined as a *capacity for eating well* – to examine the ways in which food insecurity emerges within mundane food practices. Approaching food practices in contexts of inequality, I consider those spaces and feelings that are often hidden or cut out of analyses of food insecurity. Developing an idea of capacity in terms of the material setting of food practices as well as immaterial affects, I use material encounters with buses, tables, fridges and other items to help understand how food insecurity is sensed and made sense of by those affected. Looking at food practices in terms of *eating well*, I look at the relationality of food practices rather than their nutritional content to consider their potential for nourishment.

Consequently, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. What's the matter with food insecurity?

This research question offers the chance to work with ontological politics to consider how food insecurity has been *made to matter* (Moser 2008). By showing the ways in which food insecurity has been brought together (Latour 2005), especially in terms of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that are made, it becomes possible to reconfigure it and ask new questions.

Addressing this research question in Chapter Two, I move away from food insecurity as an issue of *access to a good diet* and introduce theories of capacity and eating well as a means of generating new questions about how food inequalities feature in lived experiences.

2. How does food insecurity taste?

Applying the analysis of taste, I consider the practices of establishing *a good diet* in a context of insecurity. I consider the role that nutritional knowledge, flavours, skills and social relationships play in shaping the foods that people eat in contexts of inequality and the way they feel about them. I also reflect on the challenge of supporting those who struggle to eat well, without imposing norms on others.

3. How do people get food in contexts of food insecurity?

Here I consider the diverse elements that make it easier or harder for people to acquire food. I am interested in how these differ from measurable variables such as distance and price, and reveal the wide range of elements that are relevant. Looking at food journeys and food practices as always in process and never static can help raise new questions about the relationships between place, diet and wellbeing.

4. How does food insecurity feel?

Our relationship with food involves a range of emotions, affects, feelings and other intangible elements. The way we feel plays a large role in shaping the way we eat. Looking at the feelings of food insecurity helps to understand food inequalities within everyday lives and the ways in which these often go beyond words. I consider the invisible barriers that prevent people from eating well, even when good food appears to be accessible, and the ways in which food inequalities are shaped in ways that are not visible to the public eye.

With these questions and issues in mind, the next chapter addresses the relevant literature by asking: *what's the matter with food insecurity?* Here, I outline my approach and begin to put into practice the concerns outlined above.

Two. What's the matter with food insecurity?

*'Doing theory requires being open to the world's aliveness,
allowing oneself to be lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonder.'*

(Barad 2012, p. 208)

Introduction

In this chapter, I address the research question: *how has food insecurity been made to matter?* Inspired by material-semiotics and ontological politics (Law and Hassard 1999; Mol 1999), I interrogate the ways in which food insecurity has been enacted in academic and wider public discourses, as well as considering the types of intervention that arise as a result. In line with Moser (2008), who considered Alzheimer's disease, I consider the increasing interest in food insecurity and food poverty in the UK, not simply as an inevitable outcome of the rise of the incidents of this phenomena but also as a framing of the problem that resonates with dominant neoliberal ideas about the world and our place in it. As a result, I argue, food insecurity has been framed in way that has generated consensus for the status quo and narrowed the possibility for responses that intervene in and disagree with this consensus.

In the first sections, I consider how food insecurity has been defined and show that it has coalesced as *access to a good diet*. I then go on to show how this has been enacted in three ways: socio-politically (through the debates on foodbanks), spatially (through debates on food deserts and the obesogenic environment) and nutritionally (through education and awareness-raising programmes and discourses). I critique these approaches because they are preoccupied with choice and independence (and consumerism), and miscomprehend the complexity of food practices.

I then draw on literature that takes a food-oriented perspective (which both emphasises the agency of materials and uses food practices to cut across disciplinary boundaries) to show that food practices are *messy entanglements* with the world; entanglements that complicate human-centric understandings of self/other, nature/culture. These entanglements are evidence that the relationship between food practices and wellbeing are not simple and functional but contingent, fragile and often obscure. With these criticisms in mind, I go on to use ideas of taste to move beyond an assumption that food practices come down to a matter of choice. Drawing on Hennion (2007; Teil and Hennion 2004), I show that taste is a socio-material relation and a practice, which *brings us together* rather than keeps us apart. Developing these ideas, I go on to consider how taste might be applied in order to understand food insecurity, not as access to a good diet but instead as a capacity for eating well.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity has no single fixed definition; however, central to most academic and institutional definitions is a concern with adequate *access to a good diet*. For example: '[t]he Department of Health (England) recognises food poverty as “the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet”’ (Department of Health 2005, p.1). Similarly, the opposite – food security – is commonly framed in similar terms. The widely adopted definition offered by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations was established at the 1996 World Food Summit. It states: '[f]ood security exists when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient,

safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (EC-FAO Food Security Programme 2008).

Framing food (in)security in terms of 'access to "a good diet"' is intuitive from the point of view of political economy, where food is one resource among others that is produced and distributed through the global economy. However, although *access* is a key term for those wishing to understand inequality (McEntee 2009), in practice, what it means to access food is complicated. Should it be measured in terms of income? Or the distance between a person's home and the nearest store (Hendrickson et al. 2006)? Or perhaps in terms of a person's socio-cultural attitudes and nutritional knowledge (Pearson et al. 2005)? More complicated still is the task of pinning down exactly what a 'good diet' is. Even the FAO definition (which accounts for safety, nutrition, preferences and dietary needs) leaves many questions unanswered. Who decides what an adequate diet in these terms consists of: the person eating it or nutritional experts (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013)? What about where food cultures differ (Yates-Doerr and Mol 2012)? This slipperiness has consequences because, as has been the case in the UK in recent years, the rise in food insecurity become hard to assess without shared understandings of levels and measurements of food insecurity (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014).

Indeed, we can see some of the complications of applying an analysis of 'access to a good diet' when it comes to the diffuse – but nonetheless powerful – aspects of everyday life that shape how we relate to food. Indeed, Katos' (2013) study of Community Supported Agriculture and Farmers' Markets in the US shows that there is more to getting food than just price and location. She draws on the critical literature on alternative food movements (Guthman 2008; Slocum 2008) to show that the complexity of 'barriers' to food are often

invisible, or so entrenched in daily life and longstanding inequalities such as racial segregation that they escape notice. Importantly, for Kato, ‘food as a resource is distinct from water or air in that its consumption carries cultural identity, which is shaped by structural inequality itself.’ (Kato 2013, p.388).¹

Importantly, then, while understanding food insecurity in terms of *access to a good diet* draws our attention to food inequalities, this framing avoids the complexity of *access* in practice, as Kato shows. *Access* has many different facets and has been taken up by academics in three main ways: financially, spatially and in terms of social and educational factors (Shaw 2006). While this goes some way to acknowledging the diverse factors that shape how people and food come together, in practice each of these three framings of access has narrowed the scope for interventions to improve food inequalities. If food is a resource, then food insecurity is an issue of resource distribution, and the response becomes one of distribution and production. Indeed, while there has been a shift away from a productivist logic in analysis of global food insecurity (Sonnino 2016) (for example, to account for ‘dietary needs and food preferences’, as the FAO state), I will show that this has resulted in a preoccupation with *choice*. Yet, there is a great deal more to food and consumption practices than distribution or choice. Indeed, ‘dietary needs and food preferences’ elides a wealth of material, embodied and socio-cultural elements and processes that are central to life. As Guthman points out in her critique of the obesogenic environment thesis, an emphasis on proximity to certain facilities and resources ‘effectively validates a policy approach that

¹ I do not mean to imply here that water, air or other ‘resources’ are ever simply resources. All are laden with cultural significance and material importance; however, they are all distinct in these terms and food is no exception.

emphasizes supply-oriented issues of availability and proximity rather than demand-oriented ones of say, affordability and need' (Guthman 2011, p.68).

Those interested in food culture have emphasised the importance of food *practices* when it comes to eating well. While we are surrounded by a wealth of potentially edible materials, it is through practices that we come to make sense of what is good to eat (Roe 2006). What is good to eat, therefore, is the result of a host of practices and processes in which we *sense and make sense of* food (Evans and Miele 2012) within the shapes of our daily lives. It is important to realise that food is not a resource just like any other. It is entangled in socio-material relations and inequalities that have different forms, dynamics and imperatives. So, when we consider food as a matter of *taste*, it is a striking omission that studies of *access* have overlooked the most important way in which people relate to food materials and see them as good to eat.

As a material, food has particular properties that sets it apart from other resources. Indeed, while the study of food has often treated food 'as if it were ... an *aspect* of social life, a *sector* of society', it is far more than this (Harbers et al. 2002, p.207 emphasis in original). French beans (Freidberg 2004), chicken (Miele 2011), carrots (Roe 2006), sugar (Mintz 1986; Richardson-Ngwenya and Richardson 2013), fat (Hocknell 2016; Marvin and Medd 2006), papaya (Cook 2004), chocolate (Harbers et al. 2002) and oysters (Probyn 2012) are all foodstuffs (Roe 2006) that have been brought to the fore in other studies in order to trace and investigate the socio-materiality of food practices, particularly in terms of the webs of connection between eater and producer that span the globe.

These approaches not only make social and material connections apparent but also challenge the idea of a bounded human agent and give greater credence to

the agency of the foodstuffs themselves (Bennett 2007). Indeed, by considering material practices around food, we can begin to see that these *messy entanglements* of bodies and things are at the heart of food practices. Further, in addition to bringing the materiality of food into the picture, it is important to bring in the materiality of human bodies. Viscerality (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2010; Longhurst et al. 2009) and bodily motivations (Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010) are central to how we can access food, not least because they relate to the very mechanics of hunger that move our bodies (Bennett 2007), as well as the social and cultural conventions within which we live.

However, these approaches, concerned as they are with the connections between us and distant others (human and nonhuman) that are entangled in the global food system, have had less to say about inequalities closer to home, and a mobilisation of *connection* runs the risk of espousing an ethics of care for distant others but remains blind to those closer to home (Abbots et al. 2015, p.7). To date, these approaches have had little to say about food insecurity and the inequalities experienced by Western consumers. So, while understanding food inequalities in terms of *access to a good diet* has been an important and influential approach to understanding the political economy of food distribution, it offers no space to consider the primary way in which we relate to food: *taste*. The consequence of this has been that food is treated as a resource, and consequently, the response to hunger has often been to increase productivity. Moreover, while we have the tools that help us understand the socio-materiality of taste, they have not yet been used to consider food insecurity in the UK. To address this shortcoming, and to understand food inequalities in all their messy (Mann et al. 2011), mucky (Eden et al. 2008) and gutsy (Caldwell 2014) glory, I turn to the three framings of food insecurity: the

political-economic (as food poverty), the spatial (as food deserts) and the nutritional (as education). Having drawn out some of the shortcomings of food insecurity in its current framing, I then go on to outline an alternative, *taste-full*, approach that understands food inequalities in terms of a *capacity for eating well*.

Beyond Breadline Britain: approaching poverty through food

Geography has been slow to address the issue of poverty (Milbourne 2010), and even more delayed in coming to terms with food politics (Heynon et al. 2012)². However, in public policy and discourses, food and nutrition have been central to understanding and ameliorating poverty in the UK, at least since the seminal work of Booth (1903) and Rowntree (1901) in London and York.

The strong emphasis on the issue of food when researching and addressing poverty comes primarily from the material fact that we all need to eat. What it means to be poor might be intuitively obvious; however, when it comes to expressing this via figures or dealing with the problem through policies, we find that poverty is something which resists easy categorisation. Turning attention to food practices and nutrition is one means of making poverty more tangible, as well as meeting the important need to understand lived experiences in these contexts (Lister 2004). Yet the methods and assumptions made around the food practices of those who are poor frequently fail to come to terms with the

² Where poverty and welfare have been addressed in geography, these issues have often been framed in spatial terms (Hamnett 2014). The spatial inequalities of food, especially with regards to the obesogenic environment thesis are discussed below.

social and cultural factors that are equally as relevant to those less well-off as to anyone else in society (Thompson 2012). Common metrics of malnutrition such as BMI are just one way of measuring poverty (Purdham et al. 2015), yet often in such discourses a functional understanding of food dominates, where the material—often calorific—function of food is detached from the socio-cultural contexts in which food practices are embedded (Dowler 2002). As a result, the complexity of the relationship between food and inequality is often glossed over. So while a food-centred analysis may on first glance appear to humanise the experience of poverty by drawing attention to the everyday, we must appreciate the complex socio-materiality of food, relevant to all, if we are to avoid reinforcing inequalities rather than overcoming them.

Poverty in Western contexts such as the UK is best understood relationally (Lawson 2010, Milbourne 2010). Falling below the breadline is not simply a matter of consuming too few calories. Rather, the ‘breadline’ approach accounts for relationality by measuring poverty based on a social consensus of what is ‘enough’ that changes over time (Fahmy et al. 2011). Yet Lawson points out that an “ontological separation of poverty from social relations remains remarkably robust” despite mounting scholarly evidence that social relations are key to understanding inequality (Lawson 2010, p4). Consequently, as Dowler argues (2002), by paying attention to the socio-materiality of food practices we can begin to develop more nuanced understandings of the relationships between everyday, embodied food practices and wider political issues. Developing the idea of the body as a spatial-temporal fix (Guthman and DuPuis 2006; Guthman 2015; c.f. Harvey 1982), Rioux argues that, inequalities are concretised through food practices in an ‘uneven body’ because it is here that ‘the repository of social inequalities and the crystallisation of historically and

spatially specific dynamics of exploitation and domination... arise at the nexus between production and social reproduction' (2015 p. 2-3).

While a food-oriented approach may be helpful to humanise inequality then, it is essential that we resist simplistic and functional understandings of both food and people. Removing the socio-materiality of food practices from common framings of poverty results in a simplification whereby 'food' becomes nutrients (particularly calories) and wellbeing is conflated with BMI (Purdham et al. 2015). The framing of food simply as *fuel* that can be consumed more or less efficiently means that people who are less well-off are expected to make rational decisions with regards to eating for the sake of nutrition rather than pleasure, an aim which is time and again proven to be irrelevant to the daily, embodied practices of eating (Mol 2013b). With this in mind, the fundamental shift I offer in this study is to embrace rather than gloss over the complexities and contingencies of foods' socio-materiality in order to understand food practices in contexts of inequality.

Food poverty beyond the meantimes

Levels of inequality have been rising in OECD countries since the mid-1980s (Rayner and Lang 2012). Since 2012 in the UK, inequality has surged. The response to this has come in the form of the foodbank. A new phenomenon on these shores, the emergence of foodbanks has, hand in hand with austerity politics, transformed the public landscape of food insecurity. Foodbanks ignited the press (and public) debate around the politically induced austerity of cuts to welfare and local authority provision, and 'food poverty' and foodbanks were

key buzzwords used when discussing the role the state should play in welfare provision.

The model of the foodbank is a means of providing emergency food aid (EFA) in the form of regular parcels of groceries. The major player that implemented the foodbank model in the UK is The Trussell Trust, whose mission to have ‘one in every town’ relates not only to the scale of rising food insecurity but also to the role that foodbanks are envisioned to have in mitigating this (Lambie-Mumford 2013). While levels of food insecurity (alongside other issues such as homelessness) have been on the rise since the adoption of political austerity, it would be an oversimplification to attribute the rise of the foodbank simply to increasing need. In no means questioning the latter, the introduction and proliferation of foodbanks is not an inevitable outcome. Increased incidences of those who fall through the widening holes in the social welfare safety net are one justification for the proliferation of foodbanks, but additionally, the role of the Christian faith should not be discounted in the meteoric rise of the foodbank model. As Lambie-Mumford has shown, ‘the foodbank social franchise model was found to produce a ready-made, reputable tool for local churches to take up as part of the social action work their Christian faith calls them to do’ (Lambie-Mumford 2013, p.79)

Moreover, the foodbank model fits well with neoliberal governance, specifically the more recent Conservative government ideology of the ‘Big Society’, whereby responsibilities that were previously thought to be those of the state are taken on by civil society and other non-governmental groups. The rise of foodbanks – as a way in which food insecurity has come to matter – therefore plays into pre-existing norms and morals surrounding food, charity and religion, and the

redistribution of groceries through food parcels cannot simply be read as an inevitable response to increasing need.

Matters can always be otherwise, and so the ways in which an issue comes together in a particular way is political (Law and Mol 2008; Moser 2008). Bearing this in mind, it is possible to see the ascendancy of foodbanks as neither an inevitable response to austerity politics nor another symptom of neoliberalisation; rather, the offering of food is a very particular *framing* of the issue of poverty that has come to shape our understanding of the wider politics of welfare reform. This is particularly relevant as there are many questions about the efficacy of the foodbank model (Riches 2002), and for those who use them they are certainly not a ‘solution’. Tarasuk and Beaton’s study showed that those using foodbanks still reported going hungry in recent days and that, ‘[w]hile charitable food assistance may have alleviated some of the absolute food deprivation in the households studied, it clearly did not prevent members from going hungry’ (Tarasuk and Beaton 1999, p.112). Indeed, the majority of foodbanks in that particular study offered three days’ food at a time, and this assistance was given only once a month. Similarly, The Trussell Trust advocate an allocation of three food parcels within a six-month period (Cloke et al 2016). Therefore, even 17 years on from Tarasuk and Beaton’s research, we might ask questions as to the adequacy of foodbanks as a response to hunger, which of course makes it even more disturbing that this piecemeal response to a widespread problem is fast becoming the norm. Poppendieck (1998) makes a similar contention in the context of the USA in the 1990s, arguing that foodbanks offer an inappropriate response to issues of food insecurity and allow

for a retrenchment of the welfare state through institutionalisation of these ad-hoc spaces.³

Indeed, the foodbank model has been quite thoroughly critiqued by social scientists from the US and Canada, where they have been present for decades. Having written on the topic in the Canadian context, Riches offers a critical take on the role of foodbanks; one that ‘recognise[s] that such altruistic actions consistently reinforce public attitudes that hunger is an individual or family problem and a matter for charity, rather than a structural or human-rights issue and a deeply political question’ (Riches 2011, p.771). This tension at the heart of the role of foodbanks is an argument that has been exported, along with the foodbank model, into the UK context.

While the ethnographic literature on foodbank use is so far small, those studies that do look at the lived experiences of their ‘clients’ have emphasised the importance of emotional aspects and stigma of using food aid. When one pays attention to those emotional elements, the ‘dark side’ of foodbanks (van der Horst et al. 2014) can be seen. Qualitative work with foodbank clients showed the authors that the parcels that they received (often containing food that had been rejected by others), the lack of choice available and the predominance of sweets and ‘childish’ snacks in the food parcels were sources of shame and humiliation for clients, while interactions with volunteers were sources of both humiliation and gratitude (van der Horst et al. 2014, p.1515).

Emotional and affective elements have not only been shown as the outcome of changes to the welfare system but also, more insidiously, they become ways of

³ The overemphasis on foodbanks is also disconnected from the food insecurity experienced by those who are homeless and have nowhere to prepare and cook a food parcel. While my analysis contends that this separation is difficult to uphold theoretically, it does make sense ‘on the ground’, and as such the experiences of homeless people are not included in this thesis.

governing subjects. For example, studies into the transformation of welfare under political austerity look at one incarnation of this – workfare⁴ – to show the importance of emotional, psychological and affective experiences of navigating poverty. Here, unemployment is framed in terms of psychological characteristics rather than issues of the labour market. As a result, the workfare programmes ‘identify ostensible psychological barriers to gaining employment and ... inculcate attributes and attitudes said to increase employability ... punish people for noncompliance (through conditionality and benefit sanctions) and ... legitimise ... other coercive labour market measures’ (Friedli and Stearn 2015, p.43).

The emotional and affective experiences of negotiating the welfare system take on a particular charge when it comes to food aid, because the practices of eating and the materiality of food itself are entangled in our practices of *sensing and making sense* (Evans and Miele 2012) of our place in the world. Indeed, the sensory and visceral experiences of eating have shown how eating can evoke certain political subjectivities (Ben- Ze’ev 2004; Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010), as well as evoking a host of emotional and cultural factors (Carolan 2011; Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011; Lupton 1996; Stoller and Oakes 1989; Sutton 2010). When it comes to food poverty, these intangible elements are rarely touched upon; as the above studies have shown, they are central to understanding how food insecurity features within people’s lived experiences.

Similarly, while shame has been the most discussed emotional feature of food aid, the emotional and affective experiences outside of the foodbank are also

⁴ The authors define workfare as ‘the “work-for-your-benefits” schemes in which unemployed people are forced to work for a charity, business, social enterprise, public service or government agency in order to continue to be eligible for benefits. We also include the range of skills-building and motivational workshops that are presented alongside such schemes’ (Friedli and Stearn, 2015, p.41).

important. Indeed, emotional and mental health issues such as isolation and anxiety have been particularly important in public health understandings of barriers to a good diet (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013; van der Horst et al. 2014). Yet, social scientists have emphasised that such issues are not simply accountable to individual pathologies but that, as Jackson and others (Jackson 2013; Jackson and Everts 2010) have emphasised, anxiety is a social condition ‘insofar as it is a shared experience that results in some discernible action by significant numbers of people [and] involve[s] associations or connections with other entities causing them to spread out over spaces and time’ (Jackson 2013, p.21). I therefore turn towards work on affect to consider the transpersonal elements of anxiety.

Here, the same move away from individual pathology is important, but it is also important to emphasise that such anxiety (as an affect) is not straightforwardly ‘social’. In the case of the anxieties discussed in this chapter, we can see that the distribution of such anxieties (such as where your next meal will come from, how to make food last, how to physically navigate a kitchen space without hurting yourself) is unequal. For participants in this study, all of these anxieties and more were pressing issues in daily life, yet for many in the UK at this time they will be unrecognisable. In the case of food insecurity, then, it is important to *make these anxieties visible* if their uneven distribution is to be taken into account.

Foodbanks: the tip of the precarious iceberg

The preoccupation with foodbanks in discussions on food poverty in recent years is understandable because of the striking impact they have made on the

provision of welfare in the UK. However, food aid encompasses a broad range of provision, from soup kitchens to meals on wheels (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014; Cloke et al. 2016). As a consequence, while foodbanks might be the most salient feature of food insecurity, they are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the practices that people who struggle to get enough food engage in. As Lambie-Mumford shows: 'households use multiple strategies in their attempts to manage not having sufficient food (i.e. being food insecure), in both the long- and short-term; seeking food aid is only one of the many ways people respond to constrained food access' (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014, p.32).

These diverse tactics largely remain hidden from view, as they take place within the mundane and domestic practices that are less visible than the public space of the foodbank. This hidden element of food insecurity is worthy of further research, not to further survey the lives of vulnerable people, but rather because it is through these mundane practices that wider forces of poverty are felt and absorbed by those affected. Moreover, as foodbanks are often used at a point of crisis in people's lives, this crisis is only the tip of the iceberg in the sense that multiple, contributing vulnerabilities contribute to creating insecurity. If we are to escape the problem of only offering a plaster to cover the wound of the crisis 'in the mean times' (Cloke et al. 2016), then it is necessary to look *beyond* that point of crisis to consider the ways in which precarious living has made people vulnerable in their everyday lives and how insecurities emerge, recede and are sensed and made sense of within mundane practices. This is the arena in which precarity operates most readily (Berlant 2011; Stewart 2012), and therefore it is through the study of daily practices – including but also in excess of crisis, foodbanks and exceptional practices – that we might come to understand the challenges facing those who live precariously. Consequently, while food poverty

has come to be associated with foodbanks, the literature on precarity offers a more useful analysis for getting to grips with the ways in which inequalities are embedded within daily lives: their practices, emotions, affects and sensations.

This is also important if we are to be aware of the inequalities that exist around us in everyday practices. By associating food inequalities with foodbanks, it is easy to see those who use them as ‘other’, as well as to see food insecurity as an exceptional issue that is confined to a particular place, group of people and set of practices (rather than being an insidious set of vulnerabilities that are inherent within daily life). Consequently, there is an ethical imperative to consider food insecurities in all of their complexity and slipperiness if we are to care for those who are vulnerable without judging them or holding them as separate or exceptional.

Gibson-Graham show the importance of recognising difference. Their community economies work (Gibson-Graham 2006; Graham and Roelvink 2010) emphasises that the practices that are commonly understood as ‘economic’ actually make up only the minority of exchange practice that goes on in the world, and that we need to take a more inclusive approach to economic behaviour if we are to see diverse ways of being that already exist, and then go on to develop constructive critiques of neoliberal practices.

Additionally, it is important that critical scholars call for a more precise and politically engaged approach to ‘consumption’. Specifically, David Graeber highlights the morals of liberal political economy, which imbue the way in which the term ‘consumption’ has conflated practices of eating with practices and ideologies of property ownerships, as in the 19th-century West: ‘Eating food ... became the perfect idiom for talking about desire and gratification in a world in which everything, all human relations, were being reimagined as questions of

property' (Graeber 2011, p.499). Moreover, Alan Warde has developed sociological understandings of eating from a practice theoretical approach. This lends a third theoretical heritage to contest what Warde calls 'the colonisation of consumption by models of individual choice and cultural expressivism' (Warde 2014, p.279). The metaphor of consumption applied to diverse practices of 'getting food' is not only an empirical narrowing but also a moralised theorisation, in which property relations are privileged over other relations and that imagines a particular 'us' separate from that which we consume. It also places a direction of action between *we/human/consumer* and *that/they/material/consumed*.

Consequently, while a great deal of this study centres on issues that are often framed as consumption, I move towards a more precise framing of the ways in which people living in contexts of precarity and insecurity are able to get or acquire food. This allows space to consider the food journeys that people make and the other places they go to get food, from charities and aid providers, where food is given and not bought. As the literature on foodbanks has emphasised the diversity of experiences of users and their paths to these places, as well as emphasising the importance of emotional issues of receiving food aid (Purdam et al. 2015; van der Horst et al. 2014), I therefore take seriously the critique that a focus on crisis and meantimes is only the 'leading edge' of the pervasive issues that affect whether someone can eat well, all of which happen outside of the spaces of the foodbank. While I have shown above that affects can be sites through which we are governed, particularly those who are living insecurely (Friedli and Stearn 2015), I also want to show that capacity can be limited and shaped through affects, and that conditions of precarity shape our capacity to affect and be affected. Following Stewart (2012), I argue that precarious

conditions are not *just* material, but that they also take form and come to be felt through lived practices, including affective life:

I'm suggesting that we ask the basic questions of how precarity as a thing takes particular form, how it pulls some collection of forces, situations, sensibilities, and materialities into alignment, how it becomes nervously generative as a something. (Stewart 2012.)

Bondi 'offered a personal account of feelings of insecurity, interwoven with a psychoanalytic account, to suggest that elements of ontological insecurity are an ordinary part of all our lives, rendering fragile our sense of being in the world' (Bondi 2014, p.345). Yet, while we all may have some degree of ontological insecurity, there are socio-material conditions that produce profound differences in the propensity, severity and forms of this. Butler addresses precarity in terms of the political constructions of life, and she distinguishes between precariousness – the material condition of life that means it can be 'expunged at will or by accident' (2005, p.25) – and precarity – 'that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death' (Butler 2005, p.25). In her analysis, under current systems of government '[t]he shared condition of precariousness leads not to reciprocal recognition, but to a specific exploitation of target populations, of lives that are not quite lives, cast as "destructible" and "ungrievable"' (Butler 2005, p.31).

For Butler, under the current state system the differential distribution of precarity in which some lives are made more vulnerable to disease and death has 'implications for thinking through the body as well, since there are no conditions that can fully "solve" the problem of human precariousness' (Butler 2009, pp.29–30). As Kathleen Stewart writes, 'Abject and unlivable bodies

don't just become "other" and unthinkable. They go on living, animated by possibilities at work in the necessary or the serendipitous' (Stewart, p.118).

Following from this, while financial access to food is an important issue, and while foodbanks are one of the most visible ways in which this issue is addressed in the UK at present, I argue for the importance of understanding foodbanks within the wider context of the lives of those who use them, as well as looking for the ways in which precarity 'takes form' (Stewart 2012; see also Berlant 2011) elsewhere. This is an important step to escape the circular argument around whether foodbanks are a form of neoliberalism or an alternative to this, and instead to see foodbanks as one site among many in which food insecurity can be felt.

Lost in space: food deserts and obesogenic environments

The second way in which *access* has been developed in relation to food insecurity is via spatial analyses. Here, inequality becomes a feature of the relationship between locale, food outlets and health, resulting in two important models for analysing food inequality: the food desert and the obesogenic environment. Central to both is the assumption that Euclidian distance is a primary factor in shaping the quality of the food available to (and consequently the health outcomes of) those living in a particular area or neighbourhood. The framing of health and wellbeing in these analyses will be discussed in the following section on nutrition; however, first it is necessary to interrogate the spatial assumptions contained within these hypotheses.

An interest in food deserts emerged in the 1990s in the UK, where researchers were concerned with 'areas characterized by poor access to healthy and affordable food' (Beaulac et al. 2009, p.1). Access here is therefore taken very

literally in terms of the distance that must be traversed to reach good food stores. Food deserts captured the imagination of those in policy and became particularly significant in the 1990s, alongside the increasing concern from the post-1997 Labour government around issues of social exclusion and health inequalities in cities (Wrigley 2002). However, the term was met with caution from academics, who warned that the empirical basis for the existence of food deserts in the UK was weak and that the empirical evidence for the food desert hypothesis was underdeveloped: ‘factoids can easily and uncritically become part of the apparatus of government health policy when they fit in with broader policy objectives’ (Cummins and Macintyre 2002, p.438). Consequently, the application of the food desert metaphor in research was soon met with calls for an ‘unpacking’ of the term, for paying closer attention to the individual or household experience and the ‘need to demonstrate more convincingly that the postulated relationship between diet and access to healthy and reasonably priced foods actually holds’ (Wrigley 2002, p.2035).

Yet, while geographic approaches offer much potential in understanding the spatial elements of health inequalities more broadly, as well as food inequalities specifically, there are several indications that the food desert idea is not fit for the purpose of understanding the complexity of emplaced food practices and how these relate to wellbeing and inequality. While health geographers have offered calls to understand ‘place’ relationally (Cummins et al. 2007), ‘[s]patial analysis, like epidemiology, can only demonstrate association’ (Guthman 2011, p.75). Consequently, while a spatial approach helps to avoid victim blaming, it also makes it hard for any causality or perhaps ‘blame’ (Philo 2005) for food inequalities to be apportioned. From this point of view, it becomes hard to establish a critical analysis of food inequalities, or understand how to change

them. Relatedly, 'space' is treated as a 'container', and to understand the complexity of food insecurity we need rather to understand how it is emplaced.

As Guthman argues in the obeseogenic environment argument, the role that the environment plays in the idea that 'too much food and too little sidewalk translate into too much eating and too little exercise' is unclear (Guthman 2011, 87). Worse, the role afforded to people play in this scenario is weak, with little awareness of the complexity of social life and as a result, 'since the thesis doesn't allow much for the agency of people who inhabit these environments, it reinforces the idea that they are unthinking dupes, without personal responsibility' (Guthman 2011, p.87).

Furthermore, within this extrapolation of statistics and topographical features, what we might group together as 'social factors' are externalised as 'complexity'. Some have tried to include them, but there are severe limitations to this approach and an emergent but deeply critical literature has slammed these studies because, at heart, '[t]he food desert literature is dominated by studies seeking to link demographic, economic, and spatial data with health outcomes, with little attention to what matters to people, or what they actually do to acquire food' (Alkon et al. 2013, p.128). There has been much less attention paid to research that puts experiences of food access at the fore (Coveney and O'Dwyer 2009; for exemptions, see: Thompson et al. 2013; Whelan et al. 2002).

There have been strong critical takes from feminist-inspired authors in recent years (Colls and Evans 2013; Evans et al. 2011; Guthman 2011). Consequently, we need to pay attention to spatial 'access' in terms of emplaced, embodied socio-materiality, as well as taking into account that differences in bodily abilities mean different geographies (Dyck 1995; Hansen and Philo 2007; Moser 2000). Moreover, we need to look in different places. Supermarkets,

kitchens, corner stores and so on are spaces in which food practices take place, and are therefore worthy of further investigation in terms of how practices take place within them (Bridle-Fitzpatrick 2015). For example, do supermarkets count as obesogenic environments? They contain healthy foods as well as unhealthy ones, with many cues to facilitate spending on high-profit items. It is important to understand how they are navigated and made sense of according to social, health and affective elements, which are excluded from a spatial approach.

Food deserts are a neighbourhood-level, supply-side explanation for food inequalities; this explanation has 'progressive' roots in its move beyond blaming the victim (all too often offered as a cause of food inequalities), yet the focus on these neighbourhood levels, and the provision within them, does not consider the ways in which people (particularly disadvantaged people) navigate their environment (Alkon et al. 2013).

The key element in the food desert hypothesis relates to topographical proximity to food retailers. Many studies have complicated this picture, introducing other elements such as time (Chen and Clark 2013; Horner and Wood 2014), availability of transport (Coveney and O'Dwyer 2009; Furey et al. 2001; Páez et al. 2010) and history of racial segregation (Kato 2013; Raja et al. 2008), all of which complicate the understanding of what is accessible or not. This complexity is important, as 'geographic access to good food, while no doubt an enabling factor for a good diet, is by no means a guarantee' (Apparicio et al. 2007, p.4). Different spaces inhibit or allow movement more easily for some bodies than others (Dyck 1995), and the ways in which barriers such as finances or distance are experienced and understood is never absolute: these barriers are always entangled with the push and pull of everyday life.

There is also some debate over whether food deserts really exist, with studies finding that the term does not apply in many contexts. Consequently, other studies have coined new terms, such as ‘obesogenic environments’, ‘fat swamps’ (Saunders et al. 2015) and other similar terms that correlate the availability of particular foods – commonly fast food (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011), or those high in fat, salt and sugar – with the health of those who live nearby.

The prominence of the neighbourhood or locale in spatial approaches to food inequalities has not been accompanied by an unpacking of these spaces.

Thinking about problems of food insecurity on the level of discrete households has been offered up as one route via which we might escape a tendency to individualise the problem, and many of those involved in the emerging literature on foodbanks and access to food in the context of austerity have proffered this ‘household level’ as the most appropriate way to study insecurity (Dowler and Lambie-Mumford 2015; Tarasuk and Beaton 1999). Figures from the charity Crisis show there has been a 40% increase in the number of households containing ‘concealed single persons’, bringing the number to 3.53 million in England (Fitzpatrick et al. 2016). So, while the household level seems an intuitive one on which to base enquiries into food insecurity, we must be aware that 3.53 million people remain ‘concealed’ within these spaces, showing that ‘the household’ should not be understood as a fixed or single unit.

This not only eliminates the how micro-geographies of domestic food practices take place but also elides the diversity of domestic living arrangements, imposing an outdated and normative image of the household as a nuclear family unit. In particular, kitchens are extremely important in terms of food insecurity because they are spaces in which material practices of cooking, eating and shopping intersect, and in which wider conditions of economic and political

issues are manifested within the practices of daily life (Evans 2011; Meah and Watson 2011). Importantly, they are also ‘hidden’ spaces; private spaces that are ubiquitous to the point of being taken for granted. Subsuming the kitchen under the rubric of ‘household’ means that the micro-practices that take place in kitchens remain hidden, and also means that differences within kitchen spaces and between kitchen practices remain invisible. Where kitchen practices have been studied, rich and significant findings have emerged (see for example: Evans and Miele 2012; Evans et al. 2013; Sutton 2009; Yates-Doerr and Carney 2015), yet the study of kitchens remains side-lined in approaches to food practices in general and, to date, has been excluded from analyses of food insecurity.

Foodscapes: understanding inequalities relationally

Importantly, then, an understanding of access as primarily an issue of spatial distance risks environmental determinism. It considers ‘what is *in* the environment rather than how the environment is used’; I therefore join Colls and Evans in arguing for the importance of critique as ‘openness to explore alternative theoretical models for understanding bodies and environments’ (Colls and Evans 2013, p.737)

To allow for the relationality of emplaced food practices, we can turn to work on *foodscapes*.

In her thorough critique of the obesogenic environment thesis, one of Guthman’s most striking points is that the relationship between environment, obesity and inequality cannot be separated from the social and political factors of race and class, ‘Yet, the quantitative spatial research that attempts to demonstrate the relationship between the built environment and obesity cannot

account for this inseparability, leading to the reductionist ... conclusion that more grocery stores will reduce obesity' (Guthman 2011, p.69). While this is an important critique, which echoes the findings of Kato's study above (Kato 2013), the social factors that relate to the spatial manifestations of food inequalities can only be part of the picture. A material-semiotic approach 'is, therefore, highly critical of studies which are concerned only with social relations; it argues that such relations count for little unless they are held together by durable and resilient materials' (Murdoch 1998, p.360).

A qualitative study in Australia has shown that transport is a key issue when it comes to food shopping. For those living within an area identified as a food desert, it was found that car ownership was less of an issue in food access than 'the degree to which car-less households were able to make alternative travel arrangements to assist with food shopping' (Coveney and O'Dwyer 2009, p.48). This suggests that social relationships and networks of support are vital to enabling food shopping where there is no access to private transport. Further, these findings indicate a need to consider not just the 'where' of food access but also the 'how', and attention should be brought to the 'geographies of moving bodies' (McCormack 2008).

Car ownership was shown to be vital in the context of Coveney and O'Dwyers' study, as those without cars are more reliant on social networks to facilitate shopping practices. However, it is important to consider whether these findings apply in other contexts and, indeed, whether they will continue to do so; general trends have been identified in which large weekly or fortnightly shopping trips (where shoppers might fill their cars) are declining and supermarkets focusing their attentions on smaller urban stores, which are conveniently located but in which prices and the proportion of processed and

value-added items are generally higher. Additionally, the issue of how people get to and from food stores requires the consideration of walking, public transport and community transport, as these practices are all important among disadvantaged groups.

Where studies have considered the experiences of those getting food in conditions of food insecurity, there is a focus on looking for similarities within this group to help investigate and clarify a perceived causal link between neighbourhood and bad diet. Yet, studies often report that those living in areas designated as ‘food deserts’ or in conditions of food insecurity have very diverse priorities, values, perceptions and practices when it comes to getting food (Thompson et al. 2013; Whelan et al. 2002).

While there is a large literature on the topic of food deserts and obesogenic environments, there remains a lack of consensus as to whether such areas can be identified within cities. While the model seems to work relatively well in US cities, a systematic review found that ‘[e]vidence from other countries is sparse and equivocal ... [and] does not warrant firm conclusions at this time on whether access to healthy, affordable food systematically varies to the disadvantage of socioeconomically deprived areas’ (Beaulac et al. 2009, p.4).

Getting food: an emplaced, dynamic practice

The study of food deserts and obesogenic environments offers huge amounts of rich data on the whereabouts of certain types of people and certain types of food/outlets, but it has little to say about *how* and *why* food and people are situated in these locations. Taking an approach that is inherently tangled up with such ideas of *how* (i.e., the processual and the practised elements of life) means it is no longer enough to take such distributions for granted, but rather

that it is particularly interesting to consider how such distributions emerge through practices.

It is important to study how people get food when they are living insecurely because it shows the ways in which inequalities cannot be measured and defined but rather can make themselves felt within moments and encounters. The practices of getting food also enrol a whole range of spaces and mobilities that are understudied, particularly in the case of food insecurity. For example, there is little research into how foodbanks themselves are navigated or how foodbanks fit into the wider lives of people. Indeed, while there is a small but important literature on the ways in which supermarket shops are navigated, barely any attention is paid to how this takes places for those who are living in conditions of food insecurity (an exception is Thompson et al. 2013).

One way to focus on these elements (what we might also think of as ‘geographies of moving bodies’ (McCormack 2008)) is through *foodscapes*. Those interested in political ecology have used the idea of foodscapes to move towards a relational and dynamic understanding of emplaced food practices. This allows for an awareness that ‘[f]ood choices are made within our respective food environments. The food environment, or “foodscape”, encompasses any opportunity to obtain food and includes physical, socio-cultural, economic and policy influences at both micro and macro-levels’ (Lake et al 2010, p.666). Indeed, an advantage of apprehending these issues via a foodscape lens is that the foodscape is a ‘social constructionist, relational, and processual perspective [that] allows us to conceptualise the complex and changing interconnections that shape food access and point to the politics of food in ways that the mapping of a specific food system attributes fails to do’ (Miewald and McCann 2014, p.552).

As well as looking in different places for issues of food insecurity, it is also important to move beyond the assumption that ‘access’ is simply an issue of buying food. This is partly because there is a host of ways of getting food that do not involve buying food (Battersby 2012; Malpass et al. 2007); there is also a host of issues that can prevent one from *eating* food, even if one has the means to buy it. Indeed, while access-as-space can give data on where inequalities might lie, a focus on the interactions shows that the distributions of food outlets – what we might understand as the food infrastructure – is not fixed, but emergent and dynamic. Drawing on earlier work on infrastructures, which complements work on foodscapes, enables one to begin to formulate a critical study of how people *get* food: ‘the visibility of the interdependencies between bodies, city, and infrastructure within mobile society and which problematise attempts to isolate interventions to particular sets of relationships without the disruption of others’ (Marvin and Medd 2006, p.323). As Lancione and McFarlane point out, a shift towards practices enables attention to *how* ‘the mingling of bodies, matters, atmospheres, affectivities and power’ takes place through infrastructures (Lancione and McFarlane 2016, p.2406; see also Leigh Star and Ruhleder 1996).

While the emphasis on the obesogenic environment and food deserts may be one way to remove blame from individuals (Colls and Evans 2013, p.738), I argue that such emphases fail to offer a reflexive agency to those involved. This has particular moralising consequences and, [r]ather than challenging the marginalisation of “deprived communities” or social inequalities, obesogenic environment research is ... therefore often premised on morally tinged environmental determinism which exacerbates the marginalisation of

communities already stigmatised along racial and class lines through pathologisation of their practices as obesogenic' (Evans et al. 2011, p.742).

Approaching connections and disconnections between places, wellbeing and food, and allowing for a critical take on inequalities within these relationships, is therefore not easily managed through a conflation of topographical distance and ideas of 'access'. Instead, the study of food insecurity must be able to account for these issues through topological proximities (Probyn 2012 2000; Urry 2002), as topology is a way of understanding how global actors can make themselves felt within the intimacies of our daily lives (Allen 2011).

Access in terms of nutrition and education

Having discussed some of the issues with the ways in which *access* has been made to matter, I now turn to the second part of the definition of food insecurity: that of a *good diet*. This issue also coincides with what Shaw calls access in terms of 'attitude' (2006); here, the discourse is one of improving knowledge via the practice of thrift and healthy practices of cooking, shopping and eating in order to make the most of one's available resources.

The parameters of a good diet have remained an intransigent problem, in nutrition and health as elsewhere. Some are content to generalise for simplicity: 'eat food, not too much, mainly plants' (Pollan 2007). However, the proliferation of public interest in nutritional advice compounded with inexact media spin, which elides specific studies into more general advice, means that many of us in the UK are better educated than ever about food and nutrition yet simultaneously confused and unsure when it comes to eating well. The role that nutritional advice and government guidelines play in this have their own politics (Nestle 2013), but more profoundly, the importance of 'diet as a health

determinant' is a particular moral framing that emerged in the late 20th century and may 'inflate our sense of the individual's capacity to control his or her biology and take responsibility for that body's productive potential' (Biltekoff 2013, p.153).

The unbearable weight of being poor: ill health beyond obesity

In the wake of the 'nutrition transition', food inequalities are no longer simply about *hunger* (Morgan and Sonnino 2010). Instead, the abundance of cheap foods that are high in calories has meant that disadvantage in Western contexts is epitomised by *fat* bodies rather than underweight ones (Drewnowski and Specter 2004). The assumption here is that the prevalence of high-calorie foods in certain places translates inexorably into fat bodies. The obesogenic environment thesis is important here, not in terms of its spatial assumptions but in terms of two confluences: first, that being surrounded by unhealthy foods makes you more likely to eat them (Bridle-Fitzpatrick 2015), and second, a conflation of obesity and ill health.

As shown in the discussion of foodscapes above, it is essential that we are more curious about the ways in which the practices of *getting food* take place, rather than merely assuming that being near to something results in us eating it. In terms of nutritional wellbeing, however, there is an emerging critical feminist literature that questions the supremacy of the 'energy balance model' (in which obesity is purely related to calories going in and out of the body; see Guthman 2011). Indeed, the processes by which people gain or lose weight are not straightforward but rather complex entanglements of a range of factors beyond calories and exercise (Abrahamsson et al. 2015; Mol 2013). Moreover, advances

in epigenetics point beyond calories towards a range of factors that exist in our food, environments and bodies that can make us overweight or suffer from ill health (Guthman and Mansfield 2013). Consequently, the geographic literature on obesogenic environments ‘fails to adequately recognise the wealth of social scientific work on embodiment. As a result, a simplistic Cartesian model of embodiment continues to drive obesity policy’ (Evans 2010). Food in this picture becomes functional, delivering wellbeing if the correct proportions can be met. Moreover, being well is positioned as an *outcome* of eating and living well; the relationship is unidirectional. However, this apparently simplistic model of health does not correspond to all accounts of these processes. Indeed, it is striking that many of us are familiar with the energy-balance model of the metabolism, yet millions of people each year struggle to lose weight through diets. It is important that those interested in food practices (in all their complexity, rather than as abstractions) therefore argue that ‘in our own research we have learned that the question of how food can make people larger is exceedingly complex and, though maybe ordinary, not obvious at all’ (Abrahamsson et al. 2015, p.3; see also Alvanides et al. 2010).

Moreover, not only are the mechanisms of metabolism more complex than imagined by the energy-balance model but also, of course, health and wellbeing are about much more than our weight and diet (Colls 2007). Campaigns to change our understandings of what a ‘healthy’ body looks like (such as the Health at Every Size movement) offer a step away from assuming that a fat body is an unhealthy one; yet, there is still a propensity in public health circles to frame such body positivity in productive terms, specifically how the burden of fat bodies can be lifted from the state (e.g. Bombak 2014). By conflating obesity with ill health, other factors that impinge on our wellbeing relating to

poverty, diet and place are banished from the analysis. One striking example is that of mental health. There is a rich and important literature on the relationship between places and mental health (Cummins et al. 2007; Curtis 2010; Duff 2014; Philo 2014), but this has not yet been developed in a context of food insecurity. Indeed, there is a medical literature that shows that mental health issues such as anxiety and depression impact on food practices (Kwate 2008; Weaver and Hadley 2009), and studies of poverty have shown that living precariously also has consequences for our mental health, causing stress and even impairing our brain function (Mani et al. 2013). Consequently, it is important that we are open to looking beyond obesity when it comes to understanding health inequalities and accounting for ill health on the terms of those affected.

Education as a response: nutritional delinquency

The linking of obesity and inequality through a frame of individual choice and responsibility (Abbots et al. 2015; Evans 2010; Guthman 2011) has meant that one form of intervention to improve the wellbeing of those who are food insecure is nutritional education. Yet, while such interventions may have benign intentions, underscoring the individual's responsibility for eating well and living well does not take into account the environment and context in which food practices take place and eating well becomes framed as an act of making correct choices. This is exemplified by the Eatwell plate, a tool widely used to help people choose more from some of the identified food types, such as fruit and vegetables, and less from others, such as sweets and biscuits (Harland et al. 2012). Unsurprisingly, the role of nutritional education programmes has come under fire from critical scholars. Even where such education schemes accept the social embeddedness and relationality of food practices – such as

‘Change 4 Life’, a campaign to tackle obesity by educating children at school – these interventions end up targeting specific groups, in this case working-class mothers (Evans et al. 2011). So, while such interventions are often designed to help those who are worst off, by framing food practices through choice they end up re-inscribing responsibility on those who have the least resources to be able to make changes through choice. The result of this framing of access in terms of ‘attitude’ (Shaw 2006) – or, perhaps more accurately, in terms of education and responsibility – therefore frames those who fail to ‘improve’ their lives in terms of a form of ‘nutritional delinquency’ (McEntee 2009). Some have even gone so far as to term these interventions as ‘health fascism’, which ‘can then be seen as a form of micro-politics of health and the body which is taken up by individuals at the personal level’ (Fitzpatrick and Tinning 2014, p.134).

Further, the need for an educational response to poor health is not clear. Garthwaite et al. (2015)’s ethnographic study of foodbank users reports that those involved in running foodbanks and related agencies were keen to encourage users to learn more about meal planning and cooking, ‘as they tended to believe that people who accessed the foodbank were largely unaware of how to cook properly’ (Garthwaite et al. 2015, p.42). Yet, from the researchers’ interactions with the foodbank’s users, it became clear that they were not merely ignorant of the best ways to cook food and plan meals; the study reports the case of one participant who is ‘acutely aware of the type of food she is “supposed to eat” [but] the reality is that rising food prices, coupled with only slight benefits rises, means that [the participant] could not afford the food she needed to stay healthy, despite her best efforts’ (Garthwaite et al. 2015, p.42).

This narrowing of how food can contribute to wellbeing into a matter of nutrients and the responsabilisation of individuals to cook, shop and eat well is criticised by those who emphasise the diversity of nutritional knowledges (see Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013). While this broadening of the scope is helpful, there is a risk that a shift to bodily motivations (Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010) and visceral knowledges (Carolan 2011; Longhurst et al. 2009) of food might result in becoming trapped within a valorisation of traditional or embodied knowledges as a form of essentialism and reductionism within the arena of the body (rather than the rational mind). Indeed, it is important to move beyond a valorisation of bodily motivations in themselves if we are to escape from such yearnings towards essentialism, as: ‘There’s no question that, at least for certain nutrients, if a person is in true need, some gustatory yen or body wisdom takes over’ (Ackerman, p.149). So, while calls to diversify the range of ways of knowing a good diet and good health are important (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2015) ‘alternative’ food cultures, such calls need to be aware of ‘the apolitical and reductionist interpretation of food insecurity, the preference for technical fixes, and the undemocratic practices of nutrition interventions. The simple opposition of biomedicalization versus the “alternative” fails to capture these deeply problematic tendencies in biomedicalization’ (Mudry et al. 2014, p.32).

The post-political effects of food insecurity

An analysis of these three interpretations of ‘access to a good diet’ reveals some common threads relating to assumptions about how food practices place us in the world. In the realm of foodbanks, food deserts and nutritional education,

the complexity of food practices and interconnections may be recognised, but the responsibility for eating and living well – whether this be in terms of diet or spending on food – falls on the shoulders of individual *consumers*.

Consequently, while disadvantages can be traced beyond the individual, the ways in which they are addressed are framed in terms of choice. This can be seen as a form of post-politics; a closing down of the scope for dissent and interruption of the status quo (Ranciere 2010; Swyngedouw 2010).

The most profound post-political effect of the framing of food insecurity as *access to a good diet* is the propagation of a Cartesian dualism in which food practices are carried out by individuals (or perhaps *households*) who choose from a range of pre-existing options. As Poppendieck (1999) and Boone-Heinonen et al. (2011) show, even emergency food aid providers have attempted to disprove the old, cruel adage that ‘beggars can’t be choosers’ via a simulated implementation of choice, mimicking that found on a supermarket’s shelves.

These assumptions of how people relate to food are oversimplifications, which – as Shove (2010) has argued in the context of environmental sustainability – propagate the myth that education will generate better results. Shove shows that this model, which dominates public policy perceptions of behaviour change, can be summarised as the ‘ABC model’, where ‘[f]or the most part, social change is thought to depend upon values and attitudes (the A), which are believed to drive the kinds of behaviour (the B) that individuals choose (the C) to adopt’ (Shove 2010, p.1274). Shove shows that this model derives from psychology literature in which need is understood rationally and that ‘resonates with commonsense ideas about media influence and individual agency’ (Shove 2010, p.1264).

As Shove argues, despite the policy emphasis on drivers for and barriers to change, what these precisely consist of is not well defined: ‘pretty much anything can qualify as a driver or a barrier, and it is not always easy to tell which is which’ (Shove 2010, p.1274). Here, we can see some resonance with the confusion in obesogenic environment discussions, in which causes and effects are similarly unclear and association is taken to be sufficient for action.

Social, institutional and cultural factors, as well as habit, are cast in such policy documents as ‘complexities’ that must be taken into account; yet policies that aim to bring about behaviour change never escape the assumption of A follows B leading to C, which produces this surfeit of ‘complexities’: ‘the idea that desires and attitudes drive behaviour produces a blind spot at a particularly crucial point, making it impossible to see how the contours and environmental costs of daily life evolve’ (Shove 2010, p.1277). This analysis of climate change policy brings a great deal of clarity to the study of dietary advice, as well as helping us to understand the predominance of the idea of ‘access’ in thinking about how people are able to eat well (or not). While many studies point to the complex and contradictory elements of food practices, Shove’s analysis shows that these complexities have at least as much to do with the assumptions behind the research – particularly the idea that eating well is primarily a matter of choice, with little or no value given to the external forces that shape daily life. Consequently, there is a need to move beyond a terminology of *choice* when it comes to understanding food practices in general.

Moving beyond such terminology is also important because living precariously affords individuals much less in the way of *choice* than those who are better off. This is, of course, a central element in the injustice of food insecurity, particularly from a political economy perspective. However, it is important to

delve deeper into issues of choice when it comes to understanding food insecurity, because not only are the options available limited by infrastructural, political and economic forces but also, at a fundamental level, the ways in which we make sense of food are related to both the material and social forces that shape how we understand what is *good to eat* and what is not (Evans and Miele 2012; Roe 2006). Moving away from choice therefore opens up the analysis, allowing in the material elements of food practices (particularly the materials, settings and devices that enable food practices as well as foodstuffs themselves, and the social practices through which matter becomes food), which are part of who we are. To escape the tyranny of ‘choice’, then, it is helpful to look at food insecurity through the lens of *taste*.

The literature on taste offers one way to approach the issues of food education, governmentality and food insecurity without falling into the trap of understanding these courses as either empowering or ‘fascistic’. Following Hennion (2007), we can begin to ask questions around how different versions of good taste are enacted and negotiated. Importantly, through learning to be affected, these sites require further consideration in terms of how ‘good taste’ emerges in a context of food insecurity.

In summary, in the way in which food insecurity has been made to matter – through foodbanks and obesogenic environments and the accompanying interventions designed to address such problems – we can see that the scope for any form of dissensus has been closed down. Solutions continue to see food as functional (if it has any agency at all) and humans as individual bounded agents with similar capabilities and universal drives and desires.

The ‘solutions’ that have come about so far have centred on the themes of ability, assets and attitude (Shaw 2006). However, through the processes of these matterings, a host of things are cut out and cast aside. It is these cast-offs – the leavings, the leftovers, the junk and rubbish – that I pick up as the basis for this study. Just as the role of the idiot enables a slowing down of the reasoning and workings of others, these leftovers (the apparent complexity or contradiction within the food practices of those who struggle to get by) become the foundations for inquiry.

I have shown that there are feelings (sensations, affects, emotions, sense-making) that emerge in conjunction with food insecurity but are not yet addressed in the literature. Consequently, in answering the first research question: *How has food insecurity been made to matter?*, I draw up three new questions for the empirical study to address. The second research question is therefore: *How is food insecurity felt?*

The materiality of food plays a role. Food’s function as a building block for life is never detached from the messy entanglements that accompany it, and therefore it can never be completely predictable or controlled. Consequently, the next research question I ask is: *How does food insecurity taste?* This draws attention to the cultivation of ways of *tasting* food; it places no assumptions around ‘good’ or ‘bad’ foods, but instead considers the practices through which these relationships are formed in terms of care.

The literature surrounding food insecurity – particularly in terms of the topographical distribution of food – has placed too much attention on the where, as well a fair amount on the ‘what’, with little attention as to *how* food and people come together in different places through infrastructural arrangements. This is important because it helps to show that inequalities are

not just *there*. They come into being through a host of actions and thoughts and sensations – and so, importantly, they can be and are always different.

Moving on from these critiques, I now consider the issue of taste. I define this as a capacity for *eating well*, and believe that this approach has the potential to escape some of the pitfalls that come about when we simply consider ‘access to a good diet’. This raises some new questions about food inequalities, which the following chapters of this thesis are concerned with answering.

Taste

The sociological study of taste after Bourdieu has become something of a cliché for some (Probyn 2000), but recent interest in the affective, sensuous body (see for example Anderson 2014; Banfield 2016; Dewsbury 2015; McCormack 2008; Yusoff 2013) as well as the turn towards new materialisms (Bennett 2010; Coole and Frost 2010; see also Goodman 2016) has brought an imperative to approach taste with new tools. Specifically, interest in the embodied and social elements of taste can be enriched by these theories, as well as a material-semiotic approach, which helps to understand the role of materials in terms of their entanglements and networks (Abrahamsson et al. 2015).

The body in Bourdieu – as Probyn puts it – is ‘the body that eats is in the end eaten by the overdeterminations of culture’ (Probyn 2000, p.29). But the material turn attends to questions of how ‘liveliness [is] distributed between humans and non-humans and how are distributions of agency and power thereafter understood’ (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004, p.672). Also, the Spinozist influence is another theoretical legacy which compels us to consider not ‘the body’ but *bodies*, ‘defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other

surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect' (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, p.2), as well as heterogeneous others, including nonhuman and material bodies (Whatmore 2002).⁵

Importantly, the material turn helps to reinvigorate taste, moving beyond some of the criticisms of a Bourdieusean analysis in which 'food can only confirm identity; it cannot open up new avenues. It cannot answer back, it can only repeat' (Probyn 2000, p.31).

Tastes themselves can be political (Ben- Ze'ev 2004), and visceral and sensory aspects of life can be a site for political engagement and action (Carolan 2011; Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010). Yet, an analysis of taste, such as that which I outline here, has yet be integrated into the study of food insecurity.

Beyond the taste of necessity, towards reflexivity

For Bourdieu, the taste of necessity is the internalised habitus that betrays a person's class upbringing as it is ingrained bodily through food preferences. He shows an underlying tension whereby, on the one hand, preferences are imposed through the class system ('the product of material conditions of existence defined by distance from necessity' (Bourdieu 2008, p.177)). On the other hand however, 'it is possible to deduce popular tastes for the foods that are simultaneously most "filling" and most economical from the necessity of reproducing labour power at the lowest cost which is forced on the proletariat' (Bourdieu 2008, p.177). So, the taste of necessity is not simply imposed by

⁵ Although Whatmore's 'hybrid geographies' are not part of the material turn per se, the impulse to include nonhuman others shows an affinity between her work and the material turn.

virtue of one's class position; additionally, 'necessity can only be fulfilled, most of the time, because the agents are inclined to fulfil it' (Bourdieu 2008, p.178)

This paradox is hard to grasp for many, he argues, because we are so accustomed to understanding tastes in a way that 'presupposes absolute freedom of choice' (Bourdieu 2008, p.178). Literature that looks at tastes implicitly – such as Drewnowski and Specter (2004), who are concerned with the ways in which those who are less well-off tend to eat more foods that are higher in calories, particularly fat, sugar, starch and salt – might therefore be critically considered using the idea of the paradox of the taste of necessity, as debates on this topic appear to reproduce the misconception to which Bourdieu points.

This paradox of the taste of necessity key for Bourdieu because while for some, he argues, such tastes are seen simply: either as 'a direct product of economic necessity' or, for others, a 'taste of freedom' (Bourdieu 2008, p.178). For Bourdieu however, this is a simplification which forgets 'the conditionings of which it is the product, and so reduce it to pathological or morbid preference for (basic) essentials, a sort of congenital coarseness, the pretext for class racism which associates the populace with everything heavy, thick and fat' (Bourdieu 2008, p.178).

We can see from this that studies concerned with the unhealthy tastes of those less well-off run the risk of falling into the trap that Bourdieu identified back in the 1980s. Importantly, he offers a critical analysis of structures of domination through an understanding of the complexities of embodied habitus, through which daily practices and even our sensory perception is shaped: 'Taste is *amor fati*, the choice of destiny, but a forced choice, produced by the conditions of

existence which rule out all alternatives as mere daydreams and leave no choice but the taste for the necessary' (Bourdieu 2008, p.178).

However, while the taste of necessity allows for the agency of individuals in that such tastes can only operate if the 'agents are inclined to fulfil it', this remains a bleak picture of human life, with little space for reinvention and change (Jenkins 2007). Moreover, there is a need to account for more elements of context than simply class. In particular, the hybridity of embodied life, in which materials have a force of their own, offers an impetus to move on from *La Distinction*.

Moreover, while Bourdieu's data offers a rich snapshot of French social life in many ways, the reasons to examine this empirically need not focus simply on the limitations and partiality of the French case study – nor even simply the survey method. Despite the ways in which public discourses appear to reproduce centuries-old images of peasants and working classes as opposed to the bourgeoisie, the changing conditions of austerity and precarity – as well as the landscape of global migration – mean that the inequalities and differences between haves and have nots require a different lens. The role of reflexivity – a key term in Bourdieusean social science, but reimagined by Hennion – is essential in understanding the processes of taste-making on the terms of those involved.

In contrast to Bourdieu, Hennion and Teil develop an approach to taste as a practice in common: it is what 'holds us together' (2007). Emphasising the contingent and processual rather than fixed categories, they show that taste-making is a relation that is never given. It is 'an action, not a fact, an experience not an object' (Teil and Hennion 2004, 34). As a relation – a folding of ourselves with the world (Mol 2008) – tasting does not just take place at the

point of ingestion, it is part of a wider activity of sense-making around food. It is an ordering and a sensing that goes 'beyond the palate' (Caldwell 2014) and beyond the human (Miele and Truringer, forthcoming). Tasting, seen as a more-than-human collective activity, involves situated relationships between materials and bodies in a variety of ways and places, not just in the mouth. This broadening of the field 'changes how notions of choice, agency and even pleasure are configured and where they are located' (Caldwell 2014, 130; see also Roe 2006). Contrary to Bourdieu, this places a contingent, reflexive agency at the heart of the study of taste. Taste-making is a collective, amateur activity in which 'amateurs do not struggle against determinisms that the sociologist unveils despite their resistance' (Hennion 2007, 102) because 'taste, lived by each but fashioned by all, is a history of oneself permanently remade together with others' (Hennion 2007, p.109). In this way, we can understand the global through the intimate (Probyn 2012) but still allow for a reflexive agency of those involved.

Hennion (2004) offers a fourfold schema as an aide-memoir for those thinking about taste reflexively. Collectives, devices, bodies and settings all play a role, he argues. These elements are 'both the means and performance of the amateur's activity' (Teil and Hennion 2004, p.31); none of them can be taken for granted, but are made present (or perhaps made to matter) and continuously renegotiated through the process of performance of taste. This is a radical change to more traditional sociological ideas of taste because none of these elements has priority (Harvey, et al. 2004, p.192).

Tastes are also important because they complicate common conceptions regarding the foodstuffs that are important to wellbeing. As I have shown above, nutritional approaches have been criticised for reducing foods to their

nutritional content and failing to account for the complexity of social, political and environmental issues in which foods and eaters are entangled (Guthman 2014; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013). From this critical standpoint, the diversity of what counts as *good* food is central (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2015), and consequently we should not only look to ‘hegemonic nutrition’ for indicators of goodness but also value the knowledge and tactics that feature in lived experiences of lay people. Politically, this is an important move because it enables us to account for food preferences and practices that are otherwise ‘not on the map’ (Marte 2007). This is the case, not only in terms of diverse cuisines from all over the world, but also from the point of view of those who are living precariously.

Following from Hennion’s conception of taste is a focus on a particular understanding of reflexivity. This resonates with the take on embodied experience that I develop in this thesis. Rather than seeing ‘the body’ as a site on which societal preferences are inscribed – like so many blank sheets of paper; a palimpsest of our social class – I understand lived experience as being constantly reworked through practice, in concert with nonhuman elements of a situation, overflowing individual or class boundaries. Here I build on the work of those such as Latimer who have argued that Bourdieu’s habitus describes a body that is ‘world-reflecting rather than world-forming’ (Latimer 2009, p.7),

The examples shown in this chapter are instead considered in the light of a reflexive agency. Following Hennion’s understanding, this reflexivity ‘implies a capacity to interrupt, to surprise or to respond’ (Hennion 2007, p.105) rather than a Bourdieusean reflexivity in which the sociologist troubles their own position (Bourdieu 1984). Indeed, Hennion’s focus on taste-*making* draws attention to the setting: the collective, devices, bodies and settings, which

‘constitute the basic framework of the “spaces of taste” and their differing articulation provides for comparison between different forms of attachment’ (Milne p.220 in Jackson 2013; see also Hennion 2007b).

So, while both Bourdieu and Hennion are interested in *reflexivity*, it is through Hennion that we can begin to move away from understanding taste in terms of *necessity* or choice. For Hennion, taste-making is carried out by *amateurs* who:

‘bring themselves to detect the taste of things through a continuous elaboration of procedures that put taste to the test. In testing tastes, amateurs rely as much on the properties of objects – which, far from being given, have to be deployed in order to be perceived – as on the abilities and sensibilities one needs to train to perceive them; they rely as much on the individual and collective determinisms of attachment, as on the techniques and devices necessary in a situation for things to be felt. Understood as reflexive work performed on one’s own attachments, the amateur’s taste is no longer considered an arbitrary election which has to be explained (as in the so-called “critical” sociology) by hidden social causes. Rather, it is a collective technique, whose analysis helps us to understand the way we make ourselves become sensitized, to things, to ourselves, to situations and to moments, while simultaneously controlling how those feelings might be shared and discussed with others’ (Hennion 2007, p.98).

Here, then, tastes are not preferences or behaviours acted out by individuals who can be empowered to make choices; nor are their options simply determined by their environment or context. Rather, by making taste, a range

of collectives, devices, bodies and settings come together *reflexively* to establish *good taste*.

Precarity and vulnerability

Having affirmed the openness of bodies and the potentiality of affect, what might be imagined as the 'bloom-space' of transpersonal affects, I now go on to consider how this openness might be brought together with a critique of conditions of food inequality. It is important not to assume that openness and potentiality are given, but that conditions of poverty and insecurity can restrict capacity to be affected as well as shape affects. Indeed, while theoretical discussions around corporeality and affect are concerned with escaping Cartesian dualisms and logocentrism, it is important that we understand capacity to affect and be affected not simply as power or will or ability to *do* something or other. The corporeal sensibility evoked by these ideas of the affective are not only a capacity to do something but also contain vulnerability. Here, 'vulnerability is not simply the antithesis of vigour or strength but rather an intrinsic and noneliminable aspect of corporeal existence. Neither contingent nor derivative, vulnerability describes the inherent susceptibility of corporeal life, its inherent and incessant exposure to what exceeds its abilities to contain and absorb' (Harrison 2008, p.436)

Important here is Harrison's explication of vulnerability not as a lack or failure of will or power but as an inherent openness; a susceptibility of the corporeal and sensible to alterity. Here, corporeal vulnerability is 'a particular type of relationship – proximity – between the self and alterity, one which takes place

prior to and beyond the machinations of intention, purpose, and recognition but which nonetheless signifies' (Harrison 2008, p.441).

Put simply, then, vulnerability and precariousness are not a lack of capacity but rather a capacity (in our case, for eating well) that entails an openness to the other, a proximity, a vulnerability that is part of embodied life and sensibility. To understand good taste as a capacity for eating well, then, requires an attentiveness to this openness to the world and the proximities formed through it. This also relates to the materiality of affect elucidated by Clough (2008), because this openness is in terms of not only 'the circuit from affect to emotion' (2008, p.17) but also the 'subsumption' of life itself; 'the very viscera of life' become engaged in capitalist political economy (2008, p.14). Recent critical analyses of austerity in the UK have shown that the governance of those in need of benefits extends into the realm of the affective through the psychological (Friedli and Stearn 2015), and famously, Berlant has shown that late liberalism enacts precarity through affects of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011). Yet, by connecting taste with the affective I assert the material-affectivity at play here, which not only traverses human and nonhuman bodies and challenges boundaries but also brings with it the squishy, clingy vitality of matter itself.

How, then, might we account for injustices and inequalities that not only make some bodies more vulnerable than others but also inflict harm through the necessary openness? Moreover, how might we mitigate against such harm without moving towards a closing off of this necessary vulnerability, towards an empowerment of the individual and an extraction of them from spaces, relations and things that do harm? Indeed, it is one thing to emphasise the importance of openness and shared vulnerability when the spaces around us are nourishing and beneficent, but quite another to promote such openness to

those who live in 'blasted landscapes' or with toxic relationships (Kirksey 2014). Here, it is important to be aware of the distributions of such vulnerability. Moreover, in understanding vulnerability as an essential, presocial aspect of embodied life, how do we offer a critique of the way in which uneven distributions come about? It is important to keep a hold on the ways in which the distribution of hazards and harm are not themselves presocial but, as Philo shows, interconnected geographies (and histories) that create vulnerability for certain peoples and places rather than others', as well as inequalities in the ways in which such 'wounds' are treated and addressed once that has happened (Philo 2005, p.442).

Indeed, in a move towards understanding food insecurity in terms of capacity via an analysis of vulnerability, it is important to paint hazardous places not as something that is inevitable but as something that is created. Vulnerabilities, as Philo concludes are: 'are almost always caused in one way or another by the acts, malign or unthinking, of others in other sites' and this offers 'a further prompt to register the interconnected geographies through which an uneven map of vulnerability is traced out across worldly spaces' (Philo 2005, p.450).

Can such an account, centred on the causality of human action, be reconciled with Harrison's' explication of vulnerability? While I agree on many levels with Philo's critical engagement with the injustices of inequality – and it is important to retain the notion that vulnerabilities are uneven from wider geographies in which vulnerabilities come about, intentionally or not, as a result of the practices of people elsewhere – this argument seems to place action (if not intentionality) on the behalf of the 'perpetrators' and passive inaction on those who are made vulnerable.

Moreover, while the human dimension is important, in creating conditions that expose some more than others or fail to provide adequate aftercare (for example, in the case of natural disasters), a role for the material must be retained to some extent. Indeed, while it is true that ‘all manner of contemporary instances of vulnerability leading to disaster, the Boxing Day tsunami included, cannot be fully understood without recognising the colonial heritage that continues to structure an uneven geography of vulnerability across the present day world’ (Philo 2005, p.445), it would take constructivism too far to remove any role for the tidal wave itself from this picture. Here again we run into Latour’s take on critique (2004b): if we are not careful, we enter into a closed loop in which vulnerabilities are either entirely natural (because we are all embodied, sensorial beings) or entirely socially constructed (because they are inflicted by social inequalities).

The key point, then, is that capacity is not power. It is an openness that allows attachments to be made. This entails a shared vulnerability. Consequently, a focus on precarity enables us to understand the inequalities without removing them from the entanglements of life. As a result, in Chapter Seven, I address the issues of precarities. Here, I look at the material: affective conditions of living in precarity, specifically in relation to domestic kitchens. I draw out an analysis of how these conditions generate feelings of isolation and anxiety, which are not constant, but emerge through encounters. Here, I argue that a capacity for eating well is interrupted and restricted by isolation and anxiety, which prevent the openness of a capacity that allows for attachments to be made and interdependencies fostered. Consequently, while vulnerabilities here are about being open to ‘geographies that wound’, they are also about a closing off.

Capacity

Hennions' indeterminate conceptualisation of taste therefore points us towards the practices of *how* tastes are made. Importantly, these practices are not carried out rationally but through a processes of *sensing and making sense* (Evans and Miele 2012). Yet, from this point of view, if no elements are important *a priori* how are we to understand perennial differences and inequalities? To tackle this issue, which is key for an analysis of food insecurity, I turn to theories of affect. Here, the legacy of Spinoza affords and interest in *what a body can do* (see also Latour 2004a). Consequently, I now turn to theories of affect in order to consider how *capacity* can help us to understand how sensuous bodies, engaged in practices of taste-making, are limited or enabled in terms of what they can *do*.

This interest in capacity must first be distinguished from capacity *building* or empowerment, a key term in public health and community development, often mobilised in terms of encouraging individuals to become more independent and no longer rely on costly services. Often, this emphasis on capacity building is framed functionally, as a means of reducing dependency on costly services (Durcan and Bell 2015; Labonte 1993). Yet, for my analysis, capacity is not an issue of empowering individuals nor even community building, but is understood in terms of a *capacity to affect and be affected*.

Starting from a Spinozist interest in the capacity to affect and be affected helps to move away from the individualising effects of interventions that aim to empower. Anderson explains that:

[T]he starting point is that affects are transpersonal rather than pre-personal ... [This] attunes us to how bodily capacities are mediated through forces that exceed the person. The key question

is how does a body's "force of existing" emerge through encounters, *or more specifically the press and presence of the multiplicity that make up an encounter ... [T]he task is to attend to the mediation of what a body can do in specific social-spatial formations ... Affect attunes us to what a body can do in emergent orderings and how "forces of existing" vary*' (Anderson 2014, pp.88–89, emphasis added)

Affect can be understood, then, as 'pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act' (Clough 2008, p.4). Here, a 'body' is not simply a human body bound by human skin (Gregg and Seigworth 2010); rather, 'to have a body is to learn to be affected, meaning "effectuated", moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or nonhumans' (Latour 2004a, p.205). Affect relates the openness of these bodies. It is the 'bloom space, often associated with potential, surplus, becoming' (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, p.9). This moves us towards thinking about affective relations in general and, for our purposes, taste in particular, as 'a gathering place of accumulative dispositions' (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, p.9). This affectivity is an issue of capacity because, for Spinoza, the limits to *what a body can do* are yet to be known.

So, it is through constellation of the material-affective bodies – the material-affective setting or encounter – that what bodies can do is shaped. As Duff shows:

' a body's power of acting is directly proportion to, if not a function of, its capacity to affect be affected by the various

bodies it encounters.⁶ Yet, it also suggests that a body's strength is relational, as it is distributed across an assemblage of forces, signs and territories. Strength is held in common among the varied bodies, human and nonhuman, simple and complex, organic and inorganic, assembled in a given territory' (Duff 2014, p.162).

Within encounters, affects are mediated: 'affects become the environment within which people dwell as well as being capacities or object-targets' (Anderson 2014, p.105)

Affects relate to feelings; it is that which emerges outside of the realms of words that can be pinned down. Yet, affects cannot be conflated with emotions. Nor are they simply intangible, ineffable forms that float freely. Importantly, I follow Clough (2008) in asserting that affects are material. Indeed, 'what is at issues in these philosophical-theoretical connections is not merely the affectivity of the human body but ... the affectivity of matter, matter's capacity for self-organisation' (Clough 2008, p.7).

Eating well

The act of eating is a classic example of the basis functioning of life. It is often mobilised as a means to overcome differences ('we all have to eat'); while the practices and processes through which humans and nonhumans go about this are the cause of important differences, even rifts, eating is an activity which is often cast as a coming together. Indeed, 'there exists no shared understanding of what it means to eat well ... For while there is widespread practical

⁶ The difference of bodies is important here; for example, changes in bodies over time are often glossed over. Consequently it is important to be mindful of the 'hidden geographies of ageing' (Skinner et al., 2015)

understanding of what it means to eat, there are no shared *standards* governing the activity' (Warde 2013, p.22). With the turn towards animal studies and posthumanism, as well as the materialist turn, this coming together has been radically recast to include materials and nonhuman animals, decentring human actors in important political ways. For the purposes of this study, I develop an idea of 'eating well' in the footsteps of Derrida and these latter others in order to mobilise the reflexivity of Hennion's ideas of taste in a context of insecurity. By emphasising 'eating well', I first want to place attention on the socio-materialities that are formed around eating, incorporating human and nonhuman (including) material others. Second, 'eating well' encompasses the cultivation of good taste. This places value not on particular foods or nutrients nor even on a particular set of practices and relations, such as commensality or quality, but rather on the cultivation of socio-materiality. Third, and as a result, 'eating well' is a political call to be open to food practices that would otherwise be cast as junk or ignored and to show them in light of the careful and tasteful practices that they are, within the contours of a given context.

Eating well is a means to escape the (unintentional) normative fixation on certain types of foods and nutrients often perpetuated in the nutrition paradigm, where 'culture' becomes a layer on top of these foundational elements – the recipe rather than the ingredients. Moreover, it overcomes the overemphasis of those interested in alternative ways of knowing and doing food on valuing 'traditional', 'natural' and 'local' elements (Biltekoff 2013; Mudry et al. 2014). Here, in valuing connections, slowness and visceral knowing, there is a tendency to overlook connections that hurt, the pressures that create a need for faster food practices and the importance of closing off to food (for instance, if food is a source of disgust, distrust or ambivalence).

Importantly, this does not mean losing sight of the inequalities or asymmetries of these collectives. Indeed, ‘Opening the boundaries previously used to delimit the social and the natural, the human and the non-human, does not dissolve social agendas’ (Panelli 2010, p.83). But my aim here is to move away from functional understandings of eating as a practice and food as a material – where a good diet is important in terms of what it can deliver to humans – and instil ideas of ‘eating well’ as care-full practices in which the messy entanglements are embraced.

The term ‘eating well’ comes from Derrida’s interrogation of human exceptionalism and has been incisively employed by those concerned with more-than-human entanglements of eating and with decentring the human subject/agent. Derrida argues:

‘The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the non-living, man or animal, but since one must eat in any case and since it is and tastes food to eat, and since there’s no other definitions of the good (du bien), how for goodness sake should one eat well (bien manger?) ... One must eat well does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but, but learning and giving to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat. One never eats entirely on one’s own: this constitutes the rule underlying the statement.

“one must eat well.” It is a rule offering infinite hospitality.’

(Derrida 1991, p.115).

For Derrida, to ‘eat well’ is ‘to engage in an ethics in which the relation between self and other is not prefigured by a species-specific assessment of which lives matter and which bodies do not’ (Lipschitz 2012, p.549). Eating well, then, is an

ethical relation that prefigures neither who is at the table nor what is being eating.

Using Haraway and Latour, Bingham goes on to discuss *eating well* in terms of friendship, showing that friendship is a quality ‘of being open to and with others’, of ‘becoming articulate with’ human and nonhuman others (Bingham 2006, p.549). Through ‘becoming articulate with’, we can see eating well as a collective becoming; yet, there is a need to make room for ambivalence, dissonance and fragility within these articulations of good taste. As with Hennion, for Derrida and those after him, ‘eating well’ is a relation that involves collaboration between humans and nonhumans through this sociability of self and other through food. Eating well therefore entails an openness to attachments, interdependencies, socio-materialities and subjectivities.

However, in a context of inequalities – and bearing in mind debates around connections, proximities and places that ‘wound’ (Philo 2005) – such an openness must be read within an analysis of vulnerability and precarious life.

Indeed, within studies of food culture there is a tendency to emphasise the importance of connection: with the local, with the land, with (certain) others involved in producing food (e.g. Lyson 2004; Petrini 2003). This reaction to the globalising forces that have radically altered the food system of many of us in the West is perhaps understandable, but also defends a way of life and eating that is based on exclusionary, conservative ideas (Guthman 2004 2003; Slocum 2008; Winter 2003), which focus on (certain kinds of) connection, commensality and value traditions that involve intensive labour processes and quality over affordability. The emphasis on connection through food is an important critique; yet, in opening our eyes to these connections, such narratives have often failed to grasp their own positionality (i.e. white, middle-

and upper-class interests, preferences and resources) as well as the standpoints of others.

For those who do not know where their next meal will be coming from and those who experience anxieties around food, caring about food takes on a very different shape, which may be exhausting, terrifying or frustrating.

Importantly, then, I mobilise the ideas of ‘eating well’ not simply in terms of commensality, ‘proper’ meals and reconnection with and through food, in which ‘eating well’ is a relation that is enacted through certain, correct forms. Instead I invoke ‘eating well’ in terms of an ‘alongsidedness’. Joanna Latimer draws on Marilyn Strathern to develop ‘alongsidedness’ as a ‘relational extension that captures the importance of the “tension between” and the “irreducibility” of parts that can never merely settle into a whole ... [this helps to] rescue regard for division (and difference) as well as connection, including helping us to get away from an idea of mutuality that requires that humans and non-humans have to completely attend one to the other or share the same purpose’ (Latimer 2013, p.93). Here then, eating well does produce a cohesive commensality, in which what is ‘good’ is shared by all, but, rather a mutual relation in which complexity and tension remains at the heart of such practices.

Conclusion: opening up the politics of food through taste

In this chapter, I have looked at the ways in which food insecurity has been made to matter in the UK. Commonly framed in terms of *access to a good diet*, I have shown that this framing has meant that food insecurity has often been addressed in ways that have post-political consequences. Through three different framings of food insecurity – as food poverty, spatial approaches and

nutritional approaches – I show that these framings have closed down the possibility of truly transformative interventions, instead working in ways that generate consent for the status quo of the food system through an emphasis on choice and independence.

First, foodbanks and the discourse of crisis and the ‘meantimes’ (Cloke et al. 2016) risk becoming preoccupied with the spaces within foodbanks. Taking on board ideas of precarity and the ways in which insecurity infiltrates everyday life, I argue that foodbanks are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to food insecurity and that, while they do tell us a great deal about the changing face of inequality in the UK, we should couch studies of them within the wider pressures of everyday life. This entails not only looking beyond foodbanks as physical sites but also considering the intangible elements of receiving food aid, such as emotional experiences.

Second, spatial analyses offer a weak understanding of emplaced food practices, framing space as a container (Colls and Evans 2013) and humans as rational agents who only use their nearest food stores. Following from those who have offered *foodscapes* – a relational conceptualisation of how food practices are emplaced – I instead argue that we might better consider the dynamic practices of *getting food*: how these practices are enabled or restricted, and how we might better support those who struggle to get food. Shifting away from a static conceptualisation of food outlets also enables us to see how infrastructures of the contemporary food system are not fixed or inevitable, but are brought about and maintained through practices and competencies associated with consumerism. Consequently, by looking at the *material* practices of getting food, we can also consider how these infrastructures might otherwise be.

Third, I show that nutritional approaches have taken an overly deterministic position on what food *does* to bring about wellbeing. While nutritional responses to food inequalities have engaged with the materiality of food as well as embodiment – for example, by relating food and mood – the primacy of nutrients has meant that food culture has moved into the background, imagined as a set of choices around which foods to eat. Conversely, the material turn has shown that food has agency that is not reducible to the function of nutrients (Abrahamsson et al. 2015); nor do bodies digest in universal and predictable ways (Caldwell 2014), but rather material practices of taste and edibility are central to how materials become food (Roe 2006). As such, greater interest should be paid to the indeterminate potentiality of the relationship between food and wellbeing.

Taking these criticisms seriously, I have shown that the study of food insecurity has become post-political in that the scope for engaging with the issue and intervening has been reduced; caught in a Cartesian duality that presumes food to be like any other resource (Kato 2013), in which individuals are victims of their situation (Guthman 2011) and must be empowered to overcome inequalities by making healthy and thrifty choices (Mol 2013).

To reopen this arena in the hope of offering a chance to intervene and disrupt this unspoken consensus and offer a *productive* critique (Latour 2004b) of food inequalities, I have developed an idea of taste: a *capacity for eating well*.

Drawing on material-semiotics and affect enables an approach that accounts for the intangible, invisible and otherwise unknowable elements, which both shape how we relate to food in general and shape food inequalities within the fleshy entanglements of daily life more specifically. Bringing together work on affect and material-semiotics allows for an analysis that brings the material-affective

conditions of encounters to the fore, allowing for a proliferation of sensuous, affective bodies and their related capacities to be taken into consideration. Consequently, we can move away from fixed ideas of *access* and towards the topological intensities of *capacity*. Moreover, moving away from prescriptive accounts of *good diet*, I have proposed a relational concept of *eating well* to understand the ways in which food practices can be nourishing beyond their nutritional content. To do so I draw on Derrida's insistence on the inclusion of nonhumans in philosophy, and inspired by cosmopolitical experiments (Stengers 2005; see also Abrahamsson and Bertoni 2014; Whatmore and Landström 2011), and being alongside (Latimer 2013) to focus attention not on practices themselves but on the relations which they enact.

Finally, then, this chapter has been less a review of the wide-ranging literatures on these topics in the hope of finding a gap, and more the result of investigative curiosity into the ways in which food inequalities have been made to matter – and, consequently, a speculative experiment into how else we might construct these issues. Indeed, an ontological politics of food insecurity can reveal that there has been a crippling lack of inquisitiveness into food inequalities, as represented by framings of food insecurity. Taking an approach that brings the material-affective practices of tasting to the fore shows just how much of embodied life has been cut out from the idea of *access to a good diet*. Using some of these elements that have been cut out of food insecurity – spaces, relations and materialities that would otherwise be invisible and nonsensical – is perhaps an idiotic methodology (Callon and Rabearisoa 2004; Michael 2012) or complete nonsense (Ranciere 2010); but it is nonetheless one that enables us to speculate with new questions. Somewhat unconventionally, then, I have therefore addressed the first research question – *What's the matter with*

food insecurity? – within this examination of the literature. As Stengers argues, ‘we never get a relevant answer if our practices have not enabled us to produce a relevant question’ (Stengers 2007, n.p.).

Three. Accounting for taste: a methodology

'This is not a methods section meant to reassure you'

(Mann et al. 2011, p.226)

Introduction

The aim of this study is to research food inequalities using a sensory approach in order to consider the lived experiences of its different challenges. Comprising a bricolage of complementary more-than-verbal methods, the study was carried out with three interventions that aim to improve access to food. I chose bricolage as a means of bringing together a range of practices that relate to the sensory experience of food. The methods were designed to focus on the contingent and situated ways in which we sense and make sense of food, thus bringing the complexity of lived experiences to the fore (Evans and Miele 2012; Hennion 2007; Mol 2008). Through these methods, I therefore couch the theoretical interest in taste-making (Teil and Hennion 2004) through examination of three different situations in which food insecurity is addressed.

Having considered the ways in which inequalities in food access have been made to matter in a range of contexts, the review helped draw out a particular point of intersection from diverse but complementary literatures. As such, I focused on settings or situations: ‘constellations of settings and devices’ (Marres and Lezaun 2011) of food inequalities. In order to understand the complexity of these settings, we need to appreciate how people experience and make sense of them (Evans and Miele 2012). In order to develop a reflexive approach, a methodology is required that addresses the challenge of understanding and representing sense-making beyond the verbal. As such, I refer to the idea of taste-making as a relational and situated activity in which the world is constantly interpreted and remade by ‘amateurs’ (Hennion 2007; Teil and Hennion 2004). Such a taste of food insecurity places inquiry in the uncertain, performative space of the relationship between humans and nonhumans in the context of the world around them, as well as making spaces for our sensory

experiences to be taken into account. Holding that enactments of good taste are not simply 'out there' to be discovered but that research plays a role in producing them (Law 2004), I proceed from the central concern of this thesis around the ontological politics of these issues. Consequently, I embarked on designing a methodology that took seriously the contention that:

[M]ethods are not innocent then they are also political. They help to make realities. But the question is: which realities? Which do we want to help make more real, and which less real?

(Law and Urry 2004, p.404).

The research questions were grounded in three situations in which food inequalities were addressed. These settings or situations are not designed to be representative of all challenges in accessing a good diet, but they were chosen with two criteria in mind. First, to broaden the scope of inequalities in food access beyond that of foodbanks and second, to allow for engagement with a range of food practices including getting food, cooking and eating. Initially, I chose the lunch group and the EFA centre as key groups to work with; however, after several weeks with each, I began to develop links with the community transport scheme. This offered opportunity to extend the scope of the study by engaging with residents who are less visible in the community; in particular, residents of sheltered accommodation. These groups have rarely been considered in relation to food inequalities, yet offer an important take on ideas of accessibility, as well as enriching understandings of the domestic context.

The research questions were corresponded to the methods in the following ways

Table of research questions and how they were investigated

Research Question	What's the matter with food insecurity?	How does food insecurity taste?	How do people get food in a context of insecurity?	How does food insecurity feel?
Method		Multisensory participation – cooking and eating together; photo food ⁷ diaries; home/lunch interviews ⁸	Foodmaps; go-alongs	Photo food diaries; home/lunch interviews
With whom?	Academic and 'grey' literature	Participants from EFA centre cookery course and Dinner Plus cookery course	Food aid clients; community transport passengers	Participants from all case studies
Aims	To analyse how food insecurity has been 'made to matter' in public and academic discourses. To reconfigure the concept of Food Insecurity to account for capacity	To analyse practices of establishing and knowing a good diet in a context of food insecurity	To analyse the ways in which people get food and what shapes this beyond distance and price	To analyse the invisible ways in which eating well is restricted in domestic spaces
Materials produced	Literature review chapter	Fieldnotes, photos	Go-alongs and video go-alongs (community bus); go-alongs and foodmaps (EFA centre); fieldnotes	Recordings, fieldnotes, photos, documents
Thesis chapter	Two	Five	Six	Seven

⁷ In Chapter Five, I use only the section of these interviews in which participants reflected on their participation in the courses. The photos and discussions of practices in the home are used in Chapter Seven.

⁸ Home/lunch interviews with EFA centre clients were conducted with Emma Roe (n. 6) See 'home and lunch interviews' section below.

Table of case studies and interviews

Dinner Plus Lunch Group	Community Transport	Food Aid Charity
Cooking and eating together (weekly for 6 months)	Go-alongs on bus (12)	Volunteering at the food aid centre (weekly for 7 months)
Stakeholder interviews (2)	Supermarket go-alongs (5)	Foodmap interviews
Photographic food diaries (4)	Stakeholder interview (1)	Stakeholder interviews (2)
Promotional cookery demos (4)		Food collections at supermarkets (3)
		Participation at cookery course (2 days)
		Home/lunch interviews (67) with Emma Roe

While Dinner Plus was framed in terms of isolation, the EFA centre was concerned with food insecurity and the community bus with transport, the participants in each of the three organisations were often living with a range of issues. Vicky, for example was an attendee at Dinner Plus but was also experiencing difficulties with her health, with isolation and with changes to her benefits. Therefore in order to give background detail to the participants, I chose to use their own words to describe how they became involved in the particular organisation they were working with rather than selecting one issue as more important than the others. This was also important as I wanted to present participants in their own words as much as possible rather than assign them with categories of my own choosing (Ruppert 2012).

Table of research participants

Research participants				
Pseudo nym	Project	Role	Method of participation	How did they get involved in the organisation?
Don	EFA charity	Client	Foodmap	“Three months [ago] I was referred by the CAB ...because I was struggling [to get enough food to eat] ...[I’m on ESA] but it’s not much at all ... Probably half [my money goes on food] you gotta do the best you can”
Ali	EFA charity	Client	Foodmap	“I’ve been coming to the EFA store] almost around 2 months now...before [I was living] in Sweden, I lived with my wife and my two children ... [but] it’s very different now I am alone in the UK...it’s really hard [to get enough to eat]”
Tina	EFA charity	Client	Foodmap	“[I’ve been coming to the EFA centre] ...It was someone ...I think some charity ...somebody in the Church, he’s got his office in the Church and Father [Name] asked me to have a chat to him and then he referred me [to the EFA centre]”
Ron	EFA charity	Client	Foodmap	“I’m living in a hostel. They noticed that I wasn’t eating properly so they sent me here [to the EFA centre] to get some proper food for a change”
Olivia	EFA charity	Client	Foodmap	“I cannot have a job and I have not [got] any money, any support, and I get £10 a week...I came to the Red Cross and the Red Cross told me to come here for

				food”
Danielle	EFA charity	Client	Foodmap	“I heard about it from a friend, they used to come here but they don't come here anymore... It's quite helpful, I can't complain, it's better than nothing”
Gary	EFA charity	Client, Clever Cooking attendee	Foodmap, Home/lunch interview	“Since May [6 months]...my support worker [referred me] because my money stopped... I'd got nothing, I don't know what I would've done [without help]”
Les	EFA charity	Clever Cooking attendee and Client	Home/lunch interview	“I'm going through treatment, I have a massive problem [with my health] ... the benefits have been stopped for a month ... and that's when I've had to go to the Job Centre or council [to try to get food]”
Joy	EFA charity	Clever Cooking attendee and Client	Home/lunch interview	“I take sick ... last year [with cancer] ... I can't pay rent, I'm not working to pay the rent ... until I hear from the Home Office. [I wasn't] working and that's why I need some help now.”
Jackie	EFA charity	Clever Cooking attendee and client	Home/lunch interview	“I didn't ever have to worry about money ... then my ex-husband ... started drinking and it progressed and abuse started ... I'm in a safe house now ... I was referred to a foodbank [elsewhere] by my social worker but they would only help me for so long and that was cut off ...[that's when I came here]
Cathy	EFA charity	Clever Cooking attendee and	Home/lunch interview	“[the challenges started] as soon as I got in debt with my rent, before we moved

		client		into this place, we used to live in a private [rental] and it was cheaper. Like a small one bedroom basement flat ... and now because I'm in a two bedroom place now [I have to pay bedroom tax]"
Elaine	EFA charity	Clever Cooking attendee and client	Home/lunch interview	"I hope I won't be going to the [EFA charity] forever but it's good to have a bit of help ... life's going in a fairly good direction now ...[the children's] dad ended up going to prison so it's been quite a difficult five months"
Pat	Dinner plus	Attendee and volunteer	Food diary interview	"Coming in [to the community centre] for my other courses ...I saw the little poster that [Katie] had put up and I thought 'ooh, I fancy that'. That was a ten week [course]... on healthy eating ...[and] I did the other [cookery courses]and I said [to Katie] well if there's anything else that crops up ...I'd like to do it"
Danni	Dinner plus	Attendee	Food diary interview	"I get like that ...I can't be bothered to [go out of the house] ... that's everything with me, I just can't be bothered ... [Dinner Plus] just gets me out ... [my mental health support worker] has got me doing all sorts of things like [Dinner Plus]"

Gus	Dinner plus	Attendee	Food diary interview	“I don’t especially like cooking and because I think I’m a bit hyperactive, I get involved in things and forget ... to eat! ...Well that reached an all-time low early this year and that’s why I go to this cookery [course], to try to get a regime going again. In the mean time I’ve lost my mobility, I can’t walk, I have to push this thing [a walker] for two minutes and then sit on it for three to rest ...I get breathless you see so I can’t go to the shops now at all ... Fortunately my friends ...help me [with the shopping]”
Vicky	Dinner plus	Attendee	Food diary interview	“I’ve been coming down here [to the community centre] for about two years ... I was seeing [the mental health support worker] ... I ain’t too bad [now]...I was talking to a woman [at the community centre]... about volunteering ...I said “if it’s just going in at making coffees ...or having a chat ... or something” [I’d do it].
Freda	Community Bus	Passenger	Supermarket go-along	“It’s nice here isn’t it ... everyone’s very kind to me ... I can’t get about a lot...[because] I’ve been ill”
Reg and Lyn	Community Bus	Passenger	Supermarket go-along	Reg: “it is [a really good service] isn’t it? I’ve got no complaints, they’re very good drivers!” Lyn: “they come to your door, they drop you off at your door ... [we use it] everyday!”
Jenny	Community Bus	Passenger	Supermarket go-along	“My nephew, he’ll pick me up and take me shopping,

				and I got a young lady downstairs, she is so good. She'll [bring] me any clothes I need [but] it is far [to town from where I live] so I get the bus [when they aren't available]"
Mary	Community Bus	Passenger	Supermarket go-along	"[I often use the community bus], I'm going down ASDA tomorrow on the community bus, and I'm going down Friday as well... to Broadmead ...it's a lot easier [than other bus services]"
Gladys	Community Bus	Passenger	Supermarket go-along	"Well no [I've not been using the bus long] the point was, I started in January, but I lost my husband so I could go in between time because I had to nurse him so [then] other people got my shopping but now [I shop on the community bus] ... I use it to do all my heavy stuff [shopping]"

Taste

The methodology of this study is based around the idea of offering a taste of food insecurity. In doing so, I aim to engage with a particular performative and situated idea of taste which centres the activities of *taste-making* (Hennion 2007; Teil and Hennion 2004).

Yet, to study taste is complicated. The concept has important history in social science, linking wider social forces to our everyday embodied food practices (Bourdieu 1986) and preferences (Douglas 1996), showing how social difference

is reproduced as well as helping to understand how quotidian tactics can be used to resist wider structures of domination (Certeau 1984). In these well-known approaches to taste, the epistemological concern was one of classification. Using survey data, for example, to link the ways in which we distinguish ourselves, our practices, objects and sensations helps to stratify lived experiences (Bourdieu 1986). This makes the messy world more readily digestible for social science, but offers a bleak account of our capacity for agency and leaves little space for human or nonhuman potential outside of these categories. In his own inimitable words, Bourdieu offers an account in which:

'Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.' (1986, p.488)

But more often, preferences and experiences exceed and confound categories such as class, and seeing taste as an unconscious mechanism of social stratification results in passive determinism. Using given categories as the basis of social enquiry has the effect of re-inscribing difference and inequality, rather than offering scope to overcome it (Ruppert 2012).

In order to account for a more horizontal agency that transcends bodily boundaries and defies such 'objective' classifications, I understand tasting as a collective activity through which understanding emerges. Taste-making is a relation that is never given. It is 'an action, not a fact, an experience not an object' (Teil and Hennion 2004, p.34). As a relation – a folding of ourselves with the world (Mol 2008) – tasting does not just take place at the point of

ingestion; it is part of a wider activity of sense-making around food. It is an ordering and a sensing that goes 'beyond the palate' (Caldwell 2014) and beyond the human (Miele and Truringer, forthcoming). Tasting, seen as a more-than-human collective activity, involves situated relationships between materials and bodies in a variety of ways and places, not just in the mouth. This broadening of the field 'changes how notions of choice, agency and even pleasure are configured and where they are located' (Caldwell 2014 p.130; see also Roe 2006). Contrary to Bourdieu, this places a contingent, reflexive agency at the heart of the study of taste. Taste-making is a collective amateur activity in which 'amateurs do not struggle against determinisms that the sociologist unveils despite their resistance' (Hennion 2007 p.102) because 'taste, lived by each but fashioned by all, is a history of oneself permanently remade together with others' (2007 p.109). In this way, we can understand the global through the intimate (Probyn 2012) but still allow for a reflexive agency of those involved.

This understanding does not preclude ordering and classification. Foodstuffs and practices may still be dissected and assigned meaning (Evans and Miele 2012; Yates-Doerr and Mol 2012). But the objects and the meanings are not given. They are only present if made present and this process is always ongoing, situated and performative. This engenders an epistemology of everyday lives that is not only concerned with routines or even tactics but also with the possibility for 'improvisation, play and, inevitably, change' (Cadman 2009 p.459). It is experimental (Stengers 2005; 2010) and the aim is not to 'extract from interviews and observations with amateurs the objective grounds of pleasure, a feeling or a taste that they would ordinarily experience only as subjective, implicit representations blind to their own determinisms' (Teil and

Hennion 2004 pp.26–7). Instead, I follow Hennion in an approach that sees amateurs – those complicit in the taste-making process – as our guides. As our experts (rather than the other way around), they offer a reflexive agency in which differences come about from learned sensitivities.

Important here are the objects, collectives, devices and bodily attributes: ‘the co-producing of a loving body and a loved object through a collective and equipped activity’ (Teil and Hennion 2004 pp.31–2). It is through reflexive interactions and attachments between these elements that tastes are made. As such, these four elements have been important in developing the research questions.

Tasting is a method in itself. It is a way in which we know the world around us (Mol 2013b; Mann et al. 2011). As such, this study does not approach food insecurity as a set of lived experiences that is ‘out there’ for us to uncover with the correct scientific method; nor did I go into the field to uncover these experiences and expose them to the world to develop a political point. This collective and situated epistemology collaborates in experiences, and the politics of this are entwined within the ongoing project of taste-making. It became clear throughout the study that ‘taste is a way of building relationship, with things and with people; it is not simply a property of goods, nor is it a competency of people’ (Teil and Hennion 2004 p.25).

Consequently, the practices of *tasting* hold us together (Hennion 2007) with a range of human and nonhuman others, producing proximities that exceed those that can be mapped topographically (Probyn 2012). The methods of this study were a means by which I could participate in this ongoing activity of taste-making in strategically chosen situations in which challenges around food insecurity might be made to matter. Using a variety of methods, which make

space for the verbal and more-than-verbal to be taken in to account – what might be termed sensory ethnography – I took part in these processes and collaborated in various activities of taste-making. The resulting thesis is a representation of my interpretation of these activities, designed to bring these different situations of taste-making into touch with academic conventions and debates around these issues.

Tasteful research design: bricolage and the research spiral

This research project is situated in the city of Bristol in the South West of the UK. I give further detail about the city and the issues that it faces in Chapter Four. In terms of the methods, however, it is relevant to outline the reasons for choosing Bristol. There are two primary reasons for this choice: the first relates to case that the city offers and the second relates to my position as a researcher.

Bristol is an intriguing city in which to study food because of its well-known food culture and the success that activists have had at promoting food practices as a means of addressing wider health and environmental challenges at a policy level. Through adopting the recent policy innovation of the creation of a Food Policy Council, the local authority have shown a commitment, after the hard work of committed campaigners building on earlier work by local movements such as Transition Towns, to use food as a means of addressing the resilience of the food supply networks in Bristol (Carey 2013). This means that food has been a prominent issue in Bristol, culturally and politically, with an enshrined policy commitment to become ‘a city where good food is visible and celebrated in every corner and where everyone has access to fresh, seasonal, local, organic

and fairly traded food that is tasty, healthy and affordable, no matter where they live' (Bristol Food Policy Council 2013, p. 3).

However, alongside Bristol's policy commitment to improving the city and the wellbeing of its residents through food, the increased salience of food insecurity that was experienced across the UK in recent years (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014) was not avoided in Bristol and, while access to good food is at the heart of the Food Policy Councils' vision, the vanguard of action to offer emergency food aid came not from existing food activists or the local authority but from Church organisers. Despite having a policy framework that set Bristol apart from the majority of other UK cities in terms of food therefore, that the city did not escape the national trend points towards a possible disconnect between this approach and experiences of residents across the city. Indeed, there are marked differences in the health and wellbeing indicators across the city as shown in Chapter Four. With these tensions in mind then, Bristol offered an important context in which to study food insecurity, not through policy instruments of 'the new food equation' (Morgan and Sonnino 2010) in which 'the city' may be taken as a single, albeit complex, unit, and which policies and procurement strategies are studied. Rather, taking this tension between food-centred policy and rising food inequality seriously, I approached food insecurity through the everyday complexities of living and eating. This enabled a more nuanced appreciation of the ways in which food insecurity overflows and exceeds political and economic understandings, meeting calls for research and debate which includes the voices of those affected (Callon et al. 2001; Wells and Caraher 2014) and taking place within the otherwise hidden spaces in which the limits of these political instruments are found and tested.

The second reason for studying Bristol related to my personal experience and interest as a resident of the city. Prior to starting this project, I worked for an organic vegetable producer in the area. Part of my role involved arranging and managing delivery schedules of local and organic produce to customers across the city. During this work, I was struck by the concentration of delivery schedules within certain postcodes of the city, and perhaps more saliently, an almost complete lack of deliveries in the areas of the city that were closest to the farm itself: including the south of the city in wards such as Hartcliffe and Withywood. While this anecdotal evidence does not form part of the substance of this study, I offer it here in order to help establish the motivating factors to approach the study of food critically and for informing my research questions. While sympathetic to the literature and concerns around organic and alternative food production, by engaging with this tension every day in my previous role I became increasingly aware of the limits of this movement in a starkly geographical way.

Living and working in Bristol, this unevenness therefore had particular resonance on a personal level. It is well established in feminist literature that research cannot and should not produce accounts in which the researchers' own positionality is completely absent, and I was motivated to embrace the challenge of avoiding an attempt at 'the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity' (Haraway 1988, p.589). Consequently the choice of my home city, not only guided my interest in shaping the study, but also offered an ethical imperative for the epistemological choices I made. While this was not an action research project in a true sense therefore, having lived and worked in Bristol for several years before the start of this project, I was motivated to ensure that my

knowledge and relationships with many of the local food projects could be put back into the community.

Situating taste

The cultural turn in Human Geography that began the 1980's has brought together the social, spatial and cultural and enabled the study wider issues of meaning and identity through ethnography of daily practices in (often urban) places (Jackson 1989). The cultural turn also saw an invigoration of interest in materiality and material culture has been used here as a lens 'through which to appreciate complex relationship between wider, deeper and more abstract processes' (Cook and Tolia-Kelly 2010, p.7). Following in this vein, I chose to study food insecurity as it was 'sensed and made sense of' (Evans and Miele 2012) within settings. This allowed the material to come to the fore through the more-than-human collectivities present in a setting, but also to enable the contingent and emergent forms of food insecurity to be considered. By studying settings in this way, the aim was not to offer a window onto a wider phenomenon as a whole, but rather through the contingency of situated practices.

Yates-Doerr and Carney (2015) have shown the importance of studying food practices as they relate to health within the site of kitchens because it shows the limitations of the medical individual human model of dietary practices by showing the complexity of care at home and the ways in which this goes beyond individuals to involve collectives. Studying food insecurity through settings is similarly important not only because it enables materiality to be taken into account but also the nuance of food practices as the feature within everyday life and the relations that shape it. As shown in the literature review, the tasteful

approach of this study is based on an impetus to move away from models of individual behaviour and choice but rather to the ways in which people sense and make sense of food within their lives, and consequently, how food insecurities emerge within these processes. In keeping with Hennions' (2007) approach to taste, a setting was also important because here the issues are not defined in advance but, through paying attention to the co-production 'of a loving body and a loved object through a collective and equipped activity' (Teil and Hennion 2004, pp.31-32), articulations of good taste can be considered in situ. Importantly this meant that the research design was not about offering an accurate representation of individuals' perspective or subjective experience but rather to offer a *taste* of a situation.

The EFA centre, the community bus, the cookery course are the settings I chose not because they offered a microcosm of a group of people but, rather, because they were places in which food insecurity might be relevant for those involved. Using the setting to bring the more-than-human collectivities at play that are enrolled in practices of taste making, I aimed not to extrapolate these findings towards, for example, the national or Western experience of food insecurity, but, rather to bring micro geographies into our framings of food insecurity and also to understand how food insecurity emerged within settings. Indeed, in keeping with the argument that a capacity for eating well is performed within a setting (Hennion 2004), it was necessary to examine some of the settings in which this may occur. I therefore chose settings in which a capacity to eat well might be enabled or restricted in different ways including through cooking, getting and eating food.

As a consequence, this study does not offer generalisations or rules with regards to food insecurity. Instead, through an investigation of settings of getting,

eating and cooking food, and together with a tasteful approach which brings material and affective conditions of everyday food practices to the fore, the outcome was to offer findings from specific settings which are offered as a provocation to reconceptualise how food insecurity has been made to matter. In his case for a move away from multi-sited ethnographies towards *unsited* ones, Candea argues that researchers “need to choose the boundaries of the field sites to take responsibility for analytical (and political/ethical) decisions that this involves (2007, p. 172, see also Cook et al. 2009; Strathern 1996). Mindful of the need to choose an approach and field sites that escape assumptions around food insecurity, I chose these settings as part of a theoretical, political and ethical impetus to blow open the post-politics of food insecurity. By approaching through settings in this way, I offered a fresh mode of inquiry into the topic that does not aim to be whole, but partial, using the settings that have been excluded from most studies of food insecurity to cut open the framings that are otherwise taken for granted (Michael 2012).

With this in mind, the sites I have chosen are not offered as representative of the experiences within the city. I have discussed the context of the city above and in Chapter Four to emphasise the relevance of studying food insecurity here and to give context to the policy level in which these sites operated. By studying particular settings and using these as sites from which to challenge wider assumptions about food insecurity, I have not looked to offer generalisations about food insecurity, nor to offer a comparison. The context of Bristol as a city is important, but the experiences of those in this study show that those within a city can have very different experiences of the same place. The outcome of this use of settings then is that the findings presented here are not pieces of a puzzle

that, put together, produce 'food insecurity' as a single image, but rather are here to offer a challenge to the assumptions within existing work on the topic.

The approach to tasting outlined above— as an activity through which we know — engendered a particular epistemological imperative. As a process that is never given but always contingent, we can only ever learn about tasting in situ. My study was therefore grounded in situations in which food insecurity was addressed. In a food aid charity, in a lunch group for isolated people and in a community transport scheme, these situations differently constellate settings, devices, things and selves (Marres 2012; Teil and Hennion 2004) in which the access to food is a relevant issue. Recalling that 'method is a practice and practices are always somewhere' (Mol 2013a), this understanding of taste-making relies on a 'somewhere' that is not simple and regional (demarcated topographically) but complex, messy and topological. As such, these situations are not designed to be representative but were selected through an iterative process, partly influenced by the abductive reasoning of interpretive approaches. I began the empirical research by finding appropriate places to look in order to find answers to my research questions (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012 p.29). I made contact with my first case study (the lunch group) and became a volunteer participant/observer. This enabled me to develop my methods, sampling and research questions while in the field and, as these evolved, the scope of inquiry spiralled outwards to include more participants and methods. As a volunteer at the group, I accompanied the leader on promotional trips to local sheltered accommodation, where I learned about the local community transport scheme, which then became another case study with its own method: the go-along.

The interaction with the second case study was similar: I began as a volunteer participating in the weekly session and branched out into my own methods (the foodmaps), but also collaborated with a fellow researcher, Emma Roe, to carry out home interviews where our research interests overlapped. This spiral design, inspired by the hermeneutic spiral of Dilthey and Gadamer, distances my practices from the fiction of the linear model towards one in which ‘the process of sense-making begins where an individual “is” in her understanding at that moment’ and reminds us that, when dealing with lived experiences, there are never fixed conclusions in sense-making but only ‘momentary stopping points to collect one’s thoughts’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012 p.30). It also means that, as with Teil and Hennion’s amateurs, differences only become present when made present through activity (Teil and Hennion 2004; Hennion 2007), and allows for the themes to emerge throughout the research process rather than banishing them to distinct times and places (Crang and Cook 2007).

Studying situations is similar to a place-making approach (e.g. Ingold 2000) as it moves away from a narrow phenomenological focus on the individual body, allowing for critical approaches to these issues, which complicate discrete boundaries between bodies and settings (Mol 2013d; Pink 2011). Through complex entanglements with collective sensory elements, the livingness of material elements of food can also become apparent in embodied and emplaced ways (Sutton 2009); but moving beyond phenomenological approaches, the premise here is that bodies are not fixed starting points but part of a contingent situation in which ‘a specific configuration of bodies arose from the occasion. The experiment staged reality. It staged a strange bodily practice (for the

novices), or staged a familiar practice in a strange way (for the experts)' (Mann et al. 2011, p.227).

In sympathy with Stengers, a situated sense of taste allows for 'minority' or 'empowerment' techniques, which engender a situation not 'defined in terms of the stable, vested interests of stakeholders' but rather one that 'gains the power to cause thinking [which] induces a becoming that we may associate with the production of a minority – as none of the relations, knowledge or agreements can hold "in general" without this power' (Stengers 2010 pp.21–22). A situated approach allows for the 'creative process through which novel "realities" emerge as different food attributes (or better still "virtualities") are attuned to and "made to matter"' (Evans and Miele 2012, p.4), and therefore emphasises the contingency of food insecurity, as well as how different challenges appear or are rendered insensible in the process. To return again to Teil and Hennion, taste always 'depends' (2004, 110). The image of a spiral is therefore particularly helpful because it does not imagine a straight line from start to finish but evokes a journey in which we consistently come back to the questions and ideas that motivated the study (inequality, embodiment, sensory experiences, critical engagement with politics) – but each time we approach these from a different place, having learned and unlearned perspectives from time engaging with others.

While the research design developed as a spiral, the methodological tools employed and the materials produced can be understood as a bricolage – a collection that is pragmatic, ad hoc and 'DIY' (Crang and Cook 2007). It soon became clear that the strength of a method of tasting comes not from choosing a single correct method, but from the bricolage of different methods that suited different scenarios and different participants and appealed to different ways of

sense-making. This helped to engage with the varied ways in which people make sense of food, rather than ascribing one particular method, because that 'lived experience cannot be reduced to only one aspect' (Dennis Jr. et al. 2009 p.467). As such, this bricolage struck me as one way in which to become 'concerned with how people interpret, understand, and navigate their environments' (ibid). Using multiple methods 'helps us develop a more nuanced understanding of the way the same people incorporate a variety of perspectives and attitudes which are brought out by different contexts', and that the place or context itself also plays a role in this elicitation (Miller 1998 pp.190–1). The resulting collection offers 'parallel narratives [that] present the researcher with an interrelated mosaic of interpretive snapshots and vignettes of a particular social space and a set of social practices' (Latham 2003 p.2005). The methods that made up this bricolage approach included photo food diaries, foodmaps, home or 'lunch' interviews and sensory ethnography.

Photo food diaries: understanding food insecurity at home

As part of the bricolage method, and to offer an understanding of lived experiences around food insecurity, I used photo diaries with the lunch group. Food diaries offer a means to understand how participants relate to food and the way that food fits into their wider experience of the world, not just through verbal explanation but also by incorporating embodied practices and experiences, as well as considering the productive relationship between material and social elements of food (Roe 2006; Miele 2011). Such photo diaries

have been particularly helpful in addressing the problem of how to study the ‘routine, non-cognitive, embodied aspects and the socialities that they form’ (Latham 2003 2001). They also follow the spirit of participatory research, such as photovoice methodologies, in which participants are equipped with the tools to make their own representations (Castleden et al. 2008; Thomas and Irwin 2013; Wang et al. 2004) and then interviewed about the diaries to give voice to their thoughts and feelings around the photos (Gubrium and Harper 2013).



Figure 1: A photo food diary with Penny from Dinner Plus.

Participants were given disposable cameras along with information packs with prompts to help them and space for reflections or issues, and were briefed to give an idea of the interests of the study and answer any questions. In similar studies, participants have been given digital cameras and were allowed to keep the cameras after the study, offering an incentive (Thompson et al. 2013) as well as enabling a feeling of ownership over the camera and the pictures that were taken on it. I chose to use disposable cameras as, after discussion with the

group leader, Katie, we felt that these would offer the most accessible option for the participants in the lunch group. I asked the participants to complete the diaries for four days; this would mean that the results would cover both weekdays and weekends but would not be too taxing to complete (Thompson 2012). After they had completed the diaries and the photos had been developed, I interviewed participants about the diaries to discuss the pictures taken, reflecting in particular on the context in which different foods were eaten, the reason for the choice and the feelings that the participants had towards the meals.

However, in practice, the disposable cameras did not function as well as planned and few of the photos were able to be developed. As a result, the photos that were produced were of limited quality and often looked very similar to one another. I also realised that participants would have been willing to complete the diaries for longer and that a week might have been a more appropriate timescale, generating more images. Although this method did not work as well as initially hoped, it still enabled me to learn a great deal with regards to the ways in which people made sense of food in their daily lives. The photos were helpful in the follow-up interviews as a form of elicitation that engendered discussions about the place that food holds in their daily lives. During the interview, participants were asked to arrange the photos in order of the meals that were eaten on each day. As they described their meals to me and the context in which they ate them, it was an opportunity for us to reflect together on any challenges they may face around food and, as with the other methods, I left the discussions open, encouraging participants to explain the photos to me. Additionally, the poor quality of some of the photos helped me to reassess my aims and methods. While I had developed the photo-diary task with questions

about what sorts of food people were eating at home, it became clear that this was less relevant and productive as an avenue of investigation than I had originally thought. The primary benefit of the task turned out to be as an elicitation tool. Asking participants to make visual food diaries does not offer a manifestation of the truth of the meals that they have eaten. Pictures are always frames. Certain things are left out and others included, and the strategic framing of meals in pictures could be seen as a limitation if the aim is to offer a window on what the experience is 'really like' (Rose 2012). Yet, these limitations are also opportunities. As participants discussed their photos, they offer a snapshot, and the strategic framing of this snapshot tells us something in itself. The materials from the food diaries and the discussions they engender are productive events in which wider discourses and lived experiences comes together to produce. Therefore, the diaries and the subsequent interviews enabled me and the participants to build 'an interrelated mosaic of interpretive snapshots and vignettes of a particular social space and set of social practices *in the making*' (Latham 2003 2005, emphasis in original).

Visual materials such as photovoice food diaries add complexity and even contradiction to participants' accounts of food practices and encourage them to elaborate more fully (O'Connell 2013). Although these photo diaries and interviews were designed to be participatory (Gubrium and Harper 2013; Muir and Mason 2011), this comes with the proviso that the agenda was still set by me. Participants were asked to take photos of the meals they ate and, if they felt comfortable doing so, the places in which they ate them, as well as any other food-related activities that they considered relevant. Although this left plenty of scope for participants to offer their own interpretation, the brief still necessarily required some limitations to ensure that the materials and interviews remained

relevant to the research (O'Connell 2013). In practice, I found that participants felt somewhat unsure about exactly what they should be photographing and so did not take photos above and beyond what was specifically asked for in the brief.

The relative weakness of the photos generated in this exercise indicates that, although designed to be participatory, the diaries may not have been something that participants saw as relevant to their lives. I gave cameras and information packs to ten respondents and was able to complete four diary interviews. The majority of participants expressed difficulty in completing the task, either because the cameras were too difficult to use or because the practice did not fit in with their normal activities. The respondent that appeared most comfortable with the task had previously been on a slimming course in which they were required to keep food diaries, which perhaps explains their ease with the process. Despite these limitations, the diaries were a good opportunity to learn, both in terms of the research questions and about the methods (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2004; Hennion 2007; Michael 2012). However, as a result of the poor response from food diaries, I chose not to use these with other groups, instead endeavouring to use a method that would suit the situation and the participant as well as the aims of my research.

As well as the more-than-verbal methods discussed here, I also carried out more regular semi-structured interviews. The first round of these took place with relevant stakeholders, such as public health officials and other key staff in the organisations. This helped to gain a better understanding of how my research fits into the wider landscape in Bristol and how best to position my research.

Foodmaps

With the limitations of the photo diaries in mind, to develop the bricolage I turned to a complementary method for participants involved with the emergency food aid organisation. Foodmaps are ‘an image based approach to research that pays attention to the way people relate to food in the interaction of senses, emotions and environments’ (Marte 2007 p.263). They therefore offer an important tool for research, which aims to understand how people operate within, and make sense of, their lived environments (Sutton 2010) as well as how they reproduce and co-create them. Marte coined the term and used foodmaps to encourage participants to offer a ‘representational trace’ of food relations; a means to map experiential and perceptual understandings through food practices and narratives (Marte 2007, 263). In her study, which looked at a migrant population in New York, participants were asked to draw ‘maps’ of their kitchens, their meals and their shopping routes, with particular emphasis on foods and practices that reminded them of home. Implicit in this approach is an affinity with cognitive mapping, which differs from the background to this research; yet, these methods also speak to the theoretical concerns of this study. They render visible what is currently unseen, and therefore can help us to consider the count of those whom currently have no account.

Consequently, although I adopt the term ‘foodmaps’ for this study, it is with the qualification that this is not to topographically map food practices but instead to offer a space for the complexity of understandings of food and food insecurity to come through and to be materialised and translated. They are ‘miniature ethnographies’ (Marte 2007, 263) and can collectively offer ‘grounded ethnographic approach to the centrality of the senses in food-based place-making’ (Sutton 2010, 217), which fits with a topological approach to the

relationship between ourselves and the world that is tied up with various food practices (Caldwell 2014; Guthman and Mansfield 2013; Mol 2013d). This allowed me to develop the final research question, 'how does food insecurity feel?', through a method that engages with the spaces of food insecurity without relying on spatial analyses but rather understanding how bodies are entangled with places.

Pragmatically, I also chose to use foodmaps with participants from the EFA centre because they offered the best and most practical means to pursue my research aims in this context. While participants visited the EFA centre and waited their turn to collect food, I asked them to take part in the exercise. I then asked them to tell me about the kinds of food that they liked to make and their shopping trips and habits. These conversations lasted between 15 and 45 minutes and were recorded and transcribed so that the conversation could be taken in conjunction with the pictures that participants drew. During the exercise, I asked them to draw two pictures: one of their 'signature dish or meal' and one of their 'main shopping trip'. I explained the term 'signature meal' as 'a meal that they like to make or make often'. It might be a favourite meal but, because most participants were reliant on tinned and packaged food aid, it enabled participants to talk about their food practices not just as they are, but as they may have been in the past or how they would like them to be in the future. The second picture I asked participants to draw was 'a map or picture of a recent food shopping trip'. Again, I left it open to participants as to whether they drew a trip to collect food aid or to other shops that they often use. Although the pictures were often quite simple, they told me a great deal about how participants make sense of the challenge of shopping for food on such a tight budget, particularly as they often referred to places that we both knew.

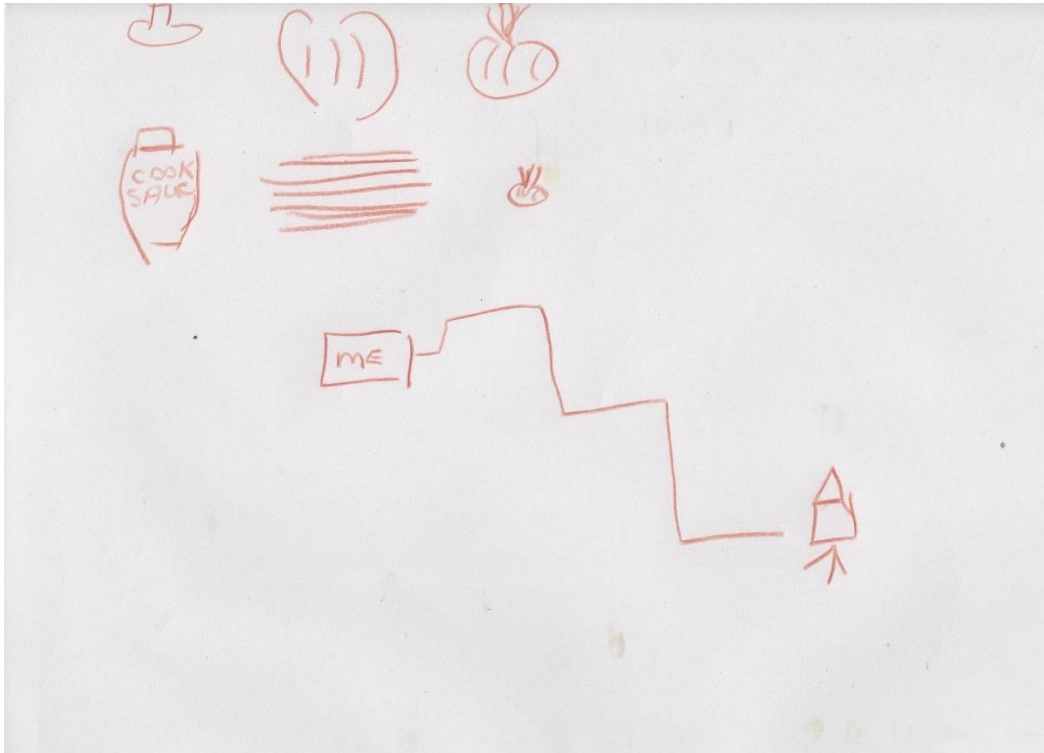


Figure 2: A foodmap by Don from the EFA centre.

While participants made their drawings, they often began to elaborate on the different elements, but I would also prompt them to tell me more if they were a little reticent; for example, how they cooked different foods, where they got them from, who they ate with, what they liked or disliked about it. I also prompted them on how they travelled on their food shop as well as who they shopped with. Although participants expressed some reluctance at the idea of drawing at first, most warmed to the idea, with only one participant requesting not to draw anything at all. In this sense, the materials produced seemed to offer more than the photos generated from the photo diaries; although the participants did not consider themselves to be skilled at drawing, the images produced offered not just a visual trace of the ways in which they made sense of the challenges of accessing food but also an opportunity to discuss the spaces and materiality of meals through details that might elude a verbal interview.

This novel approach offered many of the benefits of the photovoice or photo-diary approach. It enabled the participants to visually show me the different meals that they cooked, foods that they bought, places they went as well as how they understood all of these elements in their own words. Moreover, they were in control of the image creation to a similar degree – although I framed the task by asking them to draw a meal or a picture of a shopping trip, the results were more diverse than the same attempts at food diaries. Because these foodmap interviews took place at the foodbank, where participants had limited time to take part, these interviews tended to be shorter than the food diary interviews or the go-alongs and in total, I was able to get seven foodmaps.

Go-alongs: how do people get food?

Go-alongs are a means to study the relationship between place and lived experience. A go-along is a form of interview that takes place with the researcher accompanying the participant as they make their way on a journey or shopping trip, asking loosely structured interview questions as they go (Carpiano 2009; Kusenbach 2003; Miller 1998). As with the foodmaps and diaries, the aim of using go-alongs was to consider the ‘elusive aspects of environmental experience in everyday life’ (Kusenbach 2003 p.461). Go-alongs have particularly been used to add qualitative research to traditionally quantitative domains of public health to understand participants’ experiences of their neighbourhoods in terms of health outcomes (Cummins et al. 2007). They are also important to consumption research (Miller 1998) and studies of food practices and public health (Thompson et al. 2013), and a means to study “relational” conceptions of place and ... move away from empirical research designed to distinguish between contextual and compositional effects and

instead concentrate on the processes and interactions occurring between people and places and over time' (Cummins et al. 2007, 1828). Go-alongs have emerged from phenomenological studies, in which the aim is to understand how 'contexts "get into the body"' (Popay et al 1998 in Cummins et al p.1828). However, they are helpful in showing how people comprehend and engage with their physical and social environments in everyday life (Kusenbach 2003, 456), as well as how these activities work to create the contexts in which they take place.

I carried out go-alongs with passengers from a community bus scheme. As a form of what could be called 'show and tell' (Pitt 2015), their advantage lies not only in their ability to allow participants to demonstrate their understandings of their local environment; Carpiano highlights their strength when used alongside similar and complementary methods, such as photovoice and participatory mapping (Carpiano 2009). Miller's seminal study of shopping practices in north London also emphasised this benefit (Miller et al 1998). In accordance with these projects, I used go-alongs to study the ways in which people make sense of their local environment when it comes to accessing food. With a relatively open structure, they encourage participants to not only tell of their experiences but also show them.

The work with the community transport organisation came about when the leader of the lunch group invited me to accompany them on a number of promotional visits to sheltered accommodation in the area. These were a great opportunity to speak to people that fitted the target demographic for the lunch club – socially isolated people – but that were not currently engaged. This was particularly helpful as, by definition, such groups are hard to get in touch with. The events took the form of cookery demonstrations in which we made scones

and sat together to have a cream tea and discuss the classes, as well as more general discussions about the residents' interests in the hope of tailoring the course to be more useful for them. From these discussions, it became clear that a large number of residents relied on a local community bus to get to local supermarkets and shopping spots. As a result, I arranged to travel on the bus to talk with people who used this local door-to-door service to do their shopping. I travelled on the bus on seven different days, with around three or four separate shopping trips on each day. To carry out these go-alongs, I talked to passengers on the bus, asking them about their use of the service and their shopping habits. These conversations formed part of my observations and fieldnotes. From these discussions, I asked for volunteers to allow me to 'go-along' with them during their shopping trip, and I went on five trips to three supermarkets in south Bristol.

To allow participants to guide these conversations, the go-along interviews were loosely semi-structured (Carpiano 2009). As with all of the interviews in this study, the themes of my research questions formed a loose structure but conversations were guided by the participant's interests and thoughts on the topic, as well as their movements. These supermarket go-alongs were recorded with audio and video. Participants were encouraged to tell me about the items they were buying as a means of elicitation to further investigate the three themes around access. As with the other interviews, I prompted participants regarding their 'signature meal'. I found that participants were much more responsive to questions regarding food while they were in the store than when on the bus (where my questions about food were often met with short shrift), and despite attempts to steer conversation towards food and shopping, I spent as much time in general conversation and laughter. I do not see this as a

weakness in the go-alongs but rather a strength; it was part of the way in which participants and I got to know one another, and I felt able to participate as part of the group rather than rigidly inflicting my interests and questions on them.

The go-along interviews were useful for working with the community transport passengers; most were open to me accompanying them, although only a few were willing to be videoed. I watched these videos back to help analyse the go-alongs but the quality and number of the videos was limited, so while they have been an important part of the analysis I have not included copies of the videos as part of the thesis.



Figure 3: Still from video go-along with Fran from the community bus.

To find out how the EFA centre clients made journeys to get their food, I did not use video methods because of my own and the organisation's ethical concerns over revealing the identity of clients. I was still able to accompany clients as they made their way around the EFA food store, and I did this as a volunteer, helping to measure out client's allowances. To understand the journeys that

clients made to get to and from the store, I used the foodmap interview. Here, I asked them to draw a map of their journey for their ‘main shopping trip’. I left it open to them whether they chose the trip to the EFA food centre or another trip. Several participants, particularly those who had been using the food aid for 3 months or more, chose food journeys that did not involve the EFA centre. I reflect on the ways in which food insecurity includes a range of tactics for getting food that go beyond foodbank and EFA use in Chapter Six.

Home and lunch interviews

Although interested in the more-than-verbal, words were still an important part of the ways in which participants showed me how they made sense of food in their lives, and important in placing the case studies in a wider context.

As well as interviewing stakeholders, I interviewed clients from the emergency food aid organisation who had recently attended a cookery course run by the organisation. These interviews were carried out in collaboration with another researcher, Emma Roe, who was also studying the organisation for a project at Southampton University. There was an overlap in our interests and, to reduce the possibility of overstressing the participants and in the spirit of collaboration, we carried out seven interviews together. The idea of these interviews was to hold them in participants’ homes, ideally while they were cooking. This offered the opportunity for us to be shown how food fit into participant’s lives in ways that would not be possible if they were just telling us (Evans 2011; Pink and Leder Mackley 2012).

However, these home interviews were a lot more difficult to arrange than anticipated. Participants of the home and lunch interviews were clients who had

attended a cookery course run by the organisation, addressing the interests of both of our studies. But despite having a good relationship with the organisation and the participants agreeing to the interview, it was often very difficult to arrange a meeting. The interviews also required a risk assessment procedure, which in some cases ruled out the possibility of visiting participants in their own homes. As a result, the number of interviews we were able to carry out was greatly reduced, the process took longer than expected and ultimately only two interviews were held in people's homes. The remainder of those that did take place were held in cafes – public places that offered at least neutral territory in which we could interview participants over a hot drink or something to eat. As a result, what might have been termed 'cook-along' interviews became standard semi-structured interviews. This does not undermine their validity or the importance of the insights that came from them, but rather testifies to the difficulties of both a more-than-verbal approach and of working with participants who are living precariously.

The difficulty in arranging these interviews has been noted by social research with groups that have sometimes been termed 'hard to reach'. Although I take issue with the idea that those who have required emergency food aid are necessarily harder to reach or more distant, the difficulties we had in arranging interviews emphasise the distance between the expectations we may hold as researchers and the needs and situations of participants in these circumstances. In particular, we found that participants were often happy to agree to participate but always put these interviews off for another time when it came to arranging them. This became an insurmountable difficulty in many cases as the timetable, needs and interests of participants diverged from ours as researchers. While I did not use incentives for my own fieldwork, Emma's study

had budget allowance for incentives. Consequently, from this study participants on the EFA cookery course were offered a free item of kitchen equipment on completion of the two-day course, and those who agreed to be interviewed were given a £20 voucher that could be used at local stores. This use of incentives seemed to do little to encourage participants to take part; however, it did mean we were able to help those who were in very difficult circumstances by remunerating them for their time.

Sensory ethnography: accounting for taste

Ethnography has long been used as a means to know alongside participants, and it 'is, or should be about the use of the senses to make sense of the world about us' (Atkinson et al. 2008 p.179). Complementary with this aim, sensory ethnography stems from the premise that knowing, doing and sensing are not separate activities but intimately and necessarily connected (Pink 2009). At first glance, a sensory approach is essential if we are to avoid producing 'disembodied and decontextualized accounts' (Atkinson et al. 2008 p.204; see also Stoller 1997). If the task of the ethnographer in this context is to 'know as others do' (Pink 2009), then such sensing and sense-making are integral to the practical, embodied process of knowing. Yet, fundamentally, this sensory ethnography is not about producing an account of the research situation that is more 'real' by enriching it with sensory information. Nor is it a means to understand another's sensory experiences. The 'fusion of the intelligible and the sensible' (Stoller 1997, xv) is interpreted here to mean that sensory experience is not itself data – the ends of research – but a means of understanding something more (Pink 2009).

It is not new or surprising to say that eating is a sensory experience (Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011; Sutton 2010), but recent work that emphasises the embodiment of knowledge has challenged the separation of the senses into five categories of smell, taste, touch and sight and hearing, as well as emphasising that thinking, feeling and knowing can never be disentangled from sensory experience (Howes 2003; Pink 2009; Sutton 2010). Interestingly, recent biomedical work on taste has also emphasised the interconnections between these registers in the multisensory perception of food (Spence 2013), as well as challenging discrete categorisation of salt, sweet, sour, bitter and umami tastes that co-produce flavour⁹ (Trivedi 2012a). Particular methods and representations may appeal to one sensory register above another, but as our senses are connected (Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011), our relationship with more-than-human elements is not experienced simply as an input through sensory organs to one part of the brain; it involves complicated synesthetic responses (Lorimer 2010; Spence 2013). Approaching the sensory as an intertwining mesh of registers rather than five separate elements that need to be represented, this study uses various sensory elements in different ways – not in order to represent the spectrum of sensory potential but rather to spark such connections through a bricolage of methods and materials (Cragg and Cook 2007). Moreover, an understanding of the productive potential of the interconnection of the senses – the ability to spark new connections, entanglements, engagements and spaces – makes it possible to engage with – to know and do alongside – participants in order to generate such connections and ruptures.

⁹ For instance, the ‘tongue map’ – in which certain tastes correspond to particular points on the tongue – has recently been updated with much more complex understandings of the relationship between taste sensations and their translation into flavour perception (Spence and Gallace 2011; Trivedi 2012b).

Of course, the sensory is important but it does not preclude verbal. The ‘problem’ of how we know about sensory experience, brought to the fore by non-representational theories, and the political imperative established by the understanding that ‘certain everyday embodied practices – such as observing, preparing, cooking, and eating food – can, on occasion, provide certain consumers with an alternative sensual register for making connections’ (Evans and Miele 2012, 12), require attention to the full sensory experience of these activities. However, although ‘[t]asting, listening to or appreciating something are essentially silent activities ... [we] recall how much this silent activity resorts to words by many different means’ (Teil and Hennion 2004 p.28). With this in mind, the aim of this sensory ethnography is to participate in the processes of taste-making and to consider the more-than-verbal sense-making through asking the ‘amateurs’ to show me what they mean in a variety of ways (Teil and Hennion 2004).

At the core of this sensory study is what Pink terms ‘multisensory participation’ (2009). Building on the ethnographic tradition, multisensory participation differs from participatory observations in that it challenges the predominance of a visual register. We not only watch what others do but also remain open and aware of the multisensorial and emplaced ways of knowing that are inherent in different activities. Taste is often understood as sensations of the (singular, universal) body and in such a framing, taste may emphasise feelings and affect caused by interactions with food (e.g. Carolan 2011). However, my interest was rather in how bodies, situations and tastes are differently enacted in particular situations. Throughout the research process, I came back to the different approaches to the study of taste and the senses at various stages as the research design, implementation, analysis and writing up. Fundamentally, the

ethnography is sensory not simply in that it appeals to the senses and is more-than-verbal but also because it is about sense-making (Evans and Miele 2012). It is not about representing organoleptic taste sensations¹⁰ effectively to better understand objective senses and tastes, but about understanding the multiplicity of the performative processes of taste-making. As discussed in Chapter Two, 'taste' is always about both the individual material–bodily interaction and wider social and aesthetic elements. This ethnography was sensory, then, in that it put these tensions around tasting and taste-making (cf. Evans and Miele 2012) at the heart of the research questions, the methodology and the analysis.

The majority of the insights from this study came from multisensory participation: cooking, eating and talking about food together. At the lunch club, this was the bulk of the activity, as each week we talked about our lives, came up with and adapted recipes, shared cooking tips and ate a meal. At the food aid centre, as well as on the community bus, my interactions as a volunteer did not always engage explicitly with food in the same way. Although food may have receded into the background in some conversations, it was the reason that both I and the participant were there, and I was able to delve deeper into clients' understandings of food through the foodmaps, go-alongs and interviews, testifying to the complex ways in which food issues are 'made to matter' – or not – in different situations.

¹⁰ Although the possibilities for including the biochemical processes of tasting and flavours offer interesting provocation for such analysis, they remain outside the scope of this study.

Ethical reflections

For research to be ethical it needs to be collaborative (Pink 2009), and collaborative more-than-verbal methods have been particularly helpful in generating shared knowledges of the experience of places (Dennis Jr. et al. 2009; Kindon et al. 2007; Latham 2003; Pink and Leder Mackley 2012). Yet, claims that research is participatory are not often matched by the experiences of participants, with some projects that use the term without care being criticised for moving towards ‘authoritarian creep’ (Reason and Bradbury 2006; see also Pollock and Sharp 2012). Therefore, ethics remain a central concern for collaborative research concerned with social justice.

Understanding knowledge as embodied and practised requires that researchers cannot see participants simply as sources of data. Whether humans or nonhuman others, they are not ‘fields’ to be harvested but instead are co-producers of knowledge; both the researcher and the participants bring different elements to the situation (Gubrium and Harper 2013; Kindon et al. 2007; Reason and Bradbury 2006). Similarly, the ‘sensuous scholar’ has further responsibilities (Stoller 1997). Sensory ethnography requires that the researcher is reflexive towards their own sensory experience in the research encounter (Pink 2009, 50) and also requires the humility to be open to sensory cultures that may be at odds with the researcher’s own (Stoller 1989). The viscosity of sensory research means that it can be intense (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013); for example, the use of sensory evocation such as tasting and sharing food is a means of engendering embodied responses, and although these have appeared in academia as predominantly pleasant memories or experiences (D. E. Sutton 2010) there is no reason to assume that the evocation will always be pleasant (Pink 2009). Researchers therefore have to be aware

that being open to the sensory experiences of research may make all involved vulnerable in ways that cannot be foreseen from literature on the topic. This is particularly the case when working with those who are in potentially vulnerable positions.

With this in mind, the study required constant attention to a host of ethical issues – not just at the initial point of contact, but throughout the whole research process (BSA 2002). By keeping a journal of ethical issues, I was able to record and reflect on the decisions that I made as they came up. Ethics concerned me a great deal because of the potentially vulnerable situations of those participating. Although having a firm idea of the ideals for ethical behaviour in advance can help to maintain professional and ethical standards, the experience can be somewhat different. This was something that I revisited throughout the time in the field and continued to be important during writing up and any presentations or publications based on these experiences (BSA 2002).

In line with advice from academic resources (ASA 2011; BSA 2002) as well as the university's guidelines, I took particular steps to maintain good ethical practice. Consent is the first issue in ethics, albeit one that is always somewhat slippery. I aimed to ensure consent via the most robust and appropriate means in each situation. Written consent was gained from all participants who were recorded verbatim, whether this be in go-alongs, food diaries, foodmaps or sit-down interviews. This was obtained with a form that detailed the ways in which the information would be stored, recorded and used, and in which participants gave permission for me to use the information as part of my thesis and related publications. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that consent could be withdrawn, at which point I gave them my contact details in

case of further questions or worries and advised them of how the information would be used in line with data protection.

Using visual methods posed a particular set of ethical considerations (Prosser and Loxley 2008), particularly the use of video cameras and photography in public places such as supermarkets, at events and on the community bus.

Again, I used standard social research guidelines to inform my approach at these times (Rose Wiles et al. 2008), although it became clear that good practice comes from fitting these guidelines to a situation, which may not be favourable to ideal practice. For example, when taking photos at events I was sure to display my details to warn attendees that I would be filming and to offer the chance for anyone to request to be excluded. However, it was much more pertinent in most situations in which I was taking photos to talk to each person individually when asking permission to take photos, particularly as many of those present would have been unable to read a sheet due to problems with eyesight, limited literacy or not being English speakers. Although when in small groups, such as on the bus or in cooking class, I was always sure to speak to everyone to inform them that I was a researcher and that the activities were part of my research, it is possible that some in the group may have felt they were unable to refuse consent. I tried to use my instinct and did not push questions on those who seemed reticent. Although this might have had the consequence that those with the loudest voices were overrepresented, this was unavoidable in situations such as the bus trips, in which only a limited time was spent with a group. In addition to that given by participants, consent for filming in the supermarket was obtained from store managers on the day of interviews before meeting with the group. Although I was keen to display my details instore, as expected in good practice, store managers and staff seemed bemused

by this request; it is impossible to say whether anyone at all will have seen them on display. This added to my reluctance to use video in public, and I have therefore only used these video resources as part of the analysis and to produce stills in which faces can be excluded or easily obscured.

Although the main aim of visual methods was to allow participants to share their experiences, photos were also helpful as part of my fieldnotes, helping to elicit memories for analysis. As well as being aware of my own position, I also had to pay attention to the position of the technical devices of research and the possibilities that these may generate or foreclose (Michael 2012). When taking photographs, I generally took care not to include faces in the frames. This has the practical advantage of facilitating anonymity, but also puts the focus on the doing of the hands and the food (Mann et al 2011) – for the researcher and the reader, but also for the participants – relieving any pressure to pose. The go-along filming posed particular challenges; for example, I was unsure about where to place the camera. I opted to place it on the handle of the trolley facing forwards, thus giving a view of how we walked through the store, the aim being that the products could be visible on the shelves and as they are put into the trolley. However, the result of this is that lots of passers-by were included in the footage. The alternative option would have been to put the camera on the other end of the trolley, facing back towards the shopper. This would allow a view of the trolley's contents, but would also mean the shopper would be under the spotlight, which may make them uncomfortable. This highlights the importance of the position of the camera; given the chance to do this again, I would ensure that filming and photography were controlled more by the shopper.

As a participant observer, the balancing act between being a volunteer and being a researcher was one that I was constantly negotiating. For example, with

my work at the food aid charity I attended the regular Friday sessions as a volunteer, which entailed interviewing clients for their cases with the organisation and having access to their files. I made the decision at the start of this process that any information regarding clients and their cases would not be included in my research, and no mention of specific clients or details of cases were included in my fieldnotes. Although this meant I was missing out on what might be seen as a rich resource for my research, I wanted to be sure not to confuse my work with the organisation and its relationship with the clients, or to use such sensitive information out of the context in which it was given. My time spent volunteering was still valuable as part of the rich 'knowing alongside', enabling me to better understand the ways in which clients and organisation members co-produced different issues around food insecurity. It also allowed me to get an insight into the ways in which volunteers and staff worked on a daily basis, adapting procedures in the face of different challenges in ways that would not be possible if I had not actively taken part in the tasks myself.

Addressing the more-than-human in research, particularly in contexts where participants are vulnerable, requires sensibility as much as procedural correctness:

'[R]ather than seeking to displace responsibility for [the possibility of harm] procedurally, we should be prepared to share in that suffering, take responsibility for the harms as well as the benefits inflicted by our research, and remain open and responsive to the needs of our subjects – or rather co-workers – in research'.

Greenhough and Roe 2010 p.45; cf. Haraway 1991).

Developing the 'response-ability' was not straightforward; nor is there one correct way to go about this. This was particularly an issue at the foodbank, as I was involved in helping people in very difficult situations and had to respond instantly in ways that were not simply empathetic but also constructively helpful. In the majority of situations, this exceeded the scope of the research. Being involved with people's cases over several months involved more than getting to know them and caring for their wellbeing; as a volunteer with certain responsibilities, I collaborated with participants in the ongoing project of their wellbeing as framed and enabled by the organisation. To be response-able in this situation is not simply to empathetically respond and represent the encounter carefully in research but also to actively engage with and improve people's lives. Distinct from participant action research, this engagement was not directly part of the aims of the research, but it was an important step in understanding the ways in which food insecurity is collaboratively addressed and experienced. It also enabled me to tailor my methods to best suit the situation because I was sensitive of the wider context.

Making sense of the empirical materials

The processes of gathering materials and making sense of them is not linear but emergent (Crang and Cook 2007; Law 2004). Throughout the research I was analysing the experience of the research, and the interaction between my own ideas, interpretations and priorities and those of participants are situated within the context of the research encounter as much as the academic one. Ethnographic fieldwork is part of an iterative–reflexive process of sense-making; at any given point in time it becomes pertinent to reflect on issues of theory, literatures and experiences in the field, as well as my own reactions and

instincts (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Through my actions in the field and writing fieldnotes and journals, new themes emerges and older ones disappeared.

However, as my time with the case studies drew to a close, I spent some time transcribing, organising and coding themes from the wealth of materials. I made the most of the technological functionality of NVIVO to include visual sources, but analysing sensory data such as taste and smell is another challenge as these cannot be represented in the medium of text or be included in the coding. This did not mean that sensory experience was absent from the research however as they became the basis for discussion, photos and videos which could be transcribed and coded more formally.

I used a grounded approach to code the materials in NVIVO, assigning codes both in relation to the research questions (which also developed over time) and as they emerged from listening back to recordings and inputting information and the codes themselves were refined through the analysis. Although each of the methods were designed to be sensory, the resulting materials were visual and verbal, which were readily loaded into the software to be analysed.

However, I also wanted to develop the analysis beyond this software interface; as such, with the foodmaps I listened back to the recordings and walked the journeys that participants described, taking photos as I went of the shops and points that were mentioned in the interviews. This enabled me to enrich the foodmap drawings with photos, but also helped me to know the places and journeys through my own sensory experiences. Although this analysis did not form part of the coding and is not readily processed into the written thesis, it is further testament to the iterative process of research, particularly as it could be seen as both analysis and method, producing further materials to be analysed.

Having assigned codes, I used the software to dissect the materials in different ways creating collections of materials such as photos, recipes, maps and transcripts, from which a collage was formed of experiences of food insecurity in a particular place or for a particular person (c.f. Latham 2003) as a foodmap. To further interrogate the materials, I also experimented with dissecting across participants by postcode and ingredient/foodstuff (e.g. chicken, baked beans, spices) to consider alternative assemblages for the materials.

Picturing taste

During the field work, I captured images as part of field notes and observations and images were made by participants as part of the food diary interviews and the foodmap interviews. When it came to writing up the thesis, I made choices about which photographs and drawings to include in the draft. Images were chosen to enable the food to come to the fore and, in the case of the images created by participants such as the photo-diaries and the food maps, to represent the participants' perspective on the issues. In the case of the food diaries and foodmaps, I use the images and text together to show and tell the story of the signature dish or shopping trip (Pitt 2015). Drawings were both elicitation and a means of contributing to the bricolage and sparking ways of sensing and making sense. Consequently it was important to show both images and discussions together. Captions are used throughout the text to situate the photos within the study and the argument and in addition, images are presented alongside other materials such as field notes and interview excerpts in order to situate them within the study and offer a sense of the issue being discussed in the text.

It was important to include images in this way because, where possible, I wanted participants — or ‘amateurs’ as Teil and Hennion would describe them (2004) — to show me their own ways of making sense of food in the setting. During analysis, these photos and drawings were coded in the same way that the transcripts of the interviews and the field notes were, developing codes from the research questions and then, going back to the material with codes that came from emergent themes. When it came to including materials in the text, I chose excerpts from transcripts, field notes and images which were coded to match the issue that I was discussing. In this way, I tried to keep the text in harmony with what participants had shown me through the food diaries, go alongs and food maps. For example, when coding the data for anxiety, I included excerpts of transcripts, field notes and images that I had coded for anxiety. When coding images produced by participants, I chose codes that related to the issues that were being discussed as well as what the image depicted. For instance if the participant was referring to anxiety, I included the image that we were discussing at the time. If they were not talking about an image in particular then the transcript stands alone. Often the quantity of material relating to a particular code was larger than could easily be included in the thesis and still leave space for analysis and so, where I had to make decisions about what to include or exclude, I chose the materials that most strongly elucidated the issue according to my own interpretation.

The second use of images is the use of those taken by me as part of my observations. As mentioned above, I coded photos that I took as well as field notes as part of my analysis and therefore these images and excerpts are used in the same way as participant materials. Here, what is represented is my experience as multi-sensory participation and the materials included in the

thesis are part of that emplaced practice. For example, in the ‘food donations’ section in Chapter Six (pp.242-251), I have included photos of the food materials and the process of sorting and weighing these materials in order that I can offer a snapshot of the material practice.

While the quality of the images produced was variable, I resisted the urge to leave the photos out on the basis of quality. This remains true to the messiness of field work (Crang and Cook 2007; Law 2004) in a very literal sense, as well as the Bricolage approach (particularly in an ad hoc, DIY sense). This was a decision that made me a little uncomfortable with regards to the aesthetics of the presented document, but meant that I was editing visual materials in terms of their relationship to the issues rather than their aesthetic quality. This decision was important because otherwise, I would have excluded participants for the arbitrary reason of their ability to draw or take photographs rather than on the insights that they offered. Moreover, this openness to the type and quality of images that I included in the text means that I have not looked to gloss over the ‘serendipity of social science research (Law 2004). For example, one participant – Gus– was unable to use the disposable camera that I gave him as part of the food diary and asked instead that I carried out the interview in his home. During the interview, he asked me to take pictures of various parts of his kitchen, according to the stories that he told me about his life there and, while we were sitting he also took the opportunity to draw pictures for me. For this interview, I therefore brought together elements of all three of the methods to fit the situation and to offer Gus to show me in his preferred way, his food practices. It is important to note therefore that the images offered in this text are not there to enrich the text to make it more real or more sensory.

Importantly, the sensory approach outlined here and offered in the thesis is

established on the premise that attuning to sensory experiences including practices of sensing and making sense which often go beyond words, does not produce research that is more real but rather that it assembles the issue at hand in new ways, allowing us to ask new questions and find out different things than we would if we did not pay attention to sensory experience.

Writing taste

The challenge of representing sensory experience in academic writing is one that strikes to core of contemporary cultural geography (Lorimer 2005). Visual and audio resources can be included in academic work much more readily than ever before (although the potential for this is still far behind the technological advances present in other cultural outputs); yet, any representation of the experiences of the field is necessarily a translation not only through the researcher's own interpretation but also as it traverses from one medium to another (Rose 2012). This necessary limitation forces researchers to be creative in their attempts to render the experience of the field intelligible for others. By including images within the thesis, it is possible to bring some of the senses to the reader, but with the obvious limitation that such visual methods are overrepresented in comparison to other sensory modes (Lorimer 2010; Spinney 2011).

Throughout the stages of this project, my concern has been to focus on the interconnection between senses and sense-making to consider the extent and limit to which embodied knowledges are manifested, expressed and negotiated, perhaps offering a means to slow down the givenness or 'ontonorms' underpinning particular framings of food insecurity (Mol 2013c; Stengers 2010). Consequently, the analysis and writing aim to bring together words with

the more-than-textual elements to play on and spark embodied and sensory responses from the participants, researcher and audience as means of making us think (Stengers 2010). Bringing a variety of sensory modes into touch, these sparks can then be considered and interpreted into the forms necessary for us in academic circles to make sense of food insecurity. This speaks to a call for geographers to ‘work towards creating more supple and pluralistic accounts of the social events [interviews] we are describing’ and an ‘approach to writing that is more experimental and pragmatic than is currently evident within mainstream social and cultural geography’ (Latham 2003 2007).

Although there is a certain degree of irony in the amount of ink shed on the topic of improving academic writing in this regard, an awareness of the limits to a sensory approach are as important as the opportunities that it presents.

Anthropologists have offered thick description as a means to overcome the paucity and lifelessness of institutional academic writing, helping the reader to paint a picture of the setting just as a good author does in a novel (Geertz 1993).

Yet, no matter how lyrical or detailed a description, there will always be elements of an experience or scene that escape. Proust’s efforts to address this paucity through exhaustive detail resulted in prose that is infamously protracted. In addressing this problem, ethnographic writing shares concerns with literature, in particular seemingly distant cousins such as science fiction and fantasy writers, as both build worlds to present to the reader. In parallel to the concerns of non-representational theory, creative science fiction authors concerned with bringing unfamiliar worlds to life emphasise that evocative and powerful writing comes not through the exhaustive description and internal coherence of a (in their case imagined) universe, but rather through the strategic and economical deployment of words and ideas (Dodds 2014).

In addition, to be 'digestible', sensory ethnographic writing needs to take 'the notion of melange as its foundation [to] encourage writers to blend the ingredients of the world so that bad sauces might be transformed into delicious prose' (Stoller and Oakes 1989 p.32). But although Stoller encourages us to include details of lived experiences, they can never be perfectly translated through representation. Just as the framing of any photograph or shot is defined as much by what it excludes as by what it includes, MacDougall (2006) argues that these spaces in writing offer as much productive potential as the words that are chosen. An exhaustive description is more likely to send a reader to sleep than to conjure up an emotive sense of a situation, and a writer can offer a more powerful description by setting the reader's imagination to work. 'Apart from the absurdity of trying to replicate the world in all its perspectives and details, these gaps give the reader or viewer a creative role in fusing together the fragments that the author has chosen to represent the scene' (MacDougall 2006, 36). As such, good (in this case, ethnographic) writing is often minimal but at the same time 'highly visual, highly concrete', giving the reader the 'coordinates of the world we are entering' and allowing us to fill in the blanks with not only visual but also sensory imagination (ibid).

The challenge of representing taste-making is therefore one that does not preclude text. While the institutional requirements of academic research, deeply entrenched in verbal traditions, do not necessarily preclude a more-than-verbal ethnography, they do set particular challenges. This study aims to embrace these challenges through an acceptance of the limitations of sharing sensory experiences. In this chapter, I have argued that offering a sense of taste is not to perfectly replicate or describe an experience but to build on work that emphasises the multiplicity of ontologies, the partiality of knowing and the

interconnected constellation of sensory experience (Mol 2002; Pink 2009; Whatmore 2002). If knowing comes from a montage of sensory experiences that are contingently and contextually composed, then this thesis aims to spark relevant experiences through building compositions of various materials, words, images and flavours to evoke similar connections within the reader.

To mediate this connection, I chose bricolage as a method not only to research the issues but also to write about them. The empirical chapters weave together threads from fieldnotes, interview transcripts, foodmaps and photos to bring together disparate elements. Bricolage was helpful in representing tasteful experiences but also in terms of my interests in care and response-ability. The stories that were shared with me were moving and I wanted to ensure that these feelings were conveyed – not as a spectacle, but through a connection between participants and reader.

As Markham argues, this method of writing works well for telling stories that are disturbing (Markham 2005). Her piece deals with predatory masculinity as enacted in American college bars; although very different, the research I carried out was also emotional and at times disturbing, and this is something I did not want to cut out from my analysis. In keeping with the desire (discussed in Chapter Two) to think about food insecurity as a matter of care (de la Bellacasa 2011), I was motivated to use the writing produced from this study as a means to provoke a response in the reader – not as a form of ‘poverty porn’, as can sometimes be the case (see Chapter Two), but as a form of ‘response-ability’ (Haraway 2008) – a ‘curious engagement’ (Lorimer and Davies 2010 p.33) with and through the more-than-human settings within this study.

Early drafts of this thesis were concerned with presenting information from the fieldwork at face value, as riffs on themes and codes that emerged from the

study. Inspired by Stewart's work on 'Ordinary Affects' (Stewart 2007), these early experiments were too loose for the form of a thesis and left too much work for the reader to infer meaning. The refining of the thesis has been an experiment in opening up academic writing (Last 2012). However, within the academic context, this thesis does not simply engage with empirical material from participants and an imagined reader but also exists in concert with a burgeoning academic literature on the topic. Consequently, the form, content and conventions that are more familiar to academia were helpful in weaving together the threads in a melange that is perhaps less experimental than some examples but is nonetheless dependent on the technique to attune to sensory experiences.

Four. Context

Bristol

Bristol is a city well known for its progressive ideals. The development of the Food Policy Council in 2011 is just one example of the citywide, high-publicity endeavours that put ideals of community and sustainability at the forefront of local governance (Bristol Food Policy Council 2013). However, while Bristol is among the least deprived English cities, it has seen an increase in levels of relative deprivation in recent years. So, while the city is generally measured as doing in well in terms of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, there remain ‘deprivation “hot spots” that are amongst some of the most deprived areas in the country’ (Bristol City Council 2015). Consequently, the innovative governance landscape, while bringing food to the forefront of the agenda, has a long way to go to overcome food inequalities within the city.

The neighbourhoods

The three case studies that this study is based on are: the EFA centre, Dinner Plus (a project run by an environmental health charity) and the community bus organisation. Although this study is not primarily concerned with demographic data, the exceptional deprivation in these areas as accounted for in statistics bears witness to the rising inequalities and the ways in which hardship persists and certain people, places and practices can be marginalised and excluded.



Figure 4: South Bristol from the supermarket car park



Figure 5: Central Bristol, residential streets near EFA centre

According to the Bristol City Council report ‘Deprivation in Bristol’, the locations in which the community bus and the lunch group were both based and operated has two wards¹¹ that were ranked in the most deprived 100 areas in England. The second central area in which the EFA centre was situated was one of the other wards in the city with the highest levels of deprivation: ‘[o]n a ward basis, more than a third of people are income deprived in Lawrence Hill (36%)’ (Bristol City Council 2015).

Importantly, then, as one of the least deprived cities in the UK, Bristol has seen higher rises in relative deprivation than other cities in England (Bristol City Council 2015). While much of Bristol remains affluent, the gap between these areas and the persistent areas of deprivation is increasing.

It is in this context that the three organisations I worked with aimed to improve access to food. The lunch group (Dinner Plus), the EFA centre and the community bus all worked to alleviate inequalities in wellbeing through food practices. They all understood the relationship between wellbeing, environment and food in a broad and holistic way, and were therefore engaged in community building as much as improving food practices.

¹¹ The ward boundaries used by the local authority were amended in May 2016. This thesis refers to the wards as defined by the previous boundaries applied during the duration of the fieldwork in 2014.

Dinner Plus



Figure 6: Accessible kitchen at Dinner Plus

Dinner Plus was a weekly cookery and lunch group that was organised by a charity in south Bristol. The charity has been operating since 1990 in two of the neighbourhoods in the area. They use a community development approach in order to ‘support local people to improve their health, wellbeing and the quality of life in the area’ (organisation website, accessed 28/10/2016).

They offer a range of health-related and environmental activities in the area, and the community development approach (Labonte 1993) meant the focus was on empowering local people to bring about the changes they wanted to see in the local area by offering holistic support for these activities. With a longstanding reputation in the area, the organisation has a series of activities that help achieve their mission to ‘[p]rovide opportunities and support for people in South Bristol to engage in a range of health related and environmental

projects, which contribute to healthy and sustainable lifestyles' (organisation website, accessed 28/10/2016). In practice, those aims were met by a range of activities including mental health support groups and one-to-one support, a community allotment, a food co-operative, walking and exercise groups, support for smoking cessation and cookery courses. The organisation has ten members of staff: three who managed the organisation and office, and seven who managed and ran the separate projects.

I made contact with the organisation to find out more about the cookery courses and the food growing. After meeting with Val, the organisation's co-ordinator, I found out more about the organisation; I also met with Katie, the nutritionist who led the cookery groups. She led several groups for the organisation, all held in a specially adapted kitchen within the community building in which the organisation was located. Each of Katie's cookery groups were aimed at a specific issue of healthy eating, relevant to the local residents. For example, one course that she ran aimed to support mothers to cook more healthily for their families, as childhood obesity was a particular concern in the area. Dinner Plus, however, aimed to reduce social isolation and improving wellbeing among those who were socially isolated.

The need for this was identified in the City Council, the reports of which indicated that the number of residents in the two wards adjacent to the Dinner Plus project living with 'limiting long term illness, health problem or disability' was nearly double that of the Bristol average of 24% at 42% (Bristol City Council 2016 p.7). With regards to social isolation and exclusion, the survey shows that 17% of respondents stated that disability prevented them from leaving the house when they wanted; this is nearly three times the city average of 6% (Bristol City Council 2016 p.13).

Katie made use of local resources such as the community bus to address issues of isolation and engage with hard-to-reach groups. Additionally, she and I went on outreach events, where we carried out cookery demonstrations in the community areas of local sheltered accommodation. Here we cooked scones and sat with residents to talk about their cooking habits and to promote the course. While this was generally well received by some residents, it did not result in any new members for the group.

Dinner Plus was funded by Public Health and, working within the community development approach, Katie was keen to ensure that class attendees were not what she called 'done to' but were actively engaged as much as possible in the way that the courses were run. Dinner Plus was held once a week, on a weekday between 10.15am and 2pm. Attendees were generally recruited from other branches of the organisation or from previous cooking courses. The attendees paid £2 and were able to come on a drop-in basis, with no set course length. During the session, we would meet and have a cup of tea before being introduced to the planned menu for the day. Attendees chose which items on the menu they wanted to cook and worked alone or in pairs within the specially designed kitchenettes. Once the cooking was done, we sat and ate the meal together along with a different invited guest each week. The guests were representatives from local leisure and activity groups, such as a knitting group, local walking groups and mindfulness practitioners. These visitors were arranged by Katie, but as with the meals they were chosen in consultation with attendees. Over the meal each week, we would sit and discuss what we would like to cook and what activities we were interested in learning about. These recommendations were then integrated into Katie's plans for the following weeks.

Members of staff and volunteers in Dinner Plus¹²

	Pseudonym	Role
Organisational Staff ¹³	Val	Director
Project Staff	Katie	Nutritionist and course leader
	Tim	Project Leader: community garden
	Wendy	Project Leader: mental health group
	Cat	Project Leader: food stalls and co-op
Project Volunteers	Rose	Board member and volunteer

¹² The three tables in this chapter do not represent an extensive list of all staff and volunteers for each organisation, but rather those relevant to the projects I participated in and staff/volunteers I worked with.

¹³ 'Organisational staff' refers to those who worked in the head office, 'project staff' refers to those who undertook various projects the organisation ran and 'project volunteers' refers to volunteers who helped to run the projects.



Figure 7: Getting ready for the Dinner Plus group with Katie

The community bus

Getting around in the neighbourhood was more challenging than in other areas, particularly for those with limited mobility. While there was a flagship commercial bus service that ran on the arterial route from the neighbourhood into the city centre and beyond, the area consisted of many housing estates,

which are situated on very steep hills away from the main road¹⁴. Consequently, with higher levels of disability – and therefore limited mobility – as well as a distance of around 5 miles from the central shopping centre to the neighbourhood, getting around was an issue. In addition, 41.2% of households in the neighbourhood have no cars, compared to a city average of 28.9% (Bristol City Council 2016 p.16).



Figure 8: The community bus office

The community bus was funded by the local authority. Issues of funding repeatedly placed the continuation of the service in jeopardy. Despite this, the service offered a lifeline to the many people who were unable to leave their homes unassisted.

¹⁴ It has been shown in Scandinavian contexts that older people (over 65) are less likely to use public buses. Levin also argues that we need to think more carefully about how we measure 'old age', because the experiences and abilities of those who are over 65 vary so greatly (Levin 2009).

The organisation was established in 2011, and fell under the umbrella of the local health partnership. It was managed by Clive, who was an employee. There were also two part-time employees in the office, managing the bookings, planning routes and fielding the customers' calls, and one paid driver, Eric. There were an additional four volunteer drivers: Ed, Dan, Fred and Wayne. The bus service was always looking for more volunteers and the system required a regular time commitment from drivers, as well the responsibility of taking the tests and training required by law to drive the bus and support passengers.

I joined in with a community transport project, which took local residents from their door to the shops – either to one of the four local supermarkets, or to a high street and shopping precinct. The organisation also offered a car service, which took passengers to the local hospital or GP. The organisation was funded by the council and – apart from an overall manager, an administrator and one hired driver – was run by volunteers. For an annual membership of £3.50, the service offered free transport to those who were eligible for a bus pass (the majority of passengers), and offered the same service to those not eligible for a bus pass for the sum of £2 per journey. Passengers were able to make 'block bookings' whereby they were booked onto a particular route for four weeks at a time. The passengers I encountered used the bus on a very regular basis and several of them used it more than twice a week. The service was greatly valued by the passengers for its door-to-door service, friendly and supportive staff and volunteers and the social atmosphere that it provided. During the time that I worked on the bus it was under threat from funding cuts to the local authority, which meant it was threatened with closure.

'Clive talks to me about the route to the hospital. He says that the council have mentioned that there is no need for extra funding in

the area as they already have a world class bus system with the 74/75 however, time and again it becomes clear that the people that use this bus are unable to use the “normal” bus service.’

Fieldnotes.

This situation was eventually resolved, with the local authority agreeing to support the scheme. However, despite offering a service that passengers found essential, the reliance on volunteer drivers created additional vulnerabilities, as it proved hard to recruit willing volunteers – despite having an advertisement for volunteer drivers painted on each of the three minibuses they ran.

While the regular bus is a well-funded route that offers a service across the city, the majority of passengers I spoke to on the community bus found that this bus service was out of their reach. They found the walk to the bus stop too much and were unable to carry heavy shopping on it. The community bus was therefore an interesting case in understanding how mobilities took place within neighbourhoods and in the city for those living in a context of financial precarity and/or struggling with a wide range of mobility issues.

Members of staff and volunteers at the community bus

	Pseudonym	Role
Organisational Staff	Clive	Director
	Kim	Admin
	Heather	Admin
Project Staff	Eric	Driver
Project Volunteers	Ed	Driver
	Dan	Driver
	Fred	Driver
	Wayne	Driver



Figure 9: One of the shopping precincts that the community bus travelled to in South Bristol
The Emergency Food Aid Centre



Figure 10: Tins of potatoes at the Emergency Food Aid centre

The Emergency Food Aid centre was part of a food aid charity set up in 2010 as a faith-based organisation. It aims to address the root causes of poverty through a range of schemes that 'seek to empower crisis hit people to take control and live fulfilling, dignified and independent lives and engage with policy makers, local and national, to effect systemic change and create a fairer, more equal society' (Organisation website accessed 28/10/2016).

The organisation was established and run by a Director, Luke, who worked very hard to build an organisation that met the complexity of food insecurity head-on through far-reaching and intensive engagement with the needs of those coming to them for help. He was motivated by his Christian beliefs; this was also a major motivating factor for many of the volunteers, who had come to know about the organisation and get involved through their church. The organisation had multiple schemes in operation to fulfil its wide-ranging goals. I volunteered in one of the Emergency Food Aid centres. Here, food was given in weekly parcels to clients in need, who were referred from other organisations.

On first meeting Luke to establish the fieldwork, he told me: 'I have no doubt that we will solve food poverty in Bristol'. He spoke of the ways in which this organisation was driven not to perpetuate its existence but to work itself out of existence, by solving the problems of food poverty in the city. The director had been very successful in engaging the organisation with the national and local politics of food poverty, being consulted and represented at national level on the issue. In part this was due to the visibility of the organisation as well as the different model it offered, which seemed to address some of the problems of organisations such as The Trussell Trust. Specifically, the organisation offered

food support for an unlimited time rather than the three parcels offered by the national organisation, and explicitly contradicted the assumption that a marker of success would be the proliferation of the organisation's facilities, instead focusing on eradicating the need for the organisation's existence. This distinctive selling point of the organisation also led to the rejection of the term 'foodbank' for their operations; as a result, the term 'Emergency Food Aid' is adopted in this thesis instead.

At the weekly sessions, the clients had short, informal interviews with volunteers, in which their cases were monitored. There was also support from a nutritionist on hand for part of the day, and those who were worried about their weight or were looking for nutritional support would also have consultations here. During the interviews, volunteers offered a wide range of support for clients, including a listening ear and advice. However, this advice was mainly from a personal perspective; we often found ourselves having to refer to independent online resources (or to request the assistance of other volunteers) to find out how best to help clients who were facing complicated issues relating to benefits systems, immigrations claims and many other issues.

After a few weeks with the charity, I was asked to fulfil the role of 'interviewer' with the clients. At first I found this to be a challenging role, particularly as a researcher; I was unsure about how to fulfil the role of carrying out weekly interviews with clients – of how to both help them with their cases and undertake my duties as a researcher.

After a client had carried out their interview, they were asked to wait again until they were taken into the food store, where they would select the items for their food parcels. With a focus on dignity and holistic wellbeing, the charity offered nutritionally balanced food parcels. They did this by grouping foods according

to the Eatwell plate and setting allowances within each category (i.e. protein, carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables, etc.) based on recommended guidelines, giving them enough to get through a week. All the food was donated, however, and this meant allowances were also tempered by availability. The food donations came from another group of volunteers, managed by a member of staff, Carol, who was responsible for sourcing and sorting the food. These collections were taken to the organisation's hub in south Bristol and sorted before being allocated to each of the five food centres according to their requirements for the week.

At the time of the study, the charity had five food stores across the city. However, during my time there, one in the south of the city separated from the organisation to continue without their support. I participated in the largest food centre, in the city centre, which was part of a wider network that aimed to cover the whole of the city. I visited other centres and was told how the issues and number of cases were very different here than in the central food centre that I frequented. Each Friday between 10am and 12pm we saw about 40 clients or households. New referrals came at a rate of about one to two a week, and a similar number dropped off the list.

However, working out the best way to monitor these numbers was an evolving challenge for the organisation as it grew, so these figures come from my own observations rather than the organisation's data.

Members of staff and volunteers in the EFA centre

	Pseudonym	Role
Organisational Staff	Luke	Director
	Harriet	Project Leader: food collections
Project Staff	Len	Project Leader and trustee
	Claire	Nutritionist
	Ange	Nutritionist
	Shelly	Nutritionist
Volunteers	Gerry	Welcome Team
	Henry	Welcome Team
	Megan	Interviewer
	Hannah	Interviewer
	Michael	Interviewer
	Juliet	Food store volunteer
	Debbie	Food store volunteer
	Karen	Food store volunteer



Figure 11: Weighing out food for clients at the South Bristol EFA centre

Conclusions

All of these organisations operate in a context of changing governance, particularly in terms of the local variations in deprivation. This rise in deprivation has emerged alongside a national shift towards a neoliberal take on local and community governance (Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002), as well as more recent austerity governance that sees a reconceptualisation of the role of the welfare state (Hamnett 2014). Both of these issues, as well as increasingly severe cuts to benefits and welfare payments, have deepened the reliance on community and charity groups. This shift is both an opportunity and a burden for such groups (Williams et al. 2014); a dynamic that continues to evolve as the welfare changes have severe consequences for inequalities in wellbeing, widening rather than closing the differences between the most and least disadvantaged (Bambra and Garthwaite 2015). This study into food insecurity is therefore located at an intersection of a range of factors that may turn out to be a perfect storm in terms of health and wellbeing and inequalities in the UK in general and Bristol in particular.

The time I spent eating, cooking and talking with staff and volunteers at these three organisations brought to my attention the ways in which these issues are entangled, not only in the political economy of these changes but also, most pressingly, within daily life: the emotional and affective aspects of struggling to eat well. Conversations I had with participants in the study helped me to appreciate the diversity of forms and spaces in which access to food is an issue. Participants showed they can be surrounded by food and yet be unable to eat it, either as a result of material barriers (such as a lack of utensils like tin openers)

or through the experience of being alone and thus finding themselves unable to eat. The more places I looked, from sheltered housing to food aid centres to supermarkets, the more I saw that access to food is slippery and fluid, emerging and receding between and within encounters. Moreover, spending time with these diverse groups revealed the salience of the paradox of access to food – that you can remove all visible barriers but *something* can still get in the way of eating well. While statistics and figures are important – and an increasing number of statistics shows that access to food is an increasingly pressing challenge in ethical, nutritional and even economic terms – it is the lived experiences that are paramount when it comes to making sense of eating well. Consequently, I approach this paradox in the following chapters to try to tease out some of the ways in which eating well might be thought of as more than simply bringing people and food together.

Five. Tasting food insecurity

'Poisoning is easy but nurturing is a craft' (Stengers 2008, p.38)

Why taste food insecurity?

This chapter addresses the research question: how does food insecurity taste? Specifically, I ask: what are the practices of establishing a capacity for eating well in a context of food insecurity? Using the definition of good taste as a *capacity for eating well* developed in Chapter Two, I investigate the cookery courses Dinner Plus and Clever Cooking using multisensory participation, lunch interviews and photo¹⁵ diary interviews. This chapter contributes to debates around ‘critical nutrition’ (Guthman 2014; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013), in which the ‘hegemonic nutrition’ associated with medicalised guidelines is criticised and alternative, diverse ways of knowing good food as well as good health are valued.

Using taste is important because it helps to account for the sensuous, embodied and affective relations that shape how we *know* good food. Also, using taste points towards a socio-materiality; a coming together of human and nonhuman through a shared practice in which all participants have a role to play.

Understanding taste in terms of reflexive capacity moves away from Bourdieu’s ‘taste of necessity’, in which bodies are inscribed with preferences according to their social class (1986). Instead, incorporating Hennion’s ‘reflexivity’ (2007), our attention is drawn to multiple articulations of good taste and the practices and processes through which these articulations are negotiated. Here, bodies become productive rather than passive; ‘world-forming’ rather than world-inscribed (Latimer 2009).

¹⁵ The photo elements appear in Chapter Seven; here, I focus on the discussions that were had in these interviews.

Building from these theoretical ideas, in this chapter I add to previous ethnographic research that shows the challenge of eating a good diet is not an issue of education but rather one of resources (Garthwaite et al. 2015).

However, while agreeing that it is important not to blame the victims of food insecurity through a discourse of ignorance, it is equally important not to assume that having the material resources – the financial means, available food and tools to cook it with – is enough to materialise one's notions of a good diet. In this chapter, therefore, I argue that the practices of taste-making that proliferate here are experimental and fragile, and that they cultivate a new sociability.

First, I consider the two courses, the ways in which they framed food insecurity and the role that food practices in general – and the courses in particular – could play in improving wellbeing for their attendees. The courses had important differences: Clever Cooking focused predominantly on the nutritional elements of food and wellbeing, and Dinner Plus on the social and emotional side. However, rather than compare these two courses directly I show some of the multiple enactments of *good taste* that were produced through them. I demonstrate these courses as settings and argue that the courses offered experimental spaces for articulating practices of good taste, bringing about new sociability. While attendees *ate well* during the course (importantly, for discussions around the role of nutrition education in food insecurity), these articulations were fragile and contingent. As a result, attendance on the course did little to improve material and wellbeing situations outside of this setting.

The courses

The first cookery course was Dinner Plus. Held once a week between 10am and 2pm on an ongoing basis, this course was designed to improve health and wellbeing among socially isolated people in south Bristol. The course involved cooking a meal and eating it together; during the meal, a speaker from a local organisation joined the group to discuss social activities, issues or events that the attendees were interested in. With between 3 and 12 attendees each week, the class had a social and inclusive feel. Members of the group suggested ideas for the meals they would like to make each week and together we prepared, cooked and ate them. Attendees were encouraged to experiment with new recipes and ideas and, although the aim of the course was to encourage health and wellbeing through food, improving nutrition was the main motivation for setting it up. Healthy versions of meals were chosen where possible, but ultimately, the meals and the cooking skills imparted via the act of making those meals were not designed as a means to bring about behaviour change; the main activities focused on sharing a good meal together, socialising and building confidence. As such, the relationship between diet and health and wellbeing was not a straightforward one of ingesting some nutrients and rejecting others, but rather about creating a setting in which attendees came together through cooking and sharing a meal.

Dinner Plus aimed to improve confidence and mental wellbeing and encourage attendees' social interaction. This was measured through surveys in which attendees reflected on their mental health as well as key behaviours, such as how often they left the house. The course leader, a trained nutritionist, was committed to healthy food but saw this as only one part of a larger picture in people's wellbeing. Her community nutrition approach used the Eatwell plate

as a tool to help plan the meals, but this was backgrounded, appearing in the class only when the group chose to talk specifically about nutrition. Practices were very much framed in terms of supportive experimentation and the pooling and sharing of knowledge and experiences.

The second cookery course was delivered by the emergency food provider. Clever Cooking was a short course of two sessions, which clients attended as a one-off. These courses were held roughly once a month, with a new set of attendees on each course. Attendees were recruited from the food aid provider's clients as well as, more recently, referral from related agencies. The aims of this cookery course emphasised the link between health and wellbeing and diet; it aimed to encourage attendees to eat a better mix of foods, develop skills in healthy eating, build knowledge around food waste and encourage thrifty shopping practices.

At Clever Cooking, we made a series of dishes based on ingredients that were readily available in the food parcels, enriched with cheap and easily accessible foods such as eggs and frozen vegetables, which were thought to be easy for attendees to get hold of. Recipes were also developed to correspond to the proportions of carbohydrates, protein, vegetable and other food groups recommended on the Eatwell plate. By giving attendees space to try new foods while teaching them about nutritional guidelines and offering practical home economy tips, the course leaders at Clever Cooking aimed to equip attendees with the skills and knowledge required to eat a diet that corresponds to nutritional guidance for minimum cost and effort (and with minimal waste). On completion of the course, attendees were also given a piece of cooking equipment (a non-stick frying pan or a hand blender), which in addition to encouraging participation equipped attendees to cook in their own homes.



Figure 12: Getting started at Clever Cooking.



Figure 13: Getting started at Clever Cooking.



Figure 14: Getting started at Dinner Plus.



Figure 15: Getting started at Dinner Plus, teas and coffees.

These two courses were different in multiple ways, but both used food as an engagement tool and used measures of embodied wellbeing as indicators of success. For Clever Cooking, this was measured by imparted knowhow within the class, while for Dinner Plus the measure was based on how people felt. The attendees from the two courses also faced different challenges. Dinner Plus – aimed at south Bristol residents who were socially isolated – struggled to engage with the types of people that the course aimed to reach. Katie, the nutritionist from Dinner Plus, expressed frustration that although she had been able to secure funding for the course – including arranging transport to help people who struggled to get out and about to attend – those who attended were mainly individuals who were already engaged with the charity that ran Dinner Plus and their various other cookery courses. The attendees were mainly women aged between 45 and 65; most lived alone and did not work. Some attendees spoke of issues around anxiety and depression; during our teatime chats, Katie often steered the conversation towards these feelings, as well as how to combat isolation. In addition to the meal, an invited guest would join us most weeks from a local organisation that ran activities such as yoga classes, mindfulness activities and pastimes such as walking, knitting and sailing.

Teaching in Clever Cooking was carried out by a team of two. Shelly, the nutritionist, delivered PowerPoint slides on nutritional information and thrifty food tips, while Ange, a former food technology teacher, gave cookery demonstrations to show attendees how to make recipes that would deliver the nutritional benefits Shelly had told us about. As such, there was a classroom feel to the day. Experimentation took the form of adding spices or flavourings we liked, or challenging attendees to modify their prejudices around tastes. For example, we were discussing the benefits of oily fish when Elaine (an attendee)

mentioned she did not like fish. Upon further questioning, she revealed she had only ever tried white fish. Ange arranged to bring smoked, peppered mackerel to the next session so that Elaine could try it.

The attendees at Clever Cooking did not get to know one another to the same extent as those at Dinner Plus, although two of those interviewed mentioned they enjoyed being able to get to meet some of the other clients and that they had chatted to one another at the food centre after meeting on the course. The course I attended had five participants. Clients at the EFA centre were offered the opportunity to attend the course via promotional leaflets posted to them, through conversations with the volunteers during their weekly 'interview' or by referral from the nutritionist if they were being seen by one. Recruitment was a challenge here also; although incentives of cooking equipment were offered for those who completed the course (see Chapter Three), these seemed to have only a limited effect. For instance, at the course I took part in, only five clients attended out of the 12 who had confirmed they would be coming.

The challenge of recruiting attendees for these courses brings into question the commonly floated assumption that food is always a good means to engage people. Attendees from both courses told me they enjoyed cooking, and most had a good idea of how to cook. Some attendees at both courses seemed to be interested in learning new skills; however, as I will show, it was not clear that attendees utilised these skills and went on to make the dishes again at home. Instead, a different kind of *learning to be affected* was taking place, as the courses offered settings in which materials, devices and attendees collaborated to make space to express reflexive tastes. While a comparative approach to these two courses might give empirical weight to the benefits of one of these approaches over another, my concern instead lies with the ways in which the

food practices within the group enacted diverse experiences of *good food* through practices of *taste-making*.

Clever Cooking

- Research suggests what we eat affects not only our physical health but mental health and behaviour including mood, concentration, and even how we react to stress
- Open to anyone who would like to improve their knowledge of healthy eating, brush up on or learn new cookery skills and reduce food waste
 - Evaluation measure[s] are used to assess whether participation increases knowledge and skills around healthy eating, shopping reducing food waste and cooking before and after the course
- Clients have the chance to put the information into practice with a range of easy, affordable and healthy recipes
 - Course content is based on the Eat Well Plate model to explore the principles of a healthy diet and how this can be put into practice on a budget with limited facilities

Figure 16: Text from flyer advertising the Clever Cooking course. This was produced by the EFA centre and appears to be aimed more at referral agencies than EFA clients.

Dinner Plus:

Don't get stuck indoors feeling lonely, under-the-weather or in a rut.

Each week you will be able to:

- Help to prepare and share in a delicious lunch with *good* company.
 - Find out more about what's going on in your neighbourhood
 - Hear from speakers on topics of interest.

No matter what your tastes, interests or physical ability, there is a place for you

- **Fully equipped kitchen with facilities for people using wheelchairs**
- **Get lots of support from our cooking tutor and volunteer helpers**
- **Help choose menus, speakers and activities**

£2 per week

- We can pick you up from home & drop you back

Figure 17: Text from a flyer advertising the Dinner Plus course. The course was aimed at socially isolated people and focussed on making it easy to attend the class.

The courses were designed by the nutritionist to tackle apparently separate areas of food insecurity. Clever Cooking was explicitly aimed at those using emergency food aid or those working with the organisation's referral agencies. Dinner Plus was aimed at those in social isolation and attendees had to live within local postcodes; most came to the course from other services (including other cooking courses and mental health support groups) run by the charity. As a result, attendees were often known to the course leader or her colleagues. Dinner Plus assumed attendees to have a certain degree of purchasing power, while Clever Cooking assumed attendees to be in crisis. Clever Cooking was keen to foster aspiration by teaching attendees to cook meals that contained not only ingredients offered in the food aid parcels but also other items, such as eggs. However, although this crisis was assumed to be transitory, the aspirations envisaged only extended so far. The dishes taught were still frugal and conformed to particular ideas of – perhaps white British – cuisine.

Although the attendees at Clever Cooking were framed in terms of crisis and those at Dinner Plus in terms of stability, the financial/material position of the attendees were in many ways very similar. One attendee at Dinner Plus had used a foodbank recently, and was waiting to hear if an imminent review of her benefits would leave her needing to use one again. At Clever Cooking, one attendee who used the foodbank said she 'was able to buy enough food but once I'd done that there wasn't much money left for other things the children needed' (Elaine, Clever Cooking attendee); another had been a former client but now found themselves in a stable situation.

The varied *framings* of situations were also tied up with the approaches used to ameliorate those situations. At Clever Cooking, the seats were arranged like a classroom, with slides projected onto a wall that everyone faced. These slides

included the Eatwell plate as well as notes and exercises that encouraged attendees to shop and eat cleverly, paying attention to nutritional labels and pricing strategies of the supermarkets. Claire had designed Clever Cooking to:

'[I]ncrease people's awareness of the links between diet and mental and physical health. 'Cos I think sometimes that link gets a bit lost. And then give people the skills so they can do that. So, that might be through better choices in their shopping, through learning to cook [a greater] variety [of things], and [gaining] more confidence around cooking. Maybe reducing food waste as well, that's quite an important one, especially with fruit and vegetables, a lot of that ends up in the bin. Those are the aims ...'

Claire, nutritionist, Clever Cooking.

Here, behaviours are key indicators and outcomes. A promotional leaflet for the course advertised the measurable outcomes as enjoyment of the course, increased skills and whether the attendee's diet changed outside of the group. At the end of the two-day course, attendees were also asked to make pledges to improve their diets. In contrast, at Dinner Plus, Katie discussed the complexity of the course's role in attendees' health and wellbeing. Although personally convinced of the link between food and health, she was also conscious of the limits of her role. During our one-on-one conversations, she often made reference to her background, referring to what she thought of as her privilege in being educated, and she was often critical of what she saw as a middle-class preoccupation with food. Reflecting this, the aims of the Dinner Plus course were less focused on behaviour change and outcomes.

'I would hope that people would get an improved diet and therefore health out of it. However, if you ... don't engage with the issues that food can throw up for people about self-confidence, self-belief ... the emotional context of it and things like that ... that's not going to go too well! Also, that's what people are interested in, and motivated by... the point of view that people have when they come to this, those are the ways that you get people to change their diet ... so it's about what interests and motivates her and going with that.'

Katie, nutritionist and course leader, Dinner Plus.

A recent study of a foodbank in Stockton on Tees showed that those in food poverty are hampered more by their financial situation than their skills: 'People accessing the foodbank were aware of how to eat healthily but were unable to do so due to affordability' (Garthwaite, Collins, and Bambra 2015). In Bristol, cooking together with attendees revealed to me the extent of skills and tactics they were able to draw upon in order to ensure a good diet. These skills ranged from savvy choice and use of cooking sauces to ensure the best flavour and maximise economy, to baking all of their own bread and bottling fruit. These tactics display confidence and an ability to meet their own needs, often with limited resources. Not all of these skills might be valued in hegemonic understandings of cuisine – for example, using cake mix rather than baking from scratch – but the employment of these skills *suit*ed the needs of attendees, and displayed a wide range of aptitudes as well as a *resilience* in food practices. Consequently, although these were cookery courses, the learning element was less about cooking as a skill and more about experimenting with ways of eating well. Despret's (2004) work on 'being with' as a way of learning to be affected is

helpful to escape the bind in which understanding the outcomes of the courses in terms of empowerment can be ‘captured’ (Pignarre and Stengers 2011). Similarly, Latour shows that practices of medicine and science are incapable of reducing the world but – as distributed activities that are enabled through a host of devices – new articulations can be made (Latour 2004). Therefore, the practices of nutrition in *Clever Cooking* and *Dinner Plus* can be productively understood through these multiple articulations of bodies and tastes, which may include but also go far beyond alternative or ‘hegemonic’ conceptualisations of nourishment (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013). Indeed, ‘disciplines can only *add* to the world and almost never subtract phenomena’ (Latour 2004, p.226 original emphasis).

Tea and coffee

One example of the different framings of the relationship between food practices and wellbeing can be seen through the setup of the two courses.

Fieldnotes: Clever Cooking, Feb 2015

'I arrive early at the centre. Shelly and Ange [course leaders] are already there and both are in the process of setting up. There is a table tucked in a corner by the door onto which Ange is unpacking ingredients. Nearby there are two other tables with two-ring electric hobs on. There is a small arc of ten chairs at the front of the hall, near the stage, as well as a table, laptop and a projector for Shelly's part of the class.

I arrive just before ten o'clock; the first attendee arrives at about 10. He is Les, a client I have seen at the weekly food sessions but who I haven't spoken to before.... Luke [the Director] also pops in at the start to "make sure we can cope"; he chats to Shelly and the attendees as they arrive. Next to arrive is Elaine. She is a new client at the food store, one I haven't met before. She is probably in her late thirties, and tells us later than she has four children. She is the only one with children... the others live alone....

At about ten past [ten o'clock], Ange realises that she does not have enough milk. I go out and get some more. I go to the supermarket and when I return, May and Gary have arrived. May is a student from overseas who has been supported by the charity for some months. Gary is no longer receiving help from the charity, but did have weekly support for eleven months. When I return, the group is no closer to starting and we end up waiting until 10.35, in case anyone else turns up. Waiting is a little awkward, as we sit on the pews sideways and make small talk slightly awkwardly.

At about 10.35, Shelly starts the group and we move to the chairs. The group all sit in the back row and I join them... We comment on the fact that everyone wants to sit at the back and compare it to school. "First, I am going to give you an introduction to nutrition," Shelly tells us. Later on we will get to cook something.

Shelly starts by introducing herself, then Ange, then me. She asks us to go around the room and name our favourite vegetable.'

Fieldnotes: Dinner Plus November 2014

I wait outside the cooking room with Susan, Barbara and Cheryl... The ladies update me on last week's class. They tell me that Barbara had a sore throat and Susan had taken the week off to see a counsellor so, all three of us were absent [last time]. Cheryl tells us that they made cauliflower cheese, and meringues which she thought delicious ...

While we wait for Katie, Cheryl also tells us that we are making chocolate custard [this week], which is also one of her favourites...

When Katie arrives [we go in]... As usual, we take our seats around the kitchen island... As we drink tea and coffee, Vicky opens up to the group a bit. She tells us that in the summer, she has been enjoying going out with her dog and to see [her friend]. But now it's winter, she finds it hard to get out; she feels lonely in the house... Vicky tells us that she is lonely and doesn't have much reason to leave the house. [She also has some maintenance problems in her flat that she doesn't know what to do about.] ...As a group, Katie encourages us to think of ways in which we can ask for help. She suggests asking family members, emphasising that it doesn't have to be men, that women might be able to do it. Vicky says that she has asked most of her family and they don't know anyone that could help. ...Vicky says that she would not feel comfortable trying to fix the tap. She says... that she wouldn't want to be "digging around upside-down underneath it". Katie... suggests that perhaps one week we should have a "DIY for women" speaker, who can show us some things.

Katie returns the conversation from maintenance problems to the more general one of depression. She reminds Vicky (whilst being careful to explain that she is not "belittling the problem"), that this time of year is one in which we all feel a bit more down, as it is so dark and wet.

She talks briefly about comfort eating. "I don't know why they call it comfort eating", she says, "it always makes you feel so uncomfortable afterwards!" She says that she has heard that studies show that looking at old photos can have the same [positive] effect...

Later, Liz arrives. She has not been for several weeks and everyone says it is nice to see her. She still looks quite weak and frail...

In today's group [Katie always calls it group, not class] we are cooking bean casserole. As usual, the ingredients are on the table in front of us; Katie introduces the ingredients before telling us how we will go about cooking them.

'...Food is one of those central things that everybody can talk about and everyone can share in a conversation about. You start up a conversation starter, of what makes a nice chicken stew and actually someone's got something to say about it, so it's a great, it's something that everyone has in common ... It's the way that it can draw people together in that way, that sort of social aspect of it.'

Katie, Dinner Plus.

As a commensal experience that allowed attendees to get out of the house, meet new people and try new things, Dinner Plus was about much more than simply learning about cooking and eating well. At the start of the group, we caught up with each other over tea and biscuits and fruit. Attendees came to the group on a weekly basis and could keep coming back for as long as they wished. There was no set syllabus to learn; instead, we discussed over our meal what we would like to cook in the next week's session. There was also a visitor each week who told us something about a local service or group. The tea, coffee and biscuits at the start of the session served a practical function, allowing people to get comfortable while waiting for everyone to arrive and activities to start. The biscuits and fruit were also a chance for those who had not eaten breakfast to do so. As we can glean from the fieldnotes above, the ritual of tea and biscuits served important functions for attendees in different ways: helping attendees to feel comfortable (either by sitting and drinking or by taking on the role of helper for others); giving attendees energy in the form of a caffeine and sugar boost to kick-start the session; bringing the group together and offering space to talk about troubles, listen to others and develop group feeling, and providing

a nice practical space in which Katie could introduce the recipes for that day's lunch.

Cooking together was an important bodily practice in which attendees were able to share their own skills and interests, get to know others and contribute to a group meal. Moreover, cooking and eating were all part of a continuous practice of socialising. In contrast to public perception regarding the need to *educate* those who struggle to eat well, the focus here was on using the skills and motivations that the group already had to develop their confidence – not only as cooks but also more generally, to improve their self-esteem.

Fishcakes

Tinned fish fishcakes.	
Serves: 2.	Skill level: Moderate.
Fish is a cheap, nutritious food, which contains omega 3 fatty acids. The fish are already cooked so they are simply added to the potato and fried, or could be baked in the oven. Any tinned or smoked fish may be used.	
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 tablespoons packet mashed potato flakes • 100ml boiling water • 1 teaspoon packet soup • 1 tin fish (mackerel, tuna, sardines) • 1 tablespoon vegetable oil 	Equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frying pan • fish slice • small bowl • tablespoon • serving plate.
Method: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make up the potato with boiling water until it is stiffer than it says on the packet. Add the water gradually and make a judgement on the thickness. 2. Add the teaspoon of dried soup mix to add flavour. 3. Open the tin of fish and drain the oil, use the oil to fry the fishcakes in if you have no oil. 	

4. **Heat up the oil from the tin or the 1 tablespoon of oil in a frying pan.**
5. **Put the fish cakes into the pan and fry until brown on one side.**
6. **Turn them over with a fish slice and brown the other side.**
7. **Keep warm until ready to eat.**

Choose oily fish at least once a week Remember oily fish are salmon, fresh tuna or the cheaper varieties such as tinned pilchards, mackerel or sardines as well as smoked mackerel.

These contain omega 3 fatty acids which really do help our brain function well and can affect our behaviour and mood.¹⁶

Figure 18: Fishcake recipe from Clever Cooking.



Figure 19: Making fishcakes at Clever Cooking with tuna and instant mashed potatoes.

'I made the fish, you know, the fish cakes they made... I didn't like them 'cos they was too dry. I always put sweetcorn in with

¹⁶ Taken from 'Clever Cooking' website. Accessed 10/4/2015 to preserve anonymity, I have redacted the precise address.

mine... It tastes... better... I'd do it [from] scratch... I don't use that packet mash potato, I don't like that, it's horrible... I always... use fresh, you know: you boil the potatoes then mash it, then mix it like that.'

Cathy, attendee, Clever Cooking.

SALMON & HERB FISHCAKES

Serves 4

Preparation time: 20 mins Cooking time 5–7 mins

Ingredients

300g (10 ozs) potatoes
220g (8ozs) sweet potatoes
200g (8ozs) salmon fillet
100ml milk, mixed with 100ml of water
2 handfuls fresh dill, chopped
a few spring onions, sliced
a squeeze of fresh lemon juice
1 beaten egg
A handful of flour
1 tablespoons of oil

Method

1. Peel the potatoes and sweet potatoes, boil until tender then drain and mash well.
2. Whilst the potatoes are cooking, place the salmon in a frying pan and pour in the milk and water. Gently poach the salmon until the fish is cooked and will flake easily (around 10-15 minutes).
3. Peel the skin from the cooked salmon and discard. Flake the fish into the potato mash and mix in the spring onions, dill and a squeeze of lemon.
4. Shape the mix into 4 large patties with your hands. Dip in the beaten egg, then the flour before frying the cakes for 5 – 7 minutes until golden, turning halfway through.

These are lovely served with watercress and a wedge of lemon.

Figure 20: Fishcake recipe from Dinner Plus.

'It's not expensive, it's good food, although I've been very disappointed with the fishcake and the spaghetti Bolognese recipes, which to me were absolutely tasteless. When I do it, I put a lot of spice in it. I put a lot of black pepper in with the fishcakes, I roll them in a lot of flour, cook them in a lot of fat, they turn out to be lovely, golden-coloured and crispy, whereas the ones we did in class – wow! And I don't think salmon makes good fishcakes anyway, I think mackerel makes much nicer fishcakes however, so I was disappointed in the last two as a food to eat, but I will persevere and I stuff it in without any enjoyment at all. You saw me yesterday, struggling, struggling, struggling, and I ate it all but it wasn't enjoyable. I didn't enjoy it, I thought "No, I'm not going to waste this, I've cooked this, I'm jolly well going to eat it and lump it!"'

Gus, attendee, Dinner Plus.



Figure 21: Fishcakes from Dinner Plus.

The recipe for tuna fishcakes made with instant mashed potatoes was used in Clever Cooking for two reasons. First, the tins of tuna were a staple of the food parcels, and clients would have the option to take at least one of these tins home with them each week. Additionally, government health regulations recommend that we eat fish each week (the recommendations relate to oily fish in the main because of their omega-3 content). During the presentation at the start of the session, Shelly introduces the need for fish by showing that there is a correlation between mood and food and that omega-3s can not only combat depression but are also essential for brain health. She mentions a study that was carried out in prisons, where the introduction of omega-3s dramatically reduced the level of violence among inmates¹⁷. This study and the role of

¹⁷ It is very likely that Shelly was referring to (Gesch, 2002), the same study that is discussed by Bennet (2010) and Abrahamsson et al (2015).

omega-3s in nutritional advice is discussed by Bennet (2010) and Abrahamsson et al (2015). Omega-3 fatty acids are mobilised in these academic debates to demonstrate the agency of (food) materials. Where Bennet cites the study as one example of this agency, Abrahamsson et al. take issue with Bennet's analysis, arguing it takes at face value the findings of the study rather than investigating the practices that create such knowledge. Abrahamsson goes on to show alternative ways of encountering omega-3s in the food chain, specifically relating to the asymmetries inherent in excessively depleting fish stocks in the Global South in order to make such supplements for the Global North.

In the case of Dinner Plus, while ingesting omega-3s may provide a material capacity for certain (healthy) brain functions, there is no scope to address the way it feels when you can only afford to feed either yourself or your children, when your asylum appeal is rejected or when your benefits are sanctioned because you were minutes late for an appointment at the Jobcentre. Moreover, as Abrahamsson et al. (2015) show, benefits of omega-3 oils come only when a person is deficient in these nutrients. Additionally, while the recipe points out that fresh tuna is a good source of omega-3s, the tinned tuna more readily available to the EFA clients is not. Ange and Shelly explain this in the class, but this qualification highlights that the precarious material conditions in which the attendees live come into conflict with the nutritional advice they are given.

At Clever Cooking, we fry the fishcakes. This is because ovens are more expensive to run than hobs; also, the makeshift kitchen set up in the church hall has no ovens (although the group was looking for funding to buy some of these in future so that they could offer more dishes in the course).

'During the part [of the discussion] on omega-3s and oily fish, Elaine mentions that she does not like the taste of fish. "I wish I

did,” she says, “I know it’s good for you but I just don’t like it”. She tells us that she can eat some types of white fish like cod (“I like fish fingers!”), but other types, not so much. Bev promises to bring some fish for her to try to see if we can get her to like new things. “It’s easier to try [new things] if you don’t have to pay for it!”’

Fieldnotes from Clever Cooking.

At Dinner Plus, the fishcakes are different. We choose from different types of fresh fish. There’s haddock, plaice and salmon. No-one is keen to make the salmon ones, so I give it a go. Getting attendees to cook different versions of the recipes (either alone or in pairs) means we can all try different variations without the risk of having to buy and cook something only to discover that it is not to our liking.

Fishcakes were on the menu here because of the same recommendations as at Clever Cooking, although in both cases the fish provided were not the oily varieties recommended in government advice. Perhaps tuna and white fish (such as haddock and plaice and salmon) are more palatable to those who find the strong smell of oily fish harder to stomach.

As related above, when making fishcakes in Clever Cooking, Elaine mentioned that she had never tried mackerel. Ange told her that she will bring some smoked, peppered mackerel to the class the next time, so that Elaine can try it. In that class, we add the fish to a stir-fry recipe.

‘Yeah... The fishcakes... Do you know what? I don’t think I would cook them for myself. On the course we were saying about oily

fish at least once a week, but I went and got myself some cod liver oil tablets, because... I just can't... I don't think I'd make the effort to cook it, for myself, you know. Didn't really like the smoked mackerel, I suppose it was okay but when I was eating it the other day it just made the stir-fry taste just, too fishy, to me... So, I cheated when I did my stir-fry, didn't put any fish in it. But I did put peanuts and chickpeas in it.'

Elaine, attendee, Clever Cooking.

At Dinner Plus, the fishcakes were part of a broader effort to link mood and food. Here, the food itself was part of a set of commensal practices which were designed to restore confidence, take pride in one's achievements and feel good about oneself. The experiments with fish were met with lukewarm responses; there were lots of fishcakes left over at the end of Dinner Plus that day, and I ended up taking some of them home. At the end of each class, leftovers were split among those who wished to take them to prevent waste. When I ate them later, the fishcakes are quite dry and chewy. Although I do not eat fish as a rule, and am therefore not used to the fishy taste, they still seem bland to me, with very little seasoning. Also, the fact that they were baked after the fish had already been poached meant the resultant cake was dry. As I forced the fishcake down, I found myself agreeing with Gus's evaluation.

I did not try the fishcakes from Clever Cooking. The briny, almost acidic aroma of the tuna caused me to wrinkle my nostrils; mixing in the dehydrated potatoes reminded me a little too much of preparing wallpaper paste rather than dinner. Dehydrated potatoes are chosen over fresh ones because they keep well and are easy and inexpensive to cook. Ange anticipated that some of us might be sceptical about using them, but emphasised they are 'much better than they

used to be in the old days'. Specifically, she mentions that in the past, instant mashed potatoes had very high salt levels, recounting an incident that involved a child dying, apparently because he ate them every day.

From each of these recipes, as well as the practices of cooking them and our reactions to eating them, we can begin to see some of the multiplying articulations of eating well. Nutritional advice (to eat fish twice a week) is translated into recipes for fishcakes: attendees on both courses are given the opportunity to experiment with foods they might not otherwise buy. We cooked the fishcakes using the available resources to incorporate these novel foods into our own repertoire. For example, Les added plenty of spices to his fishcakes. At Dinner Plus we did not add much spice, as most of the diners disliked spicy foods. However, this produced fishcakes that – to Gus and me – tasted bland and dry. Cooking and eating the fishcakes was a space for our own skills and knowledges of eating well to emerge, to be interpreted in this new context and applied in new ways. At Dinner Plus, we sat together and enjoyed the shared meal of fishcakes with vegetables; at Clever Cooking, attendees took the fishcakes home in plastic boxes to eat later. Elaine told me later that she did not enjoy the fishcakes either, and that she would not be making them again. Instead, she opted to buy an omega-3 supplement to take regularly, as her experiments with both fishcakes and smoked mackerel stir-fry did not cultivate a pleasure for fish.

The meal

It is also illustrative to consider how the course leaders imagined these cookery courses featured in people's lives. For Clever Cooking, a key principle was a sensitivity to the context of precarious living conditions, of limited income and

resources. Consequently, Ange told me: 'I always buy the cheapest ingredients for this course', her idea being that these were items that those who were in crisis would be familiar with and/or able to afford. In addition, the recipes were suited to the kinds of foods donated to the food store. For instance, increased donations of couscous meant an excess on the shelves, so a recipe utilising couscous was added to Clever Cooking to familiarise clients with it and encourage them to take it to cook at home. In meetings, the course leaders discussed the need to adjust to clients and their needs, not the other way around. In contrast, Dinner Plus aimed to take people out of their daily lives, to deliver a meal in which the normal pressures of looking after family or feeling alone were absent, and where attendees had a large larder, fridge and freezer from which to experiment with new ingredients, recipes and skills. Katie used the local supermarket so that items were familiar, but because of the lack of focus on crisis and poverty attendees were not imagined to only be able to afford the cheapest items in future. Furthermore, they were encouraged to engage with healthy items.

Although we did not eat a sit-down meal, it was striking that the attendees often expressed that they were sated by what we cooked. 'I don't normally eat this much in the day', said Les, refusing a piece of omelette. He went on to tell us that he felt uncomfortably full. Although the attendees all took some home, some reported not eating all the food they were given (as Gary told me: 'I've given the wraps away, I saw a homeless man and I gave him them').

Claire at Clever Cooking devised recipes based on her nutritional knowledge but also situated this in terms of attendee feedback and an awareness of their situation. As most attendees were either reliant on food aid or had recently been

so, it was assumed that food would need to be cheap and used to maximum efficiency.

Claire: 'People tell us, "Oh, I don't know what couscous is". I don't think we had couscous in at the beginning, and we get a lot of couscous in the food store so [Ange] will now do a vegetable couscous... She's started [making] a chapatti for a wrap because we get those [in the food store]. Some of the dishes have stayed the same, the chow mein, the omelette and the smoothie and the breakfast cereal, they've always been in there. Rice pudding, I think people have put some feedback on their forms that they wanted some sweet dishes as well ...'

Emma: 'When you're thinking about the meals, do you feel limited by the ingredients in the food store, do you worry about that?'

Claire: 'No, because the clients are not going to be using us forever ... They're going to be buying their own food so I think it's nice to introduce some foods that aren't in the food store, like eggs for example, things that we know that are nutritious and that are affordable, we'll put in a mix of those foods as well.'

Claire, nutritionist and course designer, Clever Cooking.

Although there was some interaction between clients and practitioners in Clever Cooking, it came in the form of evaluation forms and verbal feedback, to be applied to future courses. The nutritionists at Clever Cooking were, however, strategic in the ways in which they pitched their classes to make the information and recipes appealing for attendees.

To find out more about how the Clever Cooking course was designed, Emma Roe and I joined a meeting with the course leaders and charity directors. Here, the organisers acknowledged that there needed to be an allowance for personal/cultural preferences when it came to flavour. Interestingly, some of the recipes were branded slightly differently when the course was run in the city centre (where the groups were more multicultural) compared to when it was run in south Bristol. In the latter, the 'lentil dhal' was instead referred to as 'lentil stew' and the 'fajitas' became 'vegetable wraps'.

There was also concern over how best to engage with 'food culture'. Emma mentioned feedback from one client who had said that her children had requested 'British food like muffins'. The lady did not know how to cook these, and would like to see them in the cookery course. However, the course leaders were ambivalent about the role of sweet dishes in the course. Although rice pudding had sometimes been featured, it was not at the time I attended. In the meeting, the course leaders expressed that 'They [attendees] don't need our help to eat more puddings'. Indeed, learning to bake muffins was seen as antithetical to the 'clever' element of the cooking course, which the leaders interpreted as being more about nutrition than skills.

Here, the organisers of the course fell back on common discourses around food skills, discussing what they saw as an erosion of cooking skills. In this sense, the Clever Cooking course was a means to help people (as one nutritionist stated in the meeting) to learn 'the things that they don't know they need'. Again, nutritional science framed the ethos of the course, with experts in place to guide and enlighten attendees:

‘How to help people to cook better? ...

“They don’t need our help to eat more puddings ...”

*Cooking cleverly – it is about nutrition rather than a bakery
course/skills course.’*

From shorthand notes, taken during meeting with course leaders.

While Dinner Plus was designed to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes for socially isolated attendees, health and wellbeing were understood in broad and related terms. Also, the role that food played in delivering these outcomes was uncertain and related as much to the challenge of engaging attendees’ interest as to practices of healthy diet or commensal wellbeing. Therefore, while Katie was motivated by a conviction that diet could affect the confidence of those who attended, she was much less certain as to whether the meals we cooked and shared in the group would deliver outcomes related to health and wellbeing and dietary practices in attendees’ day-to-day lives. For Katie, food was an important medium through which she could engage with attendees to generate a shared experience. This did not result in behavioural or dietary change outside of the group, even indirectly, as she hoped it might; however, this does not mean the group was not worthwhile for attendees. While attendees engaged with food and with others through cooking and eating together, the good affect that emerged did not result in new personal embodied predilections for ‘healthier’ foods. Instead, Katie was able to use food practices to contribute towards wellbeing aims, such as (in her words) ‘feeling like they, they can get out and about more ... They talk to friends and family more, maybe rely on

friends and family more ... That they're less insular, really, and that their overall level of happiness is improved'.

Despite this, for Gus, the primary benefit was not social or emotional but material. With mobility problems and reduced energy, cooking and shopping for himself was a challenge. As a very social person, he had several visitors every day at home:

'I'm quite happy here [at home] and I don't really want to go there [to the group]. Oh, they're nice people, don't get me wrong, lovely people but from the point of view of practical help, no, not so far I don't think it's helped a bit ... Where it does help me is that it solves, you know, somewhere to eat on a Tuesday and there's something left over, I can eat that on Wednesday, that's the only benefit I'm getting from it. And it's not expensive, it's good food, although I've been very disappointed with the fishcake and the spaghetti Bolognese recipes, which to me were absolutely tasteless.

Gus, attendee, Dinner Plus.

Sitting at the table, Gus told me that he sometimes had to force himself to eat what had been cooked, 'forcing it down' and 'struggling, struggling'. While he did not enjoy the food itself, he told me: 'if someone else cooks me something, I will eat it, out of politeness'.

As we can see, though Gus was very positive about the group he was ambivalent about the food, which he sometimes found bland. This made it even harder for him to eat, considering his loss of appetite. Yet, the setting of the family-style meal brought with it a sense of obligation, which meant that he carried on

eating long after it was pleasurable. Gus came to the group because he wanted some support to eat well, as he was losing weight; while feeling obliged to eat everything on one's plate might not always be a form of care, in this case the dynamic meant that Gus ate more than he would if he was eating alone. Indeed, the sociability of the courses was not equally shared. For Pat, it was part of the attraction:

'I love the fact with having the, you know, somebody to come and talk to us, it's so informal, which is nice, and I think it's brought everybody out of theirselves [sic] as well a little bit, so it's done quite good for social aspects as well. You know, it's like we all notices that one week that Susan wasn't quite herself, you know, and that's because she was worried about her neighbour or whatever, so there was a reason, it's getting her to say it isn't it.'

Pat, volunteer, Dinner Plus.

Cathy, at Clever Cooking, also said the chance to meet and get to know people was part of the enjoyment of the course:

'I do enjoy coming down 'cos [I'm] meeting new people. 'Cos you're not, you feel like you're not the only one in that situation. They're probably worse [off] than you are... There is a lot of people worse off than us, but a lot of people are [more] well-off than us! [Laughs]'

Cathy, attendee, Clever Cooking.

Dinner Plus explicitly aimed to address social isolation and tackled this problem head-on by offering a weekly meal with a main course and dessert, eaten sat around a table, during which we served each other. The course leader sat at the head of the table, partly so that she could get up and serve the courses and partly because her pregnancy meant this was the most comfortable place for her to sit. In many ways, this meal resembled a home-style family meal, with Katie taking on a maternal role, gently chiding those who interrupted others and encouraging those who had cooked each dish to describe it and serve it to the group. We also worked as a team to set up the table, taking on roles to do this, and worked together afterwards to wash up and clear away crockery and cutlery.

As mentioned, at Dinner Plus, sensitivity to a variety of needs often meant the foods cooked did not conform to everyone's idea of good flavour. Katie – who also ran cooking courses to help people lose weight – made an effort to make foods healthier, safer and easier to cook by bringing her nutritional training to the fore; for example, not cooking in fat or using spray oil when necessary to reduce the fat content. However, cooking together in this way – this shared negotiation of tastes and skills – meant food that would be palatable to everyone present might be met with some complaints regarding bland taste. Moreover, several members of the group did not like spicy foods and were intolerant of alliums, which meant we had to make versions of dishes without the usual flavour enhancers of onion, garlic, chillies and other spices. In addition, Katie did not use salt in her kitchen and some attendees, used to cooking with salt, noted its lack.

In contrast, the Clever Cooking course did not offer a shared meal setting. With a more educational style, the activities of the class were centred on an imagined

meal that would happen in another time and place, where the attendees would interpret the knowledge they had gained on the day and apply it to their home setting. Because the course was targeted at clients of the EFA centre, there was a sensitivity to the ways in which attendants might not have basic cooking equipment and facilities at home.

The Cooking Plus course had moments where we tried the foods together: at the beginning of the first course, Ange made smoothies and homemade muesli, and we gathered around sipping and spooning from plastic cups. As we made each dish, I worked with the leaders to portion them up and offer a sample to the attendees as they had a go at cooking the dish for themselves. We ate tortilla and wraps standing up or perched on the edge of tables, from our hands or from floppy paper plates. The course ran from 10a.m. until 2p.m., and the snacking meant that while we did not go hungry it did not offer a meal experience. People did not eat at the same time, instead choosing a convenient point in their own cooking to come over and try, nibbling on a tortilla as the eggs in their own pans gradually turned from runny to solid.

The shared meal could be seen as an outcome in itself for the Dinner Plus course. Simply by being there we were eating well, getting out of the house, meeting new people and trying new things; yet, this was not listed as an outcome for funders. Instead, the focus was on behavioural changes outside of the class; the aim was to improve people's wellbeing 'out there', not 'in here'. In part, this was to prevent attendees becoming reliant on the course. Although the course is a drop-in event and runs continuously, the course leader wanted attendees to be able to move on from it and to no longer rely on it.

The food itself became instrumental in the framing of each of these cooking courses. The conventions and restrictions surrounding funding were one reason

for this: these courses, both reliant on temporary external sources of funding, had to be able to *prove* that they were offering wider benefit to the community and the attendees. It was not enough to offer a nice meal; the benefit was not in the practice, but in the outcome. In none of the activities I studied was the stated aim ‘to feed people’, nor ‘to share a meal’.



Figure 22: Sharing a meal at Dinner Plus.



Figure 23: Trying new things: gooseberry fool at Dinner Plus.



Figure 24: Samples of the vegetable wrap at Clever Cooking.



Figure 25: Trying new things: seasoning the couscous at Clever Cooking.

Just desserts

Desserts were a means of accepting the interests and skills of attendees as they were, rather than trying to change them. We might understand this as a particularly sweet ‘carrot’, which uses what Hayes-Conroy and Martin (2010) refer to as ‘bodily motivations’ to engage attendees with the group and its aims. This was one particularly salient difference between the two groups: Dinner Plus made desserts – from tiramisu to fruit flan to upside-down cake – every week, whereas Clever Cooking ruled these out as unhealthy and inappropriate.

Katie often said, in tones of mock horror, ‘I am a nutritionist really!’ as we made brownies, tiramisu, and a variety of cakes, fruit crumbles and other foods that would predominantly fall into the ‘eat less of these’ section of the Eatwell plate. ‘This is dangerous’, Katie said, waving a recipe for a three-minute microwave brownie made in a mug, ‘we are now always only three minutes away from a brownie’. The different approaches to desserts – the different values assigned to them – at Clever Cooking and Dinner Plus were indicative of the way each course framed their own understanding of the relationship between diet and wellbeing. We might compare the use of these desserts with that of the chocolate pudding related in stories about geriatric care (Harbers et al. 2002). In that case, the flavour of the chocolate stimulated appetite and made food more enjoyable in a context where food refusal was common. At Dinner Plus, we could read the role of puddings as being the spoon of sugar that helped to digest the medicine of the nutrition course. At Clever Cooking, the approach was a rational one in which being clever about what you ate enabled you to get all the nutrition you needed, whereas at Dinner Plus the approach was about

commensality – the sharing of the experience. This could have been achieved without pudding, of course, but the desserts became a central bonding point for attendees.

As I have recounted, some disliked the first dishes we made at Dinner Plus, often because the spices had to be minimised so that shared preferences could be accommodated; however, with desserts, this lack of taste was easier to remedy. Although salt and other condiments such as mayonnaise were not available to apply to the first course, yoghurt, crème fraiche and custard were all present and applied vigorously to desserts, so that even if they were not to our liking they could be easily improved to match our taste. It is harder to displease someone with pudding, and extra toppings on pudding add to the joy of a meal.

The desserts at Dinner Plus were not only about having something sweet to finish a proper meal; instead, making and sharing them were ways for attendees to use their own skills and express their own ideas of good food. These skills were demonstrated by attendees at both Dinner Plus and Clever Cooking, but the range of desserts made at Dinner Plus allowed the knowledge and preferences of attendees to be brought to the fore. This was something that attendees on both courses enjoyed and were skilled at. For example, Jackie was well used to cooking such treats, telling me:

*‘I don’t need to even weigh out cake, I don’t need to weigh it out,
I just know by eye!’*

Jackie, attendee, Clever Cooking.

Pat – a volunteer at Dinner Plus – reflected on how in the past, when living with her family, she was constantly cooking all the food for the family:

'I used to make all my own bread... I had it worked off to an art, I used to bottle fruit... I know I can do it, you know. I was very self-survival, as one would say. It is interesting how you can do these things and once you get organised, how easy it is, to be honest... As time goes on and whatever, you get jobs and whatever, and now it's more in fashion to do [these] things [like make one's own bread]... I mean tomatoes, when people had a glut of tomatoes, the amount you save to [bottle] those, it's brilliant.'

Pat, volunteer, Dinner Plus.

Although attendees on both courses displayed a wide range of skills and adaptabilities with food, this was not always accompanied by confidence:

'I ask [Cheryl] about what she cooks at home. She tells me that she makes pasta bake although she "cheats" and uses sauce from a jar because she is "not that good" at cooking. She also mentions that she makes cakes from a cake mix. "I can cook, but [I'm] not that good".'

Fieldnotes, taken at Dinner Plus.

Dinner Plus attendees were encouraged to experiment with things that interested them, hopefully developing confidence and skills in line with their own pre-existing motivations and interests:

'Sally makes [the tiramisu]. When beating the cream, it begins to separate/curdle... Katie comes over to help out and we try to think of a way to rescue it ... She suggests melting it gently over a low heat, and they do this, creating a sort of custard that they

then pour over the coffee soaked sponge fingers. This tiramisu is brought up again in future conversations, and is memorable for the fact that, as Katie told us several times, “Cooking is an experiment” ... We chat about this over lunch and agree that, if you put tasty things together, then it’s likely that tasty things will come out at the end, even if they aren’t quite what you expected when you started.’

Fieldnotes, Dinner Plus.



Figure 26: Pineapple upside-down cake at Dinner Plus. Attendees took it in turn to cook desserts and share family favourites with the group. The use of the desserts again shows a proliferation of ways of attuning to and through food practices.

Fragile experiments in eating well

Experimentation

As Mol and others have shown, good taste is something that does not come naturally but that needs to be *cultivated* (Miele and Truringer, Forthcoming; Mol 2009; van der Weele 2006). Moreover, it requires tools and devices to come about (Teil and Hennion 2004). While looking for a good diet may point us in the direction of certain nutrients and the right foods through which to deliver them, looking for a *capacity for eating well* entails an attunement to the material and affective relations that emerge alongside food practices. These cookery courses were concerned with using foodstuffs and food practices to improve the wellbeing of attendees. As Katie put it, through food they expected to engage with people in ways that would otherwise not be possible. Yet, in the event, food turned out to be less engaging than anticipated. Both courses struggled to achieve the attendance levels they expected, and while they did bring about some relations of *eating well*, these were uneven, contingent and fragile; they had little impact on people's skills, practices, preferences or wellbeing outside the group.

Within wider debates around food inequalities, nutritional education has been seen as a means to address the social factors of inequality (Shaw 2006); others have criticised this tendency towards nutritional education as 'fascistic' interference (Fitzpatrick and Tinning 2014). Both analyses are concerned with supporting those who struggle to eat well. Neither of these framings offers much scope for an appreciation of reflexive practices of *taste-making*, in which amateurs carry out experiments (Teil and Hennion 2004). The experiences of Dinner Plus and Clever Cooking show – in agreement with Kimura in her

contribution to a collectively written piece – that ‘the presumed contrast between biomedicine and the alternative is increasingly misleading’ (Hayes-Conroy et al. 2014, p.33). So, while it might be tempting to contrast a ‘hegemonic nutrition’ approach (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013) that focuses on the nutritional content of food with an ‘alternative’ conception in which social relationships are brought to the fore, this dualism is a road to nowhere; both approaches prescribe a functional role to the food practices themselves, assuming that if the correct building blocks (nutrients or social relationships) are in place then positive outcomes will result. To escape this dead end, a *tasteful* analysis of these cookery courses instead emphasises the contingency of the relations of good taste. Here, we are concerned not with outcomes but processes: the ways in which the setting and apparatuses shape encounters around food and consequently shape what a body can *do*. As a *capacity for eating well*, a tasteful analysis helps to show that the material-affective setting enabled experimentation that allowed for the articulation of differences – the proliferation of good tastes. Just as Latour uses the example of learning to be ‘a nose’¹⁸, here ‘an articulate subject is someone who learns to be affected by others ... Articulation thus does not mean the ability to talk with authority ... but [rather means] being affected by differences’ (Latour 2004a 210).

Further, following Latour, the implementation of nutritional advice in *Clever Cooking and Dinner Plus* can only *add* to the world and almost never subtract from it through reductionism (Latour 2004, p.226). To think of each of these classes, we can consider the possible opportunities to ‘enable, open up and disrupt’ (Anderson 2014, p.93). While the course leaders framed the courses as

¹⁸ That is, to differentiate between different chemical odours with the help of a kit.

means of empowering healthy choices and developing individual confidence, a tasteful analysis of these cookery courses shows how the setting enabled experiments with food and with others, bringing about an openness – a *capacity* for eating well.

Stengers' ideas around 'empowering the situation' are relevant here.

Experimental 'minority techniques' can help to avoid assimilation into 'normative procedures' by offering 'a collective becoming that humans could not produce "by themselves" but only because of the situation that generated the power to make them think' (Stengers 2010, pp.21–22). Experiments such as 'competency groups' have put these ideas into practice, bringing about 'a "redistribution" of scientific and political capacity, achieved by enabling a situation to disrupt an established order of thought and produce *new* possibilities for knowing and acting' (Braun 2015, p.105; see also: Graham and Roelvink 2010; Whatmore 2013; Whatmore and Landström 2011).

To varying extents, the cookery courses allowed space for experiments with food. Dinner Plus in particular used desserts as well as the practice of consulting the attendees on what they would like to make, and Clever Cooking provided materials and equipment as well as ideas and recipes for attendees to try things they would not – or could not – do at home. To some extent, then, both course leaders were creating settings that helped to legitimise diverse food knowledges, particularly in terms of cooking skills. Yet, nutritional expertise retained hegemony – especially in Clever Cooking, where the foods were primarily chosen for their nutritional content.

This is important ethically, because while the deconstruction of scientific knowledge is valuable, so is the recognition of the many diverse forms of care. Critically, there are issues around who is responsible for carrying out care.

Therefore, while these courses allowed for interventions and empowerments they did not empower *people*, but a *situation*. The ethics of redistributing expertise when those who you are engaging are disadvantaged, with less capacity than those who are experts, raises important questions about the politics of knowledge. What the courses provided was a setting of eating well through the material and affective support for experimentation and the proliferation of attachments.

This analysis helps to avoid relegating attendees as either ‘delinquent’ (McEntee 2009) or ‘done to’ – a phrase Katie used to describe prescriptive techniques. Following Hennion and Teil’s (2004) practice-oriented, situated approach to tasting helps to shift the onus away from individuals who are required to learn nutritional knowledges in order to eat well. It also moves away from a wholly human-centric approach in which bodies and foods are regarded functionally – reacting always in the same way to one another – towards a place where the impetus is for bodies to simply learn to appreciate a particular set of foods in order to eat well and be well. If eating well is a relation rather than an ascribed set of practices and foods, then the ways in which food practices and wellbeing are linked through care becomes much more than learning to eat your greens.

Fragility

The experimental approach to cooking and nutrition was particularly noticeable in Dinner Plus, reflecting Katie’s respect for attendees’ own tastes and interests. So, while she saw food as a way to engage with people, it was important to her that this was done on their terms. As she put it:

‘Food is an expression or an extension of lots of other factors of people’s lives. Hopefully you can use those factors – so the

reverse is also true, you can use somebody's diet via all these other in-roads, that's the good news ... The bad news is that it is really complex and you know sometimes you just have to go, "Well, that's somebody's choice", if that's what, if they are happy with four Red Bulls a day and KFC for dinner, that's their choice.'

Katie, Dinner Plus.

The empirical material from these two courses shows us, then, that both nutritional knowledge and skills *and* the appropriate material resources are necessary ingredients for *eating well* – yet, they are not sufficient in themselves to address the need to multiply and expand responses to the problem of healthy eating (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2015, p.317). This analysis of taste enables us to diversify the actants at play and to include the visceral and embodied elements of taste, without resorting to a presumption that either of these elements come naturally or without cultivation (Mol 2013; van der Weele 2006). While there is increased interest in the affective, visceral, emotional and embodied aspects of food politics as spaces of engagement with others, and with the materialities of certain foods (e.g. Carolan 2011; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013), there is often an assumption that such engagement is somehow better – more real; more effective – than discursive, rational, financial (i.e. through purchasing) or intellectual engagement (Candea 2010).

What Dinner Plus and Clever Cooking show through an analysis of taste as a capacity to eat well is that food practices are imperfect, contingent, uneven and fragile as practices of care and engagement. Although the settings of the courses

provided an ‘apparatus’ (Despret 2004; Stengers 2008) for intervening in food insecurity through careful practices, these relations of care do not easily extend beyond these settings. The attendees did not often make the recipes at home, and those who were not already working with the organisation were not enticed into these experimental settings. Consequently, this fragility and contingency not only shows – as others have contested – that such experimental coming together is never simply *good* or *bad* but also that *good taste* is heterogeneous, uneven and contingent. A capacity for eating well in one situation does not translate into the same in another.

In addition, this analysis shows that inequalities matter when it comes to helping people to eat well. While we can help people within the setting of a cookery course, it may not translate into a home setting, in which the conditions may be very different. It also emphasises the role of the material and social setting in which we eat as playing a decisive role in our capacity for eating well (see Chapter Seven). Importantly, it tells us about the place of such engagement and education projects in the landscape of helping people. The cookery courses are able to intervene neither in the wider structures of inequality nor in the lives of attendees outside the course, and so the effects cannot easily travel outside of the setting.

Food practices are often seen as means to engage with people in ways that other methods cannot. As Katie put it: ‘I couldn’t do this without food’. Cookery courses are an important part of a governance landscape in which healthy and thrifty choices are proffered as means to overcome adversity, and diets and tastes are consequently enrolled in helping to develop consumer citizens who absorb shocks through these means. But as my analysis shows, there are

questions as to the extent to which cookery courses can empower people to eat well when they do not have the means to do so outside the course.

Consequently, while both courses were able to situate nutritional expertise within a social context through a sensitivity for the pressures and needs of the attendees, the examples of Dinner Plus and Clever Cooking counter analyses that argue that nutritional education is either *simply* 'fascistic' (Fitzpatrick and Tinning 2014) or empowering; rather, they may provide scope for a multiplicity of articulations of good taste.

Conclusions: building capacity for eating well and living well

The rising profile of food insecurity in the UK has led to renewed calls to define and measure the problem (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014; Lambie-Mumford and Dowler 2014); yet, there remains little consensus on what it means to eat well in these contexts. Notably, while the UN's commonly accepted definition of food insecurity refers to 'sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (EC-FAO Food Security Programme 2008, p.1), and while there is increasing importance placed on the nutritional makeup of the diets of those who struggle to eat well (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013), there has been little space for analysis of the role of *taste* in establishing a good diet in a context of insecurity. This chapter has addressed this oversight by accounting for taste, enabling an understanding of *eating well* that is neither based solely on overarching nutritional criteria nor on sociological definitions, but as a relation that cuts across the arenas of body and society, material and affective.

The nutritionists who designed both Clever Cooking and Dinner Plus aimed to use good food practices to improve the wellbeing of participants. Shelly, Ange and Claire at Clever Cooking focused on the role nutrients could play (for example, the role omega-3s might play in helping to avoid depression), and were looking to empower participants to make healthier and thriftier choices. For Katie at Dinner Plus, the role that food played in wellbeing was less straightforward, tied up with ideas about self-worth and confidence as much as the nutrients themselves. Yet, both of these approaches struggled to bring about change in two of their key areas: first, although food is often thought to be a good tool for engagement, both courses struggled to secure attendees; second, the chance to cook and eat new things was met with some ambivalence by attendees. Neither course brought about significant change in attendees' food practices outside the class. These courses show there is a need to be more open and speculative as to what food *does* to bring about wellbeing.

Following from Stengers' ideas of an empowered situation in which 'what matters then is a collective becoming that humans could not produce "by themselves" but only because of the situation that generated the power to make them think' (Stengers 2010, pp.21–22), it is not a weakness that the cookery groups do not result in behaviour change outside of the situation. For those who are socially isolated and at risk of food insecurity, this weekly group – the opportunity to cook together – provides a reason to get out of the house, socialise and eat a good meal. If we are concerned with helping people improve their lives around and with food, we might therefore do better to think about our motivations in both the material and affective sense. We might consider that something as simple as a shared meal might offer what Isabel Stengers has called 'minority' or 'empowerment' techniques (Stengers 2010). Here, food does

not have the properties that bring about wellbeing in and of itself, but through creating a setting of experimentation the courses conjured two different situations of eating well.

Yet, this is not to say that commensality in itself is beneficial (cf. Fischler 2011). By sharing a meal together, the attendees engaged in a ‘creative process through which novel “realities” (or better still “virtualities”) emerge as different food attributes are attuned to and “made to matter”’ (Evans and Miele 2012, p.301). What is essential from this point of view is the contingency of food experiences. The ways in which we make sense of food are not fixed or universal, and this means that the ways in which we talk about relations to food – particularly in cases of injustice – must pay attention to this fluidity or openness to be sensible to the ways in which differences appear or are rendered insensible in the process. In aiming to help people to change their relationship with food, we might return to Teil and Hennion and argue that the means to do so is never universal but always ‘depends’ (Teil and Hennion 2004, p.110).

Six. Getting food

Introduction

Having looked at the ways in which people who are food insecure articulate good taste in response to nutritional expertise, this second empirical chapter looks at the ways in which food insecurity shapes practices of getting food. I address the research question: how do people get food in contexts of food insecurity? In Chapter Two, I showed the severe limitations to spatial analyses of *access* to food (see also Colls and Evans 2013; Guthman 2011) and instead argued for an approach to food inequality that accounts for the relationality of place (e.g. Murdoch 2006 1998) and *proximities* (Bissell 2013; Probyn 2012; Urry 2002). Taking this critique seriously and building on work on foodscapes with an interest in the dynamic, fluidity of emplaced food practices (Pink 2011), I consider how the practices of getting food – and the spaces in which these processes take place – *ease* a capacity to eat well.

Spatial analyses of food consumption, such as studies measuring food deserts, have given us lots of data about the *whereabouts* of food outlets as well as the demographic makeup of different areas; however, there has been an almost total lack of curiosity into the ways in which *practices* of getting food take place. Little work has been done on people's journeys to and from the shops, how these journeys fit into mundane life (including social and work patterns) or the journeys people make within-and-between food outlets (Thompson et al. 2013). This chapter therefore pushes the boundaries of the literature on food insecurity and consumption to consider how those who are food insecure get food.

In keeping with the overall aim of the project, I approach the issue of getting food through a lens of taste. I consider how two different interventions – the

community bus and the EFA centre – bring people and food together. Using the idea of *capacity*, I consider the forces that shape, ease or resist ways of acquiring food, in which distribution of resources is made relevant through practices and encounters. I do this first by looking at the food journeys that clients and passengers undertook to get food, and second by using material from the go-alongs in the supermarkets with bus passengers and in the EFA food store with clients. As before, I reflect on the material-affective conditions of these encounters and consider the ways in which interdependencies form to create a distributed *capacity* for eating well – not in terms of cooking and eating (as in Chapter Five) but in terms of getting food, without which cooking and eating would not be possible.

Throughout this discussion, issues of dependence and independence are central. Within the practices of getting food is a constant tension around the position of passengers and clients as passive or active, dependent or independent. While the EFA organisation and the community bus aimed to give clients and passengers *independence* – offering a version of a supermarket trip – what emerged instead was a web of material and affective *interdependencies* in the practices of getting food. In this chapter, therefore, I add to the discussion in Chapter Five around issues of empowerment by offering a more thorough analysis of *capacity*, reflecting on the complex, heterogenous attachments that come about through getting food and how these attachments ease or constrict one's capacity to affect or be affected within an encounter. I contend that an individual's affective capacities are enhanced by these interdependencies. This will lay the groundwork for the next and final empirical chapter (Chapter Seven), where I consider encounters and conditions of

precarity in which attachments are fewer and interdependencies weaker, thus constricting a capacity to eat well.

Food journeys

When it comes to getting food, journeys and modes of transportation are important. As Coveney and O'Dwyer have shown, social relationships shape the ways in which people are able to carry out shopping trips, particularly for those who do not have cars (2009). Yet, a material-semiotic analysis shows the shortcomings of cutting materiality and nonhumans out of the social realm (Latour 2005; Murdoch 1998). Importantly, then, we can consider the different challenges in getting food (as a requisite for eating well) not in terms of distance from home to food store, but in terms of the complex web of interdependencies and entanglements at play in food journeys. By looking at these food journeys in terms of capacity, we can – as Bissel shows – consider 'how the mobile body is affected by all kinds of phenomena that are not necessarily part of the "goal" of that particular journey' (Bissell 2013, p.357). For Bissel, a sensibility of 'ease' smooths passage and enables mobility through infrastructural arrangements, which often valorise productivity, producing passengers who are 'enrolled within a particular capitalist ethic that privileges particular ways of moving over others' (Bissel in Adey et al. 2012, p.184). While not discussing food journeys specifically, this point can help us to escape the determinist logic that underpins spatial analyses of access (Colls and Evans 2013). Consequently, looking at mundane food journeys, I show that the ways in people get food are shaped by the material-affective conditions of these dynamic practices.

Walking

The first step in this analysis is therefore to consider the food journeys that participants shared with me. Initially, I turn to the journeys of clients at the EFA centre to contextualise some of the discussions around proximity when it comes to procuring food. The striking feature of these food journeys was that while these participants were clients of the EFA centre, the food journeys that they shared with me detailed a whole host of food procurement practices beyond their journey to the EFA food store. Indeed, as Tarasuk and Beaton (1999) argue in their critique of foodbanks, even when provided with food parcels recipients often do not have enough to eat. The EFA clients in Bristol were able to rely on support for as long as they were ‘in crisis’, but participants told me they often used any money or resources they had to add to these food bundles, particularly with meat. For recipients of food aid, therefore, the trip to the food store was one of many shopping trips and procurement practices they undertook to get by.

By looking at the food journeys that clients of the EFA centre used, it becomes possible to perceive the blurry edges around which food aid features in people’s lives. The journeys that participants on limited, precarious or no income shared with me not only offer insights into the tactics by which they fed themselves and their family (and an insight into how the crises they face are emplaced and situated within their lives) but also allow us to see how these crises are bound up with wider systems of injustice and failure of support in society.

Walking was the main way of getting around for the participants that carried out foodmap interviews. Buses were too expensive, and none of them had cars. Yet some, such as Tina, were able to rely on others for help with shopping:

'I just walk, if I'm going to Lidl's and I'm just going to buy a lot of stuff, I call my friend, he lives on Stapleton Road and then you know. I usually just call him 'cos sometimes – he always helps my mum, he's like our family friend, so he's always by my mum's place and sometimes if he pass, he'll stop by, he is very helpful so I'll just call him, I'll just tell him if he's been to see her, ask him to do me a favour, most times he does, he does you know so I'll ask him to take her to Lidl's to do some shopping and that's it.'

Tina, EFA client.

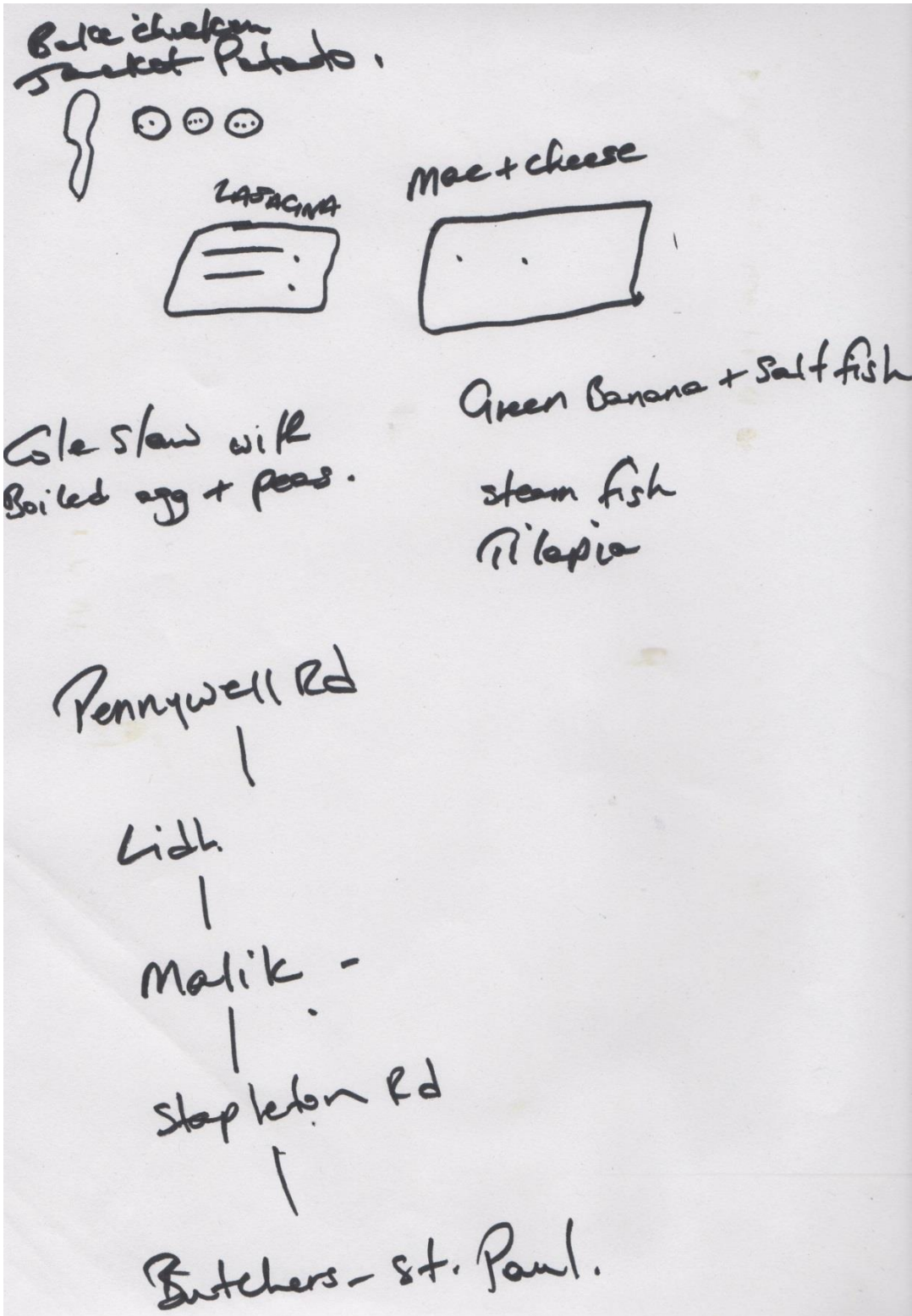


Figure 27: Foodmap, Tina. Tina navigated local independent stores to find the best foods

For Tina, food journeys were shaped by relationships with family and friends.

Having a family friend who was happy to offer her a lift was important, and also

meant she could buy food for her mother and children. Having access to a car meant she could do a bigger shop that was more economical, also enabling her to buy for her mother. Social relationships shaped participants' food journeys in other ways, too. Ali modified his shopping journeys to avoid certain people he did not want to see:

Ali: 'I walk very slowly. I live ... up here –... And then I come this way then, ok I'm in Stokes Croft. And then I come this way, and there is a shop also for people from Poland, then here, bar – I have been many times, the Crofters'

Laura: Yes, they recently have the new kitchen [a pay-what-you-can scheme using surplus food]'

Ali: 'Yes, but I never went there because I see that there is many poor people eat there, very poor and the second is, second in my mind, I do a lot of art ... and sometimes I sell it here so I don't want to mix too much with the people taking drugs and so on, wherever I go and they shout hey! [they recognise me using a different name]'

Laura: 'Do you know the people in the shops quite well?'

Ali: 'In a way, I joke with them and so on. They are mostly from Turkey. There is The Canteen, also sometimes 'cos I sell some of my art there. Sometimes they are really kind to me, sometimes they give me some meal but not now, cos there is a person I know his name is [], he said to me "enough is enough, I can't give you any more food" because of the boss then he said I can't but even if today I go, sometimes I can get soup.'

Ali, EFA client.

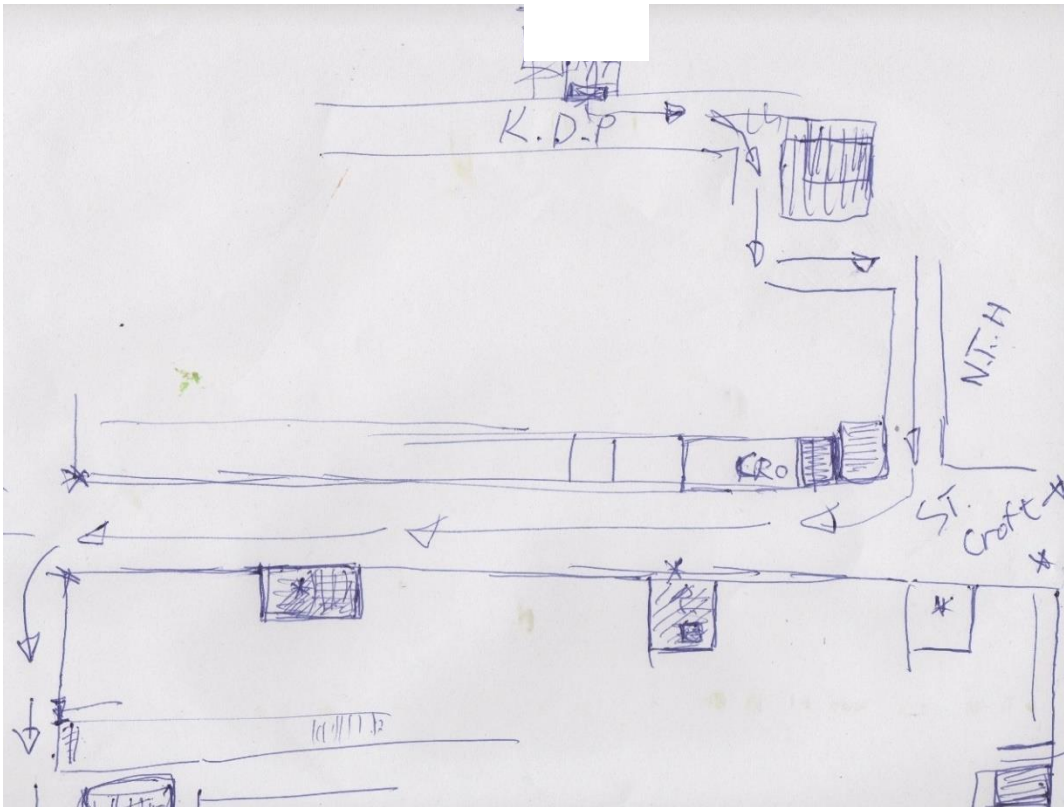


Figure 28: Detail from Ali's foodmap.

Ali marked the various places in which he shopped on the foodmap. He described not only his food preferences but also the people that work in each place and the types of food they served. As a single man living alone, he used takeaway food a great deal. He described these takeaways in far greater detail than the food he made at home. The closest café to Ali's house was a new venture that used surplus food and charged on a 'pay-what-you-can' basis. This would seem to make sense as a fresh and healthy option for Ali. However, he preferred not to use it because some of the other users knew him from a social setting with which he did not want to be associated. The 'people taking drugs and so on' had got to know him by a name different to that which he uses at the EFA centre. As *Ali*, his food journeys took him on a different path; one that

maintained distance between himself and his alter-ego. This unusual example illustrates how, in particular environments, Ali could literally be someone else – someone who makes crafts and acts in a particular way.

The majority of foodbanks in the UK run on the model of The Trussell Trust. Attendees are given enough food for three days at a time. Each of these ‘parcels’ are doled out a week apart. The EFA centre in this study provided a week’s worth of food at a time in line with its perceived role as the sole food provider for clients. The veracity of this point, however, is very difficult to ascertain.

Ali: ‘That’s it then, we come here and then crossing the traffic light and then here and then here, McDonald’s.’

Laura: ‘Do you ever go to McDonald’s?’

Ali: ‘A few times. I’m anti-American and anti-McDonald’s food, too much fat, oil and so on ...’

Laura: ‘Not very healthy?’

Ali: ‘No ...’

Laura: ‘Are there a few things that your politics – you say you’re anti-American ... Are there things you avoid?’

Ali: ‘Not in a stupid way, capitalism and consuming too much – ... not anything to do with religion as well, I have no religion.

Wine is my religion!’

Ali, EFA client.

Ali’s mention of boycotting McDonald’s also demonstrates the ways in which those living in a context of food insecurity expressed political and ethical consumption practices that, from certain perspectives, might be considered a

'luxury'. While this only emerged a few times in the discussions I had with participants, Emma Roe's survey at the EFA centre¹⁹ revealed that a high proportion of respondents were eating less meat and eating food produced with better animal welfare. Again, this correlates with the starting premise that those living in contexts of food insecurity do not have distinct interests and tastes predicated on their social class (cf. Bourdieu), but that relations of *good taste* are emergent from lived experiences. When it came to getting food, clients were particularly discerning, balancing a range of factors included sensory elements (how the food looked), a cultivated knowledge of where offered the best prices and a desire to buy familiar products – even if this meant going to unusual places to get them. As Don showed:

Laura: 'What shops do you go to?'

Don: 'Pound shops!'

Laura: 'You can get food from there?'

Don: 'Sometimes, depending what they've got. You've got to be careful, I mean some of the bacon might be green on the edges, you have to pick through the stuff you know, but then if you get eight rashers for a pound ...'

Laura: 'I didn't know they did bacon!'

Don: 'Yeah they've always got a chilled counter. Yeah Poundland. In Broadmead, there's three! There's a 99p shop in Galleries. You go to the right places, you'll be surprised what you can find but it's not until you get into this situation that you

¹⁹Some of these survey results were used in a joint conference paper (Roe and Colebrooke 2015).

*even think about it 'cos it's only if you haven't got a lot of money,
you soon learn where to go and where not to go and it don't
matter what you're buying, clothes, food, it's hard for me cos I
was bought up in quite a wealthy family ...'*

Don, EFA client.

Don's story is a good example of the way in which places are both negotiated and understood differently as a result of having limited financial resources (Miewald and McCann 2014). It also shows how changes in circumstances are a powerful source of emotion. Don tells me that, as he came from a background where he could always ask for what he wanted, the need to learn where to look to support himself and adjusting to his reliance on food aid were particularly hard.

Like Ali's story, Don's relatively well-off upbringing meant he went to some lengths not to reveal his situation to others; dressing smartly and hiding his financial situation helped him to maintain a façade. While he did sometimes ask his parents for help, he worked hard to keep the extent of his situation from them. Their financial support came with a price: losing his independence. As a middle-aged man, he found this particularly upsetting.

*Laura: 'Prior to that have you ever had any problems around
food?'*

*Gary: 'Only when I was in the hostel and had to look out for
pennies, you know, managed to get some stale bread from
Tesco.'*

*Laura: 'Where did you go shopping for food when you lived [at
the hostel]?''*

Gary: 'Tesco's ... They'd have like cheap bread, and I'd scour the floor looking for pennies...'

Laura: 'You knew what time to go to get the discounted food? What time of day?'

Gary: 'Eight o'clock, nine o'clock. They start, well, they start ... Nine-ten o'clock they shut so about half nine, or about nine o'clock I'd walk around and they'd have it all then, reduced to stupid prices.'

Gary, EFA client.

In these examples, clients of the food aid centre displayed a rich knowledge of prices and availability of food items. It is also striking that, when asked to provide an example food journey, only some detailed their journey to the food store. Even when they did so, all participants in the foodmap exercise told me about food *shops* they visited. An additional recurring theme for clients was the embodied work of walking to and from the shops.

Laura: 'Do you find it a long walk to get here?'

Ali: '[I] take it really easy now I have pain with my bones but I do it. It's hard believe me.'

Ali, EFA client.

For Ali, his body was uneven terrain. He had pain in his bones and needed to eat plenty of vitamin D to stay well. He relied on fish from the fish-and-chip shop for this. Sometimes he could walk easily, other times it was much harder, particularly when carrying his food aid home from the centre. Bags of groceries

from the food store were heavy (full of mainly tinned items) and had to be carried back home, including the very steep hill on which he lived – a road I know well, and struggle to walk up as a healthy person.

Being able to get food was therefore complicated by the diverse and fluid experiences participants had of their bodies. Some days they would be feeling good and able to go out and about; other days this would be more difficult. Not being able to predict one's bodily capacity to leave the house and get food made life chaotic. This unpredictability was brought home when trying to arrange interviews with clients. It was often hard to make plans in advance, and there were several late cancellations or no-shows. One client, Les, suffered from several health conditions. We arranged a home interview but he was sleeping when we arrived, despite having confirmed the interview earlier, and was too tired to carry out the full interview. While apologising, he told us that he was 'ruined' that day and did not know why.

For those on a limited income or living precariously, there is a greater reliance on the embodied physicality of walking and carrying when it comes to getting food. Embodied experiences of pain and mental health issues such as depression or feelings of social isolation – which may not manifest so clearly in physical symptoms but are nonetheless equally debilitating – all made it harder to leave the house and undertake food procurement activities such as going to the shops.

By looking at the EFA clients' practices of walking to get food, we can see that getting food entails practices that are shaped by the material-affective conditions. While social factors are important here (Coveney and O'Dwyer 2009), it is not the social element alone that plays a role in *easing* these journeys. Participants' bodies, emotions, mental health, political opinions and

foodstuffs all played a role. Moving onto the community bus, therefore, I consider how *getting food* is a material practice that is eased (or restricted) by material-affective encounters. Specifically, I show that while the bus might appear to offer passengers a form of independence, seen through an analysis of *capacity* a host of interdependencies emerged that shaped how passengers were able to get food.

Getting on: the community bus



Figure 29: Being able to navigate the narrow streets, the bus was able to collect passengers from their doorsteps.

The 'happy bus'

The community bus service was important for passengers; many of them had issues with mobility, which meant the normal bus was impossible or very difficult to use, especially when carrying heavy shopping. The bus was therefore seen by passengers and those who ran the service as giving passengers the

chance to shop independently. This was partly through offering physical assistance but also through producing a social atmosphere in which participants wanted to partake. The bus could therefore be seen as an acknowledgement of the social needs of the passengers, on a par with the material challenge of procuring food. With this in mind, I now consider three bus journeys: ‘the happy bus’, ‘the white bus’ and the ‘smelly bus’. These three bus trips took place on similar routes to and from the supermarkets in south Bristol. The experiences of these bus journeys show how getting on the bus made shopping *easier* for passengers; however, an analysis of the material-affective conditions on the bus shows that this bestowed not independence but rather a set of interdependencies.

“This next one’s the Happy Bus,” Eric the driver tells me as we pull away from the carpark to begin our next route, “there’s some real characters on here....” This run is to go to ASDA... The first stop is Reg and Lyn who I have met on previous trips. They get on and are cheery... As we go around ASDA tells me she has a “metal plate in her hand”. The couple are friendly and chatty and joke all the way, Lyn’s wheezy laugh punctuating our conversation...

The second pickup is a mother and daughter on the outskirts of the city, before the residential streets fade into the steep green hills that border the city. Speaking to her later... [the daughter] tells me about her sister (in-law?) who suffers with depression. She tells me that the bus is a really good service for those who cannot get out, and that it would be beneficial for those with depression because they often do not leave the house and that

having somewhere to go with a friendly service like this might make all the difference... Her mother, Peggy, is very bright and cheerful but has problems with mobility and struggles a great deal with getting up the steps and on to the bus.

The third stop is Doris. She lives in sheltered accommodation...

The bus reverses in. I don't get a chance to see it clearly, but I make out its big gates as we pull away.

The fourth stop is on a main road, by the bus stop. Here we pick up Lil. She sits at the front and is very talkative. Eric tells me after she gets off that she is 82.... Despite this, she is very energetic. When she gets on the group makes jokes about her having a boyfriend locked up in her house because there is a car outside that they don't recognise. All passengers notice things like this; they look for regular passengers, know where they will be waiting, what time they come out to wait ...

On the bus, everyone jokes and laughs with one another, they ask about how everyone has been since last week. Lyn tells everyone that they won't see her next week as she will be on holiday. She is getting a coach to see family in the north east.

"We will miss you", the group agree.

We stop at another house but there is no-one outside. Eric gets off the bus and knocks on the door. A lady opens the door in her slippers. She tells Eric that she is not coming this week and that she thought she had told the staff in the office.

Later on, there is a pickup on the list that Eric queries. “Grace isn’t coming this week, is she?” he asks the passengers. “No!” someone says, “Derek’s in the hospital so she don’t come on at the moment”. We pass her address just in case, but there is no-one there.

“I don’t expect we’ll see her on the bus again”, someone says.

[When we arrive at ASDA] the passengers break up into couples or individuals and disappear into the store. I follow Reg and Lyn who have agreed to let me go-along with them into the shop.

When we get to the store, her daughter brings a trolley over to her and Lyn tells her to bring to trolley closer so that she has something to help support her while she walks. When she gets back on the bus, Lyn remarks that she’s in pain. ...’

Fieldnotes.



Figure 30: Getting the bus first thing in the morning.

For the passengers on the community bus, as with the EFA clients, bodies were not a blank canvas but unpredictable, sometimes problematic and subject to a variety of limitations not commonly addressed in the literature on food access. For older bodies these problems are chronic; not necessarily pathological, but understood to be part of getting older. ‘Don’t get old!’, one passenger on the bus advised me as she struggled to step on. The passengers were generally watchful over one another, noticing when they needed help and stepping in where necessary, as this conversation between Lyn and Peggy shows:

Lyn [to Peggy’s daughter]: ‘Here, bring over that trolley.’

Peggy: ‘Oh, I’m all right.’

Lyn: ‘No, you ain’t all right.’

Peggy: ‘I’ve got to go to the cash-point ‘cos I’ve got to get some money out.’

Lyn [to me]: ‘She’s got a job to walk.’

Peggy [overhearing]: ‘No! I’m all right!’

Lyn: ‘No, you haven’t. You’ve got a job to walk!’

Peggy: ‘I’m just going to go get some money out ‘cos there’s nobody there [no queue at the cash-point], all right?’

Lyn: ‘I’ll see you later.’

Peggy: ‘I’m all right!’

(Transcribed from go-along interview.)



Figure 32: Trolleys of all types helped residents at this sheltered accommodation to get their shopping on and off the bus; often, they had to help each other. Residents kept a supermarket trolley (left) at the entrance to the flats to help with this process.

Passengers on the bus suffered from a number of chronic mobility problems.

Living in an area of the city that has particularly steep hills and narrow roads, passengers told me they found it hard to get around, particularly in winter.

While this area of the city is served by a good bus route, this stays on the arterial roads; the post-war estates that make up large swathes of this area come off from these roads across the slopes of the hills.

The drivers are helpful and able to physically assist passengers aboard the bus.

There is an area for passengers to leave their shopping trolleys at the front, and the drivers load these on and strap them down so that passengers can manage large bulky items, which would be impossible for them to carry any distance.

The drivers help people to their doors, navigating steps and bringing their shopping, sometimes even carrying the shopping into the house.

It was a personal service. Unlike any other bus, passengers knew where the others lived; they paid attention to the details around their homes. This was a

source of comfort, particularly for those who were vulnerable. On several occasions during my time on the bus, the driver went to an address that was not on his sheet because he knew that the passenger was likely to be coming out that day. As one of the administrators in the office told me, this was a regular occurrence because some of the passengers sometimes had trouble remembering things.

This strong sociality came about because of a routine. The majority of passengers that I met used the bus often. The drivers knew their addresses off by heart; they knew whether the passenger was likely to be waiting for them in the house or on the doorstep. If someone was absent, they referred to goings-on in the passenger's life to consider whether their absence was cause for concern. For example, one passenger's husband had recently died, so they knew that her block-booking was unlikely to be kept.

“Does anyone know how she is” a passenger asks.

“Bad” someone says, “I don’t think we’ll see her on the bus again”.

Fieldnotes

These close social relationships were partly generated from the passengers living in the same area for decades; everyone I spoke to had lived in south Bristol or very nearby for their whole lives. Two ladies told me: ‘Would you believe it, we’re related! We’re second cousins but we didn’t know until we started coming on this bus!’ Passengers knew one another from their school days; they reminisced about working in factories in the city that have long been demolished. ‘I used to cycle all the way down this hill to get to the factory’, one lady told me. ‘This was all fields then’. These routines mean passengers were

able to feel supported rather than isolated, and for those who lived alone it was comforting to know that someone would notice if they were missing. The interaction between Lyn and Peggy also shows that passengers kept a sharp eye on each other. While there might be some social pressure to not be seen to be struggling – ‘I’m all right’ – Lyn saw this as a brave face and instead intervened to help Peggy.

‘We collect Colin and his wife. He has had a stroke, and cannot talk well. She uses the bus for all hospital visits, and goes shopping on a Tuesday. Their son also takes them out on a Saturday. Lots of the passengers also mention that their children offer some support in getting their shopping. However, they mention difficulties such as long working hours and desire for independence as reasons for not relying on this for all of their shopping needs.’

Fieldnotes.

Although several of the passengers had other means of getting to the shops, they emphasised that the bus was a ‘lifeline’ and a ‘godsend’ because it enabled them to get about without relying on family or friends. Yet, this apparent independence was supported by the infrastructure that kept the bus running: the volunteer drivers, the council funding, and – as these quotes show – the willingness of drivers to go the extra mile, often quite literally, to help passengers. Funding cuts were a real and omnipresent risk for the organisation, particularly because of recent slashing of local authority budgets. During my time on the bus, changes to funding meant a free service for bus-pass holders was no longer available, and there was a risk that after Easter 2015 the service would no longer run at all. Passengers were shielded from this risk to a certain extent by the hard work of the staff and volunteers, who were convinced of the

need to keep the bus running; however, at the time, the viability of the scheme was being called in to question by the ambivalence of the local authorities and their determination to push through financial cuts.



Figure 33: Passengers often had to wait for the bus to return to pick them up. In Morrisons, they often waited in the café with something to eat, but here, at ASDA, there was only a bench on which to wait.

The ‘smelly bus’

‘After dropping off from this journey, we get ready pull around to the front of the supermarket to pick up the next lot of passengers and take them home.

Eric [the driver] warned me that on this run, we pick up “the smelly man”. I am sitting near the front but Eric tells me I “might want to move”. I feel that this seems a bit over the top, but take his advice. When we pull up to the store, I see one lady waiting for the bus. She waves and is obviously considering getting on to go home, but seems to decide against it when she sees who is getting on the bus with her. “The smelly man” – as he was referred to – gets on, and his carer sits behind him. His clothes are dirty and the smell is awful,

much worse than I expected. I wonder how he or his carer can stand it, how long he has been in this condition and why no-one (doctors, support workers, his carer?) has done anything to help him.

I find myself fighting to breathe as little and shallowly as possible. The rest of the passengers are quiet and the man and his carer are also silent, saying only “hello” and “goodbye” to Eric. They are our first drop off, perhaps intentionally. Once they are off the bus, the other passengers, sitting next to me at the back, talk about how it’s “such a tragedy” that he is not better looked after. Conversation resumes after he has disembarked but it is subdued and there is still a bad smell in the air.’

Fieldnotes.

On this bus journey, there was none of the friendly chatter and joking of the other journeys. Here, the relations seemed strained, the atmosphere taut: we did not talk; we found ourselves holding our breath. The carer and his patient were physically moved from place to place but did not participate in the same social reactions as the others, and when carer and patient were on the bus the interactions between the others were also limited.

The example of the ‘smelly bus’ shows that the sense of community evident on the happy bus was not a universal experience. While the passengers were generally very positive and the atmosphere was jolly in most cases, this journey offered a marked contrast. The smell, indescribable but all-pervasive, seemed to indicate a lack of care for one passenger. He and his carer did not interact with the others at all, and we were all left concerned for the man’s wellbeing.

However, this concern did not result in offers of the same assistance and level of interest shown by Lyn when she looked out for Peggy, for example. The close

confines of the bus brought us into touch with an ongoing tragedy that we did not want to be involved in. We were disgusted by it and this meant we were unable to engage with each other in the same way. The bad atmosphere on this bus journey brought about a proximity we did not want to share. The sickening smell was an overwhelming reminder that, although we are all on the same bus, our lives are very different.



Figure 34: The bus is part of the community – an infrastructure of these estates.

The white bus

'This morning I am on the bus driven by Fred. He is friendly and very chatty. We get on the bus and he points out a toy gollywog that is pinned up next to the notices on the barrier behind his

seat. *“I know it’s not politically correct but I think it’s stupid that they aren’t allowed in some places”, he tells me.*

Fred is friendly and helpful to everyone on the bus. The passengers tell me that they like him [but not “the cowboy one” who listens to “loud country and western music and drives much too fast”]. The drivers are all volunteers apart from Eric: as volunteers, there is a limit to the amount of shifts they can commit to, and they are often asked to do more. Some are fine with this, others are not. All the drivers are white males of retirement age, mostly with a work history of driving.

Fred tells me that he is often invited on the lunch groups and one Wednesday he is not driving because he is joining them on their Christmas lunch’

Fieldnotes.

*

‘At one point, in the bus is cut-up in traffic by a van in a narrow residential street. “I bet it is one of those darkies”, one passenger says. She is the loudest voice and dominates many of the bus’s conversations. The others all know her: she is often described as “a character” and gets the bus very regularly. She has strong opinions and everyone knows her. She used to work as a lollipop lady and knows everyone and everything that goes on in the area. Fred says to me later: “They can be a bit racist!”

*

'The bus passengers are predominantly white. When a black woman gets on, she is friendly and warm to me but does not engage much in conversation with the others.'

Fieldnotes.

Here, the type of community and social interaction enabled revealed its boundaries. Some passengers dominated with their crass humour and rigid opinions. While the outspoken comments were sometimes funny and life affirming – I had not expected to hear the older ladies swear or joke about 'keeping men locked up in the basement', for example – such humour could be a boundary marker for a particular community. Therefore, while the bus was more than transport, offering a social interaction, this interaction was still dominated by particular voices. The way we used the bus was not like a normal bus service; rather, it had a group outing feel to it. While the community feel on the happy bus seemed light and friendly, there could be a darker side. Living in such close-knit communities meant that neighbours noted every absence and presence, every coming and going. While such oversight can be mobilised as care – as with Lyn and Peggy, helping those who might otherwise be isolated – such attention could also be construed as an invasion of privacy.

Social scientists concerned with disability have argued that apparently benign spaces contain 'hidden geographies' (Dyck 1995), pointing to the extra work the differently abled have to do to traverse spatial configurations taken for granted by others: 'their way of doing things is disruptive to the "normal" speed, flow or circulation of people, commodities and capital because they "waste" more time and space than they should' (Hansen and Philo 2007, p.499). In a similar vein,

the experiences described above make us aware of the ways in which spatial configurations of food practices enable some bodies but not others.

The bus scheme is a good example; it shows that food infrastructures, particularly the regular supermarket shopping trip, are reliant on certain mobile practices and affective capacities. The practices of *getting food* that I have reported add to this by showing how the bus scheme is one of an increasing myriad of instances in which charitable organisations come to bridge the gap between ‘disabled’ and ‘able’, allowing their clients or passengers to participate as consumers. As both EFA clients and bus passengers showed, we humans are never more than temporarily healthy (Bost 2008). Daily practices of getting food – such as getting to and from the store, carrying large and heavy items and negotiating the linguistic and visual cues through which the products are displayed and promoted – are not naturally within us all, but emerge through the material settings and a host of social norms and practices that enable and maintain this infrastructure.

By adding an analysis of *getting food* to the study of food insecurity, therefore, it becomes possible to show how wellbeing – physical, mental and emotional – is an important and sometimes decisive factor in shaping capacities to acquire food. Indeed, while spatial analyses such as the obesogenic environment approach or ideas such as ‘fat swamps’ (Saunders et al. 2015), show a correlation between certain areas and certain health outcomes, I argue for a curiosity into the lived experiences of embodied food practices. Here, apparent categories such as ‘obesity’ or mobility issues are experienced – ‘sensed and made sense of’ (Evans and Miele 2012) – through the multiplicity of everyday life.

Dancing in the aisles: navigating the supermarket

Gladys [looking at the fresh veg (cauliflowers, sprouts etc.)]: 'I need to get me glasses out, one of me eyes is glass because I've got, I had a cataract operation gone wrong.' [She gets her glasses out from the case. The cleaning cloth falls out of the case and I hand it back to her.]

Laura: 'Sorry to hear that...'

Gladys: 'I can only see with these glasses out this side, this other eye is all...'

[We bump into another shopper from the bus and exchange greetings.]

Laura: 'So, have you been using the bus for a long time?'

Gladys: 'Well no, the point was, I started in January but I lost my husband.'

Laura: 'Oh, I'm sorry.'

Gladys: 'So, I couldn't go in-between time 'cos I had to nurse him. Other people got my shopping.'

Gladys: 'Got me frozen chips, got me Bisto. Just me cabbage left, then.' [She had tried to get cabbage at the start but did not see any. She suggests that shop staff might have put out more by now, so we go back.] 'Of course, I used to get through about, ooh ... eight pints of milk a week because he [my husband] had to

*have everything with milk ... But now I've got to remember that
I've only got to get one!*

Laura: 'You get into a habit, don't you?'

*Gladys [emphatically]: 'Yeah, you do! Yeah it's too big a change
really, and too sudden. 'Cos, on the Monday, he ate everything
and then Tuesday, he wouldn't eat anything ... And then on the
Wednesday, he died.'*

Laura : 'I'm so sorry. [Pause] That's very sudden, isn't it?'

*Gladys: 'Yeah. I mean, I knew it were coming, I'd known for a
long time, it's just – there we are, they've got it out now ...' [She
picks up a sweetheart cabbage.]*

*Laura: 'Quite nice those cabbages aren't they, the pointy
[cabbages] ...'*

*Gladys: 'Yeah you've got to go by the weight [she lifts two or
three cabbages and tests their weight in her hands. She gestures
to another cabbage.] You lift that one, then lift that one ... See the
difference?'*

Laura: 'Oh yeah, you're right!'

Gladys: 'Yeah!' [Laughs]

*Laura: 'I thought they were quite strict on weighing them out,
but obviously they're not ...'*

Gladys: 'No, they don't, not cabbages they don't.'

Laura: 'They must do it, it must be on size, mustn't it?'

Gladys: 'Yeah. Any cabbage, whatever you pick up, is like 45p or 49p, so really you've got to go by the weight in your hand, and then you know you've got [the best one].'

Transcribed from supermarket go-along with Gladys to Morrisons.

At the start of the trip, Gladys locks her shopper in the lockers at the front of the store. She also places her stick in the supermarket trolley. Managing walking aids and trolleys can be difficult, though there are some specially designed trolleys to help those who need walkers. Similar to Cochoy's findings (2008), the shape of the trolley matters; the shallow trolleys are often preferred by the passengers on the bus because the amount of shopping they buy is not large (many live alone and shop at least once a week), and also, as one shopper tells me, it is easier to reach in and out of the shallower trolleys.



Figure 35: Gladys uses her trolley to hold her stick and bag so that she has hands free to look at the items on the shelf.

Gladys carries a set of glasses with only one lens and one arm. These help her because her vision is limited in one eye, but it means she needs to use a hand to hold the glasses to her face. She uses the other hand to pick up the item she is looking at so she can more easily read the label – or, as with the cabbage, test the weight. In her trolley is her walking stick and her handbag. I worry about her bag being left in the trolley, and make sure to keep an eye on it as we go around. She never goes far from it, however, and I wonder if she uses the trolley for support in lieu of her stick.



Figure 36: Gladys consults her list and checks the prices.

At the end of the shopping trip, I get Gladys's shopper from the lockers and bring it over to the checkout. Gladys has a good system for packing the bags, and we place the heavier ones at the bottom. She has vouchers with her that give a certain discount when you spend £40. The total comes to £38.54, so Gladys goes to buy another item to push the total above £40. However, when she hands the voucher over, the cashier tells her it has expired.



Figure 37: At the checkout, we transfer the shopping from the supermarket trolley to Gladys's shopper.

Through Gladys's shopping trip, we can see how the performance of a supermarket shop is partly shaped by her physical abilities and her emotional experiences. The material-affective settings of the bus and the supermarket (as well as her own skills and tactics) share the burden of getting food. The processes of sensing and making sense (Evans and Miele 2012) of the food and the space are tied up with these elements of her life, related to wellbeing. The smallest task – such as getting milk – brings back the grief of losing her husband. As I will show below, pauses and resistances such as these (as well as a host of other multisensory cues, affects and physical elements) all contribute to the 'hidden geographies' (Dyck 1995) of getting food. Importantly, I want to draw out the emotional elements as these relate to the physical, material-affective and social elements to discuss issues of *emotion* within practices of getting food. As I have shown in Chapter Two, the experience of receiving food aid has often been linked to emotions of shame (Purdam et al. 2015). However, the experiences in both the supermarket and the EFA store show there is a great deal more going on than this, and that emotional elements are dynamic and emerge together with a host of other elements.

EFA file

CLIENT NO.	CLIENT NAME (MUST BE SAME AS ON REFERRAL FORM)					REFERRAL DATE:			
NO. TO FEED	CHILD / CHILDREN NAME(S)					DOB	M/F		
# ADULTS									
# CHILDREN									
# SUPPLEMT									
[1]	BOX 'A'	BOX 'B'	BOX 'C'	BOX 'D'	BOX 'E'	TOTAL AMOUNTS ACTUALLY WITHDRAWN BY DATE			
FOOD GROUP	MAXIMUM DAILY ALLOWANCE	# OF DAYS X	# OF PEOPLE	= TOTAL 'B' x 'C'	ALLOWANCE (meal x total) 'A' x 'D'	DATE:	DATE:	DATE:	
BAKED BEANS	80g (1)								
CEREAL	80g								
PROTIEN	80g								
CARBS	160g								
VEG (1)	80g (1)								
VEG (2)	80g (1)								
FRUIT	80g (1)								
COOKING SAUCES	80g (1)								
PUDDINGS	80g								
MILK 0.2 LTR PPPD	160g								
TOILET ROLLS: 1 PPFM	25g								
TOTAL [1]	(5-A-DAY)								
[2]	ITEMS THAT CAN ONLY BE WITHDRAWN ONCE				# OF ITEMS ALLOWED	Not allowed until week 2	DATE:	DATE:	DATE:
FRUIT JUICE					1				
CORDIAL / SQUASH					1				
COOKING OIL					1				
SUGAR					1				
TEA BAGS					1				
COFFEE					1				
HOT CHOCOLATE					1				
BISCUITS					1				
JAM					1				
FLOUR					1 PP				
TOOTHBRUSHES					1				
TOOTHPASTE					1				
SOAP					1				
SHAMPOO or CONDITIONER					1				
DEODORANT					1				
HYGIENE PRODUCTS					1				
HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS					1				
TOTAL [2]									
GRAND WEEKLY SECTION TOTALS [1] + [2]									
CLIENTS INITIALS TO CONFIRM AMOUNT OF FOOD WITHDRAWN TODAY									
[REDACTED] P TEAM MEMBER INITIALS									
PLEASE RECORD ANY SPECIAL DIETRY REQUIREMENTS HERE									
PLEASE NOTE: TO ENABLE US TO ENSURE EVERYONE GETS FOOD HELP									
ALLOWANCES ARE MAXIMUM AMOUNTS & MUST NOT BE EXCEEDED									

Figure 38: The allowance sheet of the EFA file. Allowances were based on the Eatwell plate and clients were allowed sweet items (labelled 'biscuits') as well as toiletries on a four-weekly rotation.

The clients' files managed the administrative practices of the allocation of aid. The forms contained therein and the systems through which volunteers moved the files facilitated certain movements of clients, volunteers and food around and out of the centre.

Arriving at the food centre, participants came through the double doors from the residential street on which the church was located. The doors were locked outside of the appointed hours and a bell had to be rung for admittance outside of these times.

On arriving, clients were directed into the main hall where they were met with two trestle tables. One was stocked with small glasses of squash and cups for tea and instant coffee. Immediately facing the clients was the welcome desk. This was staffed by two regular volunteers, Gerry and Henry. Their role, as well as helping to set up and pack away the hall, was to manage the arrival of and appointments for clients. On a first visit, the client would be required to show a referral form. The form had to be checked and okayed by a member of staff or a volunteer who was understood to have more responsibility because they 'did interviews' with clients. Once the referral form was accepted, the client was asked to sit down and have a cup of coffee while they waited.

Regular clients would first say their name, then their file would be chosen from the stack on the table. This stack of files was supposed to be kept facing the volunteers (to protect privacy), but names were still visible on the files. Clients then sat down and waited for the name to be called by an 'interviewer'. The interviewer talked with client about their problems and made note of changes to the clients' circumstances, adding the details to the forms in the file.

The dynamic of receiving food aid was choreographed through the file system, the room layout for waiting and the interview system. The system of managing the workload of interviewing clients and then allocating them food aid was organised through the movement of the files and the completion of sheets within them. This allowed the charity to measure and monitor the clients and keep them engaged with the mission of the project, such as self-improvement. For example, the weekly interview sheets included questions about the clients' wellbeing and goals; this information formed part of their 'progress review'. New sheets were added each week; consequently, it was possible to tell who had been there longest simply from the relative thickness of the file. As volunteers hefted some of these files out from their place, sometimes they would joke to the regular clients about how heavy the files had become.

When clients arrived, they would usually be holding an appointment slip on which the time of their appointment was printed. They were greeted at the welcome desk, and Gerry and Henry would find the file and put it in a pile of those waiting to be interviewed. The volunteers who were appointed specifically to interview the clients would take the first file on the stack and proceed to interview them. At the end of the interview, the file was moved to a second pile – that for the food store visit. This was accompanied by a small paper slip, on which was written the time of the appointment for next week.

Clients then waited for their trip into the next room: the food store. The trip was made under the supervision of another set of volunteers. Clutching the files to their chests, the volunteers collected the relevant clients and then led them into the food store, where the client chose their food allowances. When the clients 'checked out' their food, the different types of items were weighed as the

allowances were checked and these allowances were recorded in the files; blank spots were marked where someone had not taken their allocated allowance.

‘This morning I take Alice around the food store. She is more talkative than the last time I saw her, and tells me that she likes me taking her round. I think this might be because I am not as strict at sticking to the allowances as some of the other volunteers.... She still refuses rice and pasta and tells me that she only likes one particular type of rice, one which we don’t have.

She takes no protein and no milk.

Today she smiles and laughs with me, which belied the initial impression I had formed of her. She refuses cooking sauce. I offer it to her again after weighing her groceries and we go over together, to look more closely at the sauces. She says that she does not know how to cook with them. I try to explain – here is sweet and sour sauce that could be used for meat and rice, Bolognese sauce for mince and white wine sauce for chicken. She looks at a few but seems confused. She gives up on the sauces. I feel bad because all the sauces call for meat and I don’t know whether she eats meat or can afford to buy any. I am unsure of her level of literacy or her English skills; can she read the labels of the foods on the shelf? Thinking back, I also note that the situation, with someone standing looking over your shoulder, makes it hard to browse as you might in a supermarket. Clients often choose quickly and don’t always take time to read the

*labels or browse amongst things which you would have time to
do in a normal store.'*

Fieldnotes.

Working with Alice, a client from Nigeria, reveals some of the tensions present in the food allocation. The charity felt that a large choice of items was important as a means to provide dignity, but it was not always clear that this choice dispelled the tensions around receiving food aid. As shown in Chapter Two, the literature on food aid has focused on the issue of shame as a barrier to uptake of food aid.

By offering a choice to clients, the charity enables them to select foods they like and know how to cook – but, of course, the charity is still reliant on donors. The foods received fit a very particular – perhaps very British – idea of what is tasty and easy to make. Each week, clients receive at least two tins of baked beans. These are a staple in the UK; they are comfort food. They are pretty healthy – the government recognises them as one of our five portions of fruit or vegetables a day, regardless of the salt or sugar content of the sauce. On the file, baked beans have a separate category of their own (rather than being included in another category, such as vegetables) because they are items that are always donated and therefore readily available and generally understood as store cupboard staples.

It would be easy to assume that when Alice entered the food store she would want to take as much food as possible. Even if she did not like it or was unsure how to cook it, surely – one thinks – her hunger and the needs of her body would have eclipsed socialised preferences or cultural norms? Is her refusal of

some of the items proof that she was not *really* in need? Or does it reveal that she was ignorant and did not know what was good for her or how to cook it?

Alice's refusal to take her full allowance and her confusion over apparently innocuous foods such as baked beans could equally be read as an empowered refusal of victimhood or a lack of confidence in choosing among unfamiliar items. The challenges of research in the midst of such precarity meant I was never able to secure an interview with her to find out more. The charity found her refusal to take the full allowance to be a sign that her needs were less severe, and due to a wider set of circumstances it was decided after a few weeks that she was no longer in need of food aid. She no longer came to the food store.

A *tasteful* analysis instead shows that tastes are not unconscious bodily responses to material stimuli but rather performances that constantly rework our relationship with the world through and around food. Food insecurity is something that is felt, emerging and changing within the *press and presence* (Anderson 2014) of encounters such as these. Indeed, the act of allocating food was often negotiated between the volunteers, the clients and the foodstuffs that were available, mediated and enabled by devices such as the scales and the layout of the foods on the shelves. For example, while the clients were allotted a certain weight of food from each category, this was difficult to navigate because some products are not supplied in amounts that fitted the allowed criteria.

'We look at the sheet, check the allowance and then offer it to the client. "Milk"?

I state, almost automatically now, I have got so used to the standard weekly allowances: "You can choose one of these." ...

"Puddings, choose one".

Baked beans: the allowance says 1120 grams but one can weighs 420g so the most people can take is 2 cans, as allowances represent the maximum limit. The volunteers try to encourage some to take one branded can and one non-branded one to make sure that everyone gets their “fair share”. Some clients are fine with this, even leaving the branded ones “for someone who really needs them”; others always hunt for the branded tins.’

Fieldnotes.

Clients and volunteers got to know the foodstuffs in new ways. I became attuned to the weight of cans of different types of food, and could work out how much of a certain food clients could have within their allowance without the need for scales. Clients became attuned to the types of the food on the shelves, learning to navigate the cramped space quickly and looking for clues such as branded packaging to help them choose.

Don: ‘I know it sounds a bit snobby but if you offered me three tins of beans of Sainsburys-own or something, I’d rather take one tin of Heinz beans and leave the other because I know I won’t eat it. So, what’s the point of me taking it if I won’t eat it? I’ll only throw it in the bin ‘cos I can’t stand it... but then I don’t take my full quota because I always have – well I try and get branded makes from here, I end up only having half of what I’m allowed ‘cos I know I’m only going to eat that [particular product], like. As I say, what’s the point of taking something if you don’t like it?’

Laura: ‘So the flavour of the branded is a lot better?’

Don: ‘Yeah! Especially the beans, [the non-branded ones] are like bullets, haha! They might be only 10p a tin but – if you’re not going to use it – I can’t see the point of taking it. Leave it for someone else who doesn’t mind.’

Don, EFA client.

The charity is particularly concerned with emotional barriers to the use of food aid support. It has been identified in some studies (and in popular discourse) that people who might be eligible for food support are often put off using these services because they are ashamed. Consequently, the charity mimics the material setting of the supermarket – particularly the element of choice between food items (within the limits of the nutritional requirements and weighted allowances) – to treat the client as a consumer. In doing so, the aim is to provide dignity and reduce the gap between food aid clients and others, and thus reduce the stigma of being a user of such as service.

As with the community bus, it allowed the charity to present an image of independence within a political landscape of austerity in which neoliberal rhetoric of independence from state support is key. Just as Wilk shows (Wilk 2004), consumption as a metaphor is imbued with morality, and this morality is centred around ideas of the triumphant individual who makes choices between an array of predetermined options. The charity mobilises this ideal to avoid feelings of shame in its client base and to generate dignity. However, in the experiences of traversing the food store – an encounter shaped by the file, the layout of the store and interactions with the volunteers – any dignity the EFA centre mobilises is tied up with the morality of capitalism: ‘Ease and comfort, however, do not necessarily imply freedom’ (Adey et al. 2012 p.172).

The experiences of the EFA centre clients and bus passengers therefore show that the practices through which participants went about *getting food* were shaped by material-affective encounters. While both organisations were concerned with maintaining dignity through a discourse of independence, their practices enabled a distribution of capacity – through establishing bodily

attachments – that *eased* these practices. Understanding these practices through the Spinozist openness and possibility, and what a body can do, shows that new ways of relating emerged in these encounters. The material and intangible elements of the EFA centre and the bus shaped the potential for bodies to form interdependencies, sharing the burden of unpredictable bodies, lack of finances, social isolation, mental health and emotional wellbeing. What this shows is that we need to pay attention to the invisible elements of practices of *getting food* – not simply by ascribing them as emotional or social elements (such as shame or isolation), but instead as the forming and shaping of what a body can do: the material-affective conditions.

Finally, therefore, to consider how practices of *getting food* are shaped in contexts of food insecurity I turn to the movement of the foodstuffs themselves as they travel from the supermarket, through the hands of donors and into the EFA food store. This adds to the above analysis by shedding light on some of the ways in which *getting food* is contingent on not only moving human bodies but also moving foodstuffs, and the effects that these movements have on the experiences of food insecurity in the EFA centre.

Food donations

'The thing I needed the most when I came here, is the thing I'll miss the least – the food.' Don, EFA client.



Figure 39: The food distribution hub of the EFA centre. Harriet sorts out the donations to be taken to each food centre branch.

All the food that is donated to the EFA centre is taken here, to this empty shop in south Bristol. The food is then sorted into the nutritional categories that are used for the food allocation in the different branches across the city. Each of the branches fills out a sheet asking for particular quantities of each of the

categories, which were measured out and allocated from here. While there are large amounts of some items (such as rice and pasta), there are often shortages of others (such as UHT milk). The availability of food at the EFA branches is governed by the donations made at supermarket collection points run by volunteers, or via school or church schemes where attendees bring in food to be given to charity. The volunteers took shifts at large supermarkets in south and central Bristol to collect the food and to give out leaflets with the types of food needed by the charity displayed on them. Harriet told volunteers which particular items were needed so they could pass this information on to shoppers as they entered the supermarket. Despite this, sometimes items were donated that could not be used: on one occasion, a whole fruitcake. At the end of the volunteer shift, someone would take these items that could not be used back into the store and ask for an exchange from the staff, so that this act of goodwill could be utilised even though the item donated was not suitable according to the charity's guidelines.



Figure 40: Supermarket own-branded items at Morrisons collection.

The brands of food donated vary, but there is often a strong presence of basic ‘own-brand’ packaging. While Don mentioned that he hated the own-brand versions of baked beans, avoiding them on the shelves of the food store, Jackie told me she always took these ones as she would rather leave the branded goods for those who wanted them. Further research is needed to find out more about the ways in which donors choose items to be given to charity; however, the role that branded foods play here is interesting. By giving the less expensive version to charity, it might be that donors are offering only the bare necessities to recipients who are unknown to them. Conversely, buying the less expensive

items might mean they can stretch their budget further and offer more. Moreover, when volunteering at one of the collections, casual observation showed that those who gave these items also had similar own-brand items among their own shopping, and so by offering these items to others they may be extending a similar form of care to strangers that they extend to their own family (cf. Miller 1998).



Figure 41: Protein in the form of processed, canned meats. The food that was received was sorted and stored by nutritional category to correspond to the allocation practices within the store. Protein was one of the

fundamental nutrients; however, only sources of protein that could be stored at an ambient temperature without fear of spoiling. There was often a shortage of available meat products in each food store branch. Additionally (particularly for those who came later in the day, when the most popular items had been picked already), there were often only one or two items remaining on the shelves.

Some difficulty also arose regarding the size of the protein allowances, as items such as a Fray Bentos pie would exceed the allowance offered on the sheet for most people, but it might be the only item remaining on the shelves. Here, again, micro-adjustments between the volunteer, the client and the sheet came about when it was time to weigh out the allowances.

Quite apart from the predominance of pork, there was often a lack of clarity over which of the processed meats were halal or kosher. While there were sometimes lentils available in the food store branches, they were rarely taken.



Figure 42: Toiletries were important to the charity's mission to provide dignity to clients.

Part of the EFA centre's mission was to provide dignity, and they mentioned that one way to do this was to offer toiletries as well as food. Each week, clients would be allocated two single toilet rolls; the larger packs, stored in the food hub, were separated into single rolls at the branches. On their second visit and

every fourth week after that, clients were allowed to take shampoo, soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste. Toiletries were therefore sought after, but there were often shortages in the food store's branches. In particular, toothpaste and toothbrushes were not always available, which meant that clients had to try their luck next time. While items such as toilet roll, feminine hygiene products and toothpaste are relatively inexpensive and most would agree are essential to daily life, these were less often given by donors.



Figure 43: Inedible and unusable items, including tins many years past their sell-by date. In addition to the supermarket collections, schools and churches also collected food for the charity. On a small table in the corner of the hub was the 'corner of shame', where items that were unusable or woefully out of date were placed. While the tinned items might have been safe, the ones in this photo were more

than five years past their sell-by date, indicating they were likely to have been sitting unwanted in the donor's kitchen cupboard for many years. Additionally, items that had been opened and partially used were donated. While these items represented only a tiny percentage of the total donations, they suggest an interesting dynamic among donors. Are such items chosen on purpose, whereby giving these items to the charity food drive would be akin to disposing of them in the bin? Or is it an honest mistake? Even if it is the latter, we might speculate that these forgotten items are not held in high regard by the donors, and that therefore the care being shown by donating might be outweighed by the donor's concerns about the contents of their own kitchen.

While individuals who donate might be judged as somewhat mean for donating out-of-date tins and open packages, there remains a vocal campaign in the UK for the redistribution of surplus food from business and industry to help address the issue of food insecurity. Just inside the front door of the food hub sat 11 boxes of muffin mix, each containing enough material to make 240 muffins. These boxes were catering-sized packages and were short-dated. Donated from a local company, Harriet urged me to take some home with me. As I had come across town in my car, I obliged by taking one of the packets from one of the boxes, with the intention of taking it home to make muffins that could be eaten by clients while they waited to be seen at the food store branch.



Figure 44: Donated muffin mix and buckets of frosting from business donors. Each box contained enough mix for about 240 muffins, and the charity found it hard to make use of them.

However, the large bag of muffin mix sat on the side of my kitchen for several weeks while I steeled myself for the task of baking five dozen muffins. When at last I began to make them, it became clear that my kitchen equipment was woefully inadequate for baking on such a large scale; I had to use several bowls and cook in batches of 12, as I had only one muffin tin. When they emerged, the muffins were dense and unpleasant and I felt ashamed to offer them at the food store.

While figures place the amount of food wasted globally at around 1/3 of that produced, it does not follow that food insecurity can simply be addressed by the redistribution of such surpluses. Not only is the idea that those who are facing insecurity should live off the scraps of the tables of others morally repugnant but also the materiality and practices of making food from these surpluses is often incompatible with our everyday food needs and capacities. Consequently, donations of surplus food demonstrate care for the materials themselves, saving them from landfill, as well as self-care by the donors by enhancing Corporate Social Responsibility, rather than care for the intended recipients.

Consequently, these experiences echo the findings of others that food waste redistribution does not offer any long-term *solution* to issues of food poverty, but instead legitimises the current system in all its inequality (Midgley 2014) and reinforces the idea of recipients as somehow inferior (van der Horst et al. 2014).

Getting food, beyond in/dependence and towards capacity

These practices of getting food are diverse; yet, bringing them together to consider how people get food in a context of insecurity and analysing them through ideas of *capacity* shows that *eating well* extends beyond the dinner table, involving a host of diverse practices. This breaks down assumptions that food practices are enacted by autonomous individuals making (rational) choices. Common to the encounters described above is a tension between ideas of independence and dependence. Both at the EFA centre and on the community bus, an ideal of independence played a large role in the activities that took place and the discourses that were used. But this was also tangled up

with dependencies. The bus was a ‘godsend’ to those who used it, and the EFA centre was the main source of food for all of the participants I spoke to.

For Schwanen, independence is ‘fuzzy’ and multiple; an achievement that comes about from ‘a trial-and-error process of adjustment ... different body-and-device assemblages offer different action possibilities and create different lived bodies’ (Schwanen et al. 2012 p.1319) In this analysis, Schwanen moves away from the false normativity of independence, instead mobilising the term ‘dependencies’ to ‘affirm individuals’ enmeshment in relations with both fellow humans and non-human elements’ (Schwanen et al. 2012 p.1320). The examples from the bus and the EFA centre journeys can be understood in terms of these ‘dependencies’ (Schwanen et al. 2012), through which capacity to get food – and consequently, eat well – were distributed. Both services offered networks of practices, bodies and properties, which collaborated to *ease* mobility in shifting landscapes of embodied wellbeing. On similar lines, Winance (2006) offers the term ‘adjustment’ to show how people and wheelchairs come to fit one another. This term is more fitting for these examples of getting food; it draws attention to the dynamism of these processes because it was through a multitude of micro-adjustments that, for clients and passengers, the fluctuating precarity of unpredictable bodies, stretched finances and unreliable social relations was levelled out.

To accept that some (inter)dependency is a necessary condition of life is a powerful step towards developing an ethics of care between and across bodies (de la Bellacasa 2011; Tsing 2015). As the contrasting bus journeys show, however, the *qualities* of these dependencies must also be considered (Law 2004; Moser 2008; Schwanen et al. 2012). The person known only to me as the ‘smelly man’, dependent on a carer who could not keep him clean, was the most

striking example of this. While for some, such as Lyn and Peggy, the bus enabled literal support as they watched out for one another, for the carer and his charge – who could perhaps be in need of both intervention and more far-reaching care – these more positive dependencies did not emerge.

Indeed, staying true to the Spinozist openness and potentiality of what a body can do, we can look to these schemes as enabling new relations of care that eased mobility. Getting food in these cases was an accomplishment; something that is always in process and that entails a distribution across material and human elements. Yet, as these experiences of getting food showed, '[t]he process of adjustment is ambivalent. It is both opening and closing of possibilities for a person. ... Adjustment produces a common materiality that is both what enables and what disables, what allows and what forbids' (Winance 2006 p.66).

Additionally, in keeping with my interest in the material-affective, I argue that these capacities were not simply about social interactions and physical support. Bearing in mind the sensory elements that, using Bissel's language, were an *easing* of the practices of getting food, it was through sensibilities and feelings that the EFA centre and the bus became spaces in which a performance of consumerism could be enacted. Emotional²⁰ elements were important in journeys for getting food – a point that Winance also shows in her study of wheelchair users. The EFA centre was keen to avoid shame through offering choice – a performance similar to a supermarket shop, which helps to prevent negative emotions that come from receipt of food aid (Purdam et al. 2015; van

²⁰ If we do not conflate the emotional with the affective but rather affirm that emotions can contribute to affect as bodily capacity (Anderson 2006). For further discussions on the distinction between affect, emotion and feeling, see Anderson 2006; Bondi 2005; Massumi 2002.

der Horst et al. 2014), thus reducing the stigma of using such as service. In the supermarket as well as on the bus, emotional issues of bereavement as well as dignity (for example, not wanting to be seen to struggle) emerged. These emotional micro-adjustments had limits, however. The public suffering of the ‘smelly man’ was a point of rupture of these connections, as noses were held and conversations died on the lips. Some, such as Don, strove to cover their weakness by refusing to share their vulnerability with others who could help them, reclaiming a sense of dignity (which affords a limited affective capacity). Others such as Lyn and Peggy found strength in the diversity and depth of their attachments. The more numerous and strong the attachments across bodies, technologies and socialities, the *easier* it became to get food; yet, openness to forming these attachments is distributed unequally across bodies. It is to these unequal distributions of openness, or precarity (Butler 2004), that I turn in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have addressed a wide range of empirical material that helps to answer the research question: how do people get food in contexts of insecurity? I have drawn attention to those practices of getting food that are often neglected in studies of food access, helping to move towards an analysis of the ‘hidden geographies’ of food insecurity, which shape capacities for *getting food* (and consequently eating well) but have been excluded by a preoccupation with the idea of *access* to food in literature on the topic.

First, I considered the practices of walking to get food that were carried out by EFA clients. Here, bodies were uneven terrain and the material-affective conditions of their food journeys – including embodied wellbeing, mental

health, social relationships and the *foodstuffs* they were getting – did not only shape the journeys they took. Importantly, these examples showed that embodied wellbeing – understood as physical health and mental health – is not simply an outcome of a particular food environment, nor even of food practices, but that these experiences emerge through and alongside practices of getting food, impacting on whether someone can leave the house, for example, or the sorts of food journeys they make.

Building on this point, I moved on to the community bus. Reflecting on three different bus encounters – the ‘happy bus’, the ‘smelly bus’ and the ‘white bus’ – I showed that, while the passengers and staff on the bus viewed it as offering *independence*, the ways they were able to get food can be attributed to certain *interdependencies*, which arose through the material practices of getting the bus to the store. Here, the burden of getting food was shared through the formation of material-affective encounters that distributed a capacity to affect and be affected, opening up the possibilities for what the bodies could do.

After considering the bus, I moved on to look at passengers’ experiences in the supermarkets and clients’ experiences within the EFA food store. Throughout these encounters, embodied knowledge and sensibilities – of oneself and of foodstuffs and food spaces – were important in understanding how practices of *getting food* took place. Participants ‘sensed and made sense’ (Evans and Miele 2012) of these elements within the landscape of their own lives, and consequently ‘barriers’ emerged that might not become apparent if we did not take this embodied, reflexive *foodsensing* into account. For example, working with Alice showed me that there are things beyond words, and not obvious to outsiders, which shape food practices. Even in situations of need and hunger (or perhaps even more so), these intangible elements are not exterior to the

physicality of hunger but are fundamentally tied up with how we know and relate to food. As a result, while nutritional models such as the Eatwell plate imagine food culture as something that can be laid on top of or come after the brute materiality of macro and micro nutrients and digestive functions, when addressing food inequalities we must rather understand both the nature and culture of food as intrinsically entwined, emergent from the material practices through which we come to know them.

These encounters offer not only a step in the direction of theorising food inequalities in terms of *capacity for eating well* rather than *access to a good diet* but also scope to consider the ‘hidden geographies’ (Dyck 1995) of food inequalities. By looking in places where others have not yet looked, by examining practices in all their dynamism and by attuning to the sensuous bodies and affective capacity at play, it becomes possible to begin to bring these hidden geographies to the forefront of our analysis of food inequalities.

Consequently, in the next and final empirical chapter, I turn to domestic food practices to consider the intangible – and, to date, invisible – elements of food inequalities, in order to consider how food insecurity *feels*.

Seven. Kitchen encounters

*'Affects may constrain and restrict as well as enable, open up
and disrupt.'* (Anderson 2014, p.93)

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider how food insecurity emerges – how it comes to be felt – within material encounters at home. Looking at participants’ domestic kitchens, and specifically at three encounters within these spaces, I show the importance of these sites in the study of food insecurity. As these spaces are not often considered in contexts of insecurity, this analysis offers an important opportunity to reflect on elements of food insecurity that would otherwise be invisible.

To make this argument, I draw on empirical material from all the case studies. Some of this was gathered in kitchens; however, most of the material emerged through discussions that took place elsewhere but in which kitchen spaces and attendant practices were important. This empirical material follows the journeys of food encounters: from the public places of the cookery courses discussed in Chapter Five, via the supermarket or EFA centre where participants got their food in Chapter Six, and ultimately to participants’ homes here in Chapter Seven.

I show how precarious living situations are conducive to the affects of anxiety and isolation and how these affects can decisively interrupt the formation of a capacity for eating well, even when the requisite resources appear to be present. I address the research question *‘How is food poverty felt?’* through analysis of three encounters within these kitchens: at the back of the fridge, the dinner table and the kitchen cabinet. Discussing both actual encounters with these spaces as well as a wider reflection on the meanings and associations these spaces had within participants’ lives, I use these encounters as loci, the examination of which shows how food insecurity was felt as these encounters

constricted and prevented participants from developing a capacity for eating well.

Contributing to the recurring theme in this thesis of the ‘ordinary affects’ (Stewart 2012) of food insecurity, these encounters are loci at which to reflect on the wider issues of isolation and anxiety that limit a capacity to eat well.

While in Chapter Six I discussed how practices of getting food were *eased* by interdependencies and multiple attachments, here I show how the encounters within domestic spaces constricted rather than opened up participants’ capacities to eat well; in other words, a capacity to eat well (based on multiple attachments) was not developed. Consequently, I build on the discussions in Anderson around the ways in which an encounter can constrict (Anderson 2014). I draw out two main elements of these encounters that engaged in this restriction, namely *anxiety* and *isolation*.

I begin with a physical encounter with one of these spaces that participants shared with me, and then use this to reflect more broadly on participants’ experiences of these spaces and encounters. In doing so, I consider the ways in which precarious living restricts a capacity for ‘good taste’ through isolation and anxiety.

Central to this chapter, then, are the apparent contradictions that can emerge when eating well does not come about despite food being available. This shows the potential for a *tasteful analysis*: an attempt to understand life on the terms of those affected. From such an analysis, such apparent contradictions (like going hungry when there is food in the house) can be understood; the apparent contradiction disappears when we understand the forces that brought it about.

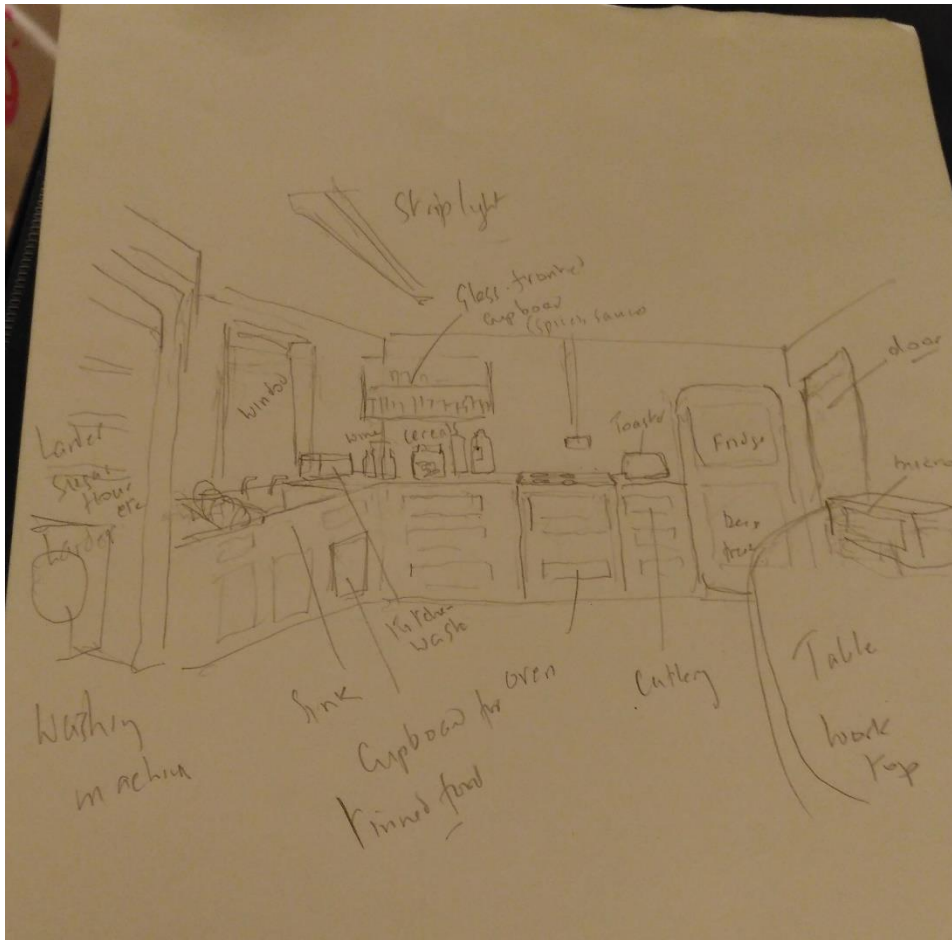


Figure 45: Gus's kitchen. During our interview, he drew pictures of his kitchen for me. As he did so, he described how he used to share chores with friends who lived with him and who taught him about food from India.

Kitchens, precarity, isolation and anxiety

To understand how food insecurity *feels*, it is important to attune to things that are invisible. One of the motivations behind this study has been to open up what we mean by 'food insecurity' by looking in places that have so far been cut out of public ideas of food insecurity. A salient space in this discourse that has often been overlooked is that of the kitchen.

The study of kitchens is important because it unpacks the idea of 'the household'. This is particularly important because of the diversity of living arrangements of the participants in this study. Very few of the participants I

met lived in a nuclear family household. Rather, their housing arrangements included: sofa surfing; domestic violence (DV) refuges; sheltered accommodation; private rentals; council rentals; living with family; living with friends; living alone, living in supported-living residences and living with immediate family in owned or privately rented properties. Consequently, their kitchens varied – from large shared kitchens with professional catering equipment (such as those found in hostels for the homeless) to shared domestic-style kitchens with others (in the DV refuge) to bedsits (where people slept, lived, cooked and ate in one room) to very small kitchens in sheltered accommodation.

Not only were the spaces themselves diverse but also, importantly, they were places in which diverse social and familial relationships were enacted and negotiated, and which were often fraught to some degree. So, while kitchens can be a site of coming together (such as for Yates-Doerr and Carney (2014), where kitchens were sites of family care and collectivity), in this study they were often sites of isolation and anxiety.

The literature on precarity often draws upon areas of affective life (Berlant 2011; Stewart 2007) and the ways in which wider structures take form within the imbroglio of people's lives. The kitchens themselves can be seen as material manifestations of the political-economic conditions under which people live. In this chapter, I argue that these conditions have two major effects on people's capacity to eat well: anxiety and isolation. These affects can involve medical, emotional, embodied and social elements. Yet, in many ways, despite the force with which they are felt, they are invisible to outsiders.

As participants in this study shared their food practices with me in different ways, kitchens repeatedly emerged as important sites that contributed to 'eating

well'. Kitchens were ubiquitous to the point of being taken for granted in some cases, yet in other cases were hidden or absent from public view, as well as hidden from me in my role as a researcher (see Chapter Three on methodology). As such, they are doubly invisible in analyses of food access, yet they were consistently relevant – not only as key sites for food practices but also as links between family life, economic precarity/housing situation and social and family relationships – in many of my encounters with participants. Kitchens have also been absent from geographic and other academic contributions to the issue of food access, in which activities that relate to kitchens – eating, shopping, etc. – have been discussed but little attention paid to the places in which these activities take place.

'I cannot have [a] job and I have not [got] any money, any support ... And I [get] ten pounds per week ... I lived in Kingswood and when I [was] refused [asylum], I must leave NASS home and live in Bristol, in Bedminster ... with an English lady in Bristol. I live one month there and changed to [redacted] road to English family ... I want to stay [in] Manchester but I could not get a good solicitor, because the Manchester solicitor is very busy.'

Olivia, EFA client.

The unreliability of their living conditions was a major issue for many participants. Circumstances differed among those who suffered from such unreliability, but in terms of affective experiences there were commonalities. The above quote from Olivia is representative of those who were receiving food aid and were undergoing the protracted and difficult process of seeking asylum.

There were people at the EFA centre from Jamaica, Romania, Iran, Afghanistan and El Salvador. These people were often limited to an income of £10 a week; they were not allowed to work, and had ‘no recourse to public funds’. Obviously, these factors meant that their financial situations and living conditions were extremely precarious; these states of precarity could last months or (more likely) years. Furthermore, those seeking asylum were often in difficult housing situations, sometimes (like Olivia) living in the homes of those who volunteer to support migrants. Others were given housing but had little say in the location or condition of those homes. Gary (who lived for a while in a homeless shelter) told of how the rules and regulations of the hostel prevented him from feeling at home:

‘I needed to go into the kitchen and that’s when I got into trouble 'cos they thought I wasn’t using the hostel ... You’ve got to use the key fob to go down [to the kitchen] ... I used to go out, and then as I came back someone would let me in, so I never used the fob to get back in and so they thought I’d gone out and not come back in. I had two written warnings, or was it two verbal and one written, anyway, they were gonna throw me out! I’m like “What do you mean? I’m here!” They said “You haven’t been using your fob.” I goes, “Well, people are letting me in! And I don’t use the kitchen – ”, 'cos that was another fob to get in too, it was all computerised and so they just assumed, like, that I was not there or missing or something 'cos I never used the fob. And I was like “No, I just don’t want to mix with people.” You know, 'cos my head wasn’t right.’

Gary, EFA client and Clever Cooking attendee

Others, such as Vicky, lived in houses or flats that had been their homes for many years. The arrival of the 'bedroom tax' meant that these (previously stable) spaces had now become a source of worry as well as a site of financial strain. Vicky told me that her bedroom tax put her in arrears each month, as she had a two-bed flat but lived there only with her small dog. The cuts to her income meant she was constantly worried she might lose her home. Many of those at the EFA centre were there because of the effects of the 'bedroom tax' on their income. For those who were just getting by, this sudden dip in income made the difference between managing and not managing. While financial strain was one issue making food harder to afford, there was also the attendant emotional and mental toll experienced when under very tight financial pressure. Precarity— whether felt financially or bearing upon one's housing situation – therefore generates anxious affects that diminish our capacity to live well; or rather, live in the ways that we otherwise would. Thus, a person's precarity impacts upon their kitchen practices, as the kitchen becomes a space in which their anxiety is made manifest, the point at which they confront their anxieties via the material practices of preparing and eating food.

Breaking from those who have previously focused on kitchen practices, I do not focus solely on the four walls of a room, but rather attempt to look at kitchens as a space with porous boundaries that can often be traced throughout the house and further beyond (Wills et al. 2013). To address the question of how food insecurity *feels*, I focus more on affects than on practices. While public kitchens (such as those used in the cookery courses) and participants' domestic spaces share some of the same dynamics, I focus here on the latter, because they are consistently missing from analyses of food environment and wellbeing.

To show how precarious conditions impact on the capacity to eat well through affects of anxiety and isolation, I begin with three material encounters shared with me by participants: the back of the fridge, the dinner table and the kitchen cupboard. I then use these material encounters (as described by participants through discussions, from photos and drawings shared with me and via eating together) to reflect more broadly on participants' experiences of such spaces. I then go on to consider the emerging affects of anxiety and isolation, their impact on eating practices and how we might begin to integrate them into the issue of eating well.

The back of the fridge



Figure 46: Gus's Fridge. There was very little food in Gus's fridge. As he had lost his sense of taste and subsequently lost a lot of weight, he chose foods such as yoghurt and juice, as they require almost no preparation and are easy to swallow.

To consider these issues of anxiety and isolation in kitchens, I first evoke an encounter with the back of the fridge. This helps one attune to the various practices of getting by when living precariously, as well as highlighting some of

the vulnerabilities that emerge in this situation. The use of fridges was an important tactic for participants in all of the case studies. Being able to cook a large batch of a particular meal and preserve portions for later is an economical way of cooking; it also prevents the boredom that arises when one eats the same thing for every meal. Clients at the EFA centre were particularly reliant on fridges to eke out as much as possible from their food parcels. As these were given once a week and they could not be sure what they would get each time, it was important that participants were able to make the best use of the food that was given. This is an example of the skills and knowledge that participants had, adding further evidence that 'education' is rarely the issue (see Chapter Five).

As Jackie points out:

[Making large portions] is the most economic way to cook, my mum always taught me that. And then if I freeze it, like with this casserole I made, or stew, whatever you want to call it, at least I'm not living on this one stew, every meal, for a week. 'Cos then I'd get bored with it so... If I portion it up and put it in the freezer, I can have different things on different days ... I label things, date it.'

Jackie, EFA client and Clever Cooking attendee.

Savvy use of the fridge also helped to manage money and to make the most from shopping trips – particularly important when relying on support from others to go shopping and when money is tight. As this extract from an interview with EFA client Tina shows, fridges and freezers can also help to make the most of cheap options as they become available:

*'I'd say my whole budget goes on food for them really.'Cos yeah,
Wednesday I got the money, Friday I'm broke already, I'm
broke until I get the money next Wednesday. My last £10 I give
it to [my kids] ... They were going to cricket yesterday so I gave
them the last £10 to buy six packs of bread at Lidl's ... So, I put
the bread in the freezer 'cos I buy them cheapest bread – 47p
[for each loaf]. So, I buy six packs so I know, so at least I know, I
try to buy the cheapest one, the cheapest brands, you know to
try and save the money ...
... I get the tilapia in St Paul's really cheap, like, the Wednesday I
bought two big bags, each of them had about six in it for, well,
the two bags were £10, £9.99 ... [The tilapia's] frozen, it's nice, I
put it in the freezer – I know they're there and I don't need to – I
know I have, I'm not going to run out of meat, you know so I just
buy it for the freezer so I'm fine for the next week or two weeks
with meat and stuff.'*

Tina, EFA client.

As Tina's quote shows, some of the anxieties of getting enough to eat, making food last and ensuring children are cared for can be eased by savvy use of storage devices such as fridges and freezers. Having a fridge and a freezer is important; even those who lived in hostels, such as Gary, were able to keep a small fridge in their room. Yet, for others, fridges were a space in which food that was disliked could be hidden.

'That's why I think these ready-made foods might be the long-term answer ... Something you take out of the fridge and cut a slice off and put in the microwave and it's done. An old lady

down the road tried to interest me in these Wiltshire Farm Foods things [a range of frozen ready meals]. Do you know those? Well sometimes the fish is nice, sometimes the meat is nice, but the vegetables are horrible! Oh dear, it doesn't work, especially the potatoes and the other things. And eating out of a plastic! Well, of course, you can put it on a plate, but it's quite ... It's ... I think I have a few in the deep freeze but I don't like them. I think they do for a lot of people but I think it's much better to try to eat something fresh.'

Gus, Dinner Plus attendee.

Here, Gus shows us that the convenience of foods that only need heating up can be offset by their flavour and the packaging in which they come. Eating the meal out of plastic also seems to be a barrier to enjoying this food – albeit one that escapes words. We can see, then, that fridges and freezers were sites of ambivalence in which the line between bad and good food can become blurred. This line was negotiated by participants via practices of sensory engagement with the packaging – the experience of eating out of plastic – and the food itself. Other studies have shown some of the ways in which we use our senses – particularly sight and smell – to negotiate the foodstuffs in fridges as they change over time (Evans 2014).



Figure 47: Gus’s freezer. Like others I spoke to, he had tried ready meals offered by a ‘meals-on-wheels’ service (the pre-packaged ‘vegetable bake’), but did not find them simple to reheat or pleasant to eat.

Evans (2014) shows that fridges, and the backs of fridges in particular, are sorting sites; it is here that things go before they are thrown away. These items are ugly, disgusting and can be banished – out of sight, out of mind. For some, throwing things away brings intense feelings of guilt. There are emotions attached to fridges.

Fridges were therefore also spaces in which vulnerabilities emerged in relation to food. At Dinner Plus, Katie often brought up the issue of storing food; at one meeting, Gus mentioned he was happy to eat anything in his fridge and was not afraid of food poisoning. Katie urged him to be cautious, because while food

poisoning is an uncomfortable experience for those who are otherwise healthy it can be very serious or even fatal for those who are older or in fragile health. For Gus, then, the fridge was a space in which not only the changing materiality of the food was encountered and dealt with (as in Evans' study) but also the changing *capacity* of his own body – including processes of digestion – became apparent. Additionally, for those who use the fridge to eke out limited food supplies, vulnerabilities emerge from eating food that has been there for several days. Gary told us how he was not daunted by food that was old:

'I don't take any notice of like, Sell-By dates or Use-By dates, I just smell it and if it smells all right I'll, you know, use it and if it doesn't it'll go in the bin. I can't even stand food waste, it's another thing that just drives me insane. Especially not having food, and when you're seeing people chuck food out, when there's nothing wrong with it, it's gone a bit, you know, bruised ... Well, just chop that bit off!'

Gary, EFA client and Clever Cooking attendee.

For Gus and Gary therefore, the back of the fridge and the foodstuffs it contained were spaces in which embodied reactions to their personal situations emerged. For Gus, the fact of his changing health was brought home by the need to be more careful with old food; combined with his recent lack of appetite, declining sense of taste and mobility issues, this contributed to the ambivalence of these spaces. For Gary, his strong constitution and commitment not to waste food meant he was able to absorb the wider (political) conditions of precarity with which he was faced through his bodily capacities. His capacity to

eat well emerged through his embodied *sensing and making sense* of food (Evans and Miele 2012), which meant he was able to digest these issues. These examples show how embodied wellbeing becomes enrolled in wider networks of precarity, some directly related to political economy (such as the benefit sanctions and debt that resulted in Gary living in a hostel), others (such as Gus's wellbeing) not overtly political (although arguably, better care provision might have played a role here).

Despite being happy to eat most foods that were past their sell-by date, there was one food that Gary was not able to stomach: mouldy bread. For him, it was a potent reminder of living in a hostel, surviving by picking up pennies from the floor and using them to buy bread from the supermarkets in the evenings when he knew it would be massively discounted.

Gary: 'When I was in the hostel and had to look out for pennies, you know, I managed to get some stale bread from Tesco ... End of the day, like, they'd have like cheap bread, and I'd scour the floor looking for pennies ... And I don't get – eat much bread now as well, because that's driving me insane now as well. Oh, I can't face bread.'

Emma: 'Really? You, you sort of associate it with a former time in your life?'

Gary: 'Yeah with torture. Chinese torture. Just not good ... [I can't face] any bread... [I think of] the mould, and when it went mouldy I'd just eat it, picking the mould, it tastes just, I think it's all in my head and it just takes you to a bad place ...'

(From an interview with Gary, EFA client and Clever Cooking participant).



Figure 48: Gary's signature dish. Now that he no longer lived in the hostel, he enjoyed cooking. He made sure to eat items that might be 'on the turn', such as mushrooms, by adding them to dishes like pasta bake.

Through these encounters with the back of the fridge, we can see how tastes – capacities for eating well – enrol embodied wellbeing within wider conditions of precarity. Making a similar argument, Julie Guthman shows how bodies become enrolled in capitalist modes of production as 'fixes' for the inevitable accumulation that capitalism produces (Guthman 2015; see also Harvey 2005). These examples, however, show there is a need to consider this argument further. The encounters with the back of the fridge show these are spaces where vulnerabilities emerge, and that these vulnerabilities are differently distributed.

Looking at these encounters with the back of the fridge allows us to attune to a set of material-affective forces that shape a capacity for eating well. These are not universal or inherent within a material or practice in themselves, but are contingent on history and context. For some, the fridges supported thrifty practices and ensuring care for others, such as their children. For others, however, they were more hazardous.

For those participants who did not always know when they would next get a meal, what it might contain or where they might eat it, a different set of pressures applied when interacting with the food at the back of the fridge. There was more imperative to eat anything, even when it is old, mouldy, monotonous or otherwise unpalatable. The material conditions of living precariously and not being able to rely on a regular supply of food therefore make such encounters riskier. However, this risk is not always known or reflected on by participants. Disgust might emerge here, either through the texture of the food (mushy vegetables, signs of decay) or through other markers that have particular force for a person (mouldy bread). Equally, finding something to eat at the back of the fridge might be a way of mitigating feelings of anxiety by accepting items as food that others might see as waste.

By considering these encounters at the back of the fridge we can see the importance of looking in otherwise hidden spaces to think about food insecurity. Doing so, we can see the importance of the material-affective configurations of these spaces in easing or restricting a capacity for eating well. Specifically, the encounters described above – of Gus, Gary, Tina and Jackie – show that anxiety is an important element in shaping our capacity for eating well. For some, such as Jackie and Tina, the fridges and freezers were a means of alleviating anxiety and monotony and eking out food resources that were

only sporadically available. However, for Gary and Gus, the encounters at the back of the fridge took place where one's own changing bodily abilities became apparent. Gus learned that he must be more careful about eating what is lurking at the back of the fridge, as his age made this a much more hazardous practice. For Gary, his disgusted reaction was entangled in his head with 'torture', chiefly because of its association with times when he was under a great amount of stress and pain and living in a hostel. We can see that a capacity to eat well shifted for Gus and Gary because – to draw on Anderson's commentary on Fanon (2014) and in contrast to the encounters in Chapter Six – the encounters at the back of the fridge *constrict*. The interdependencies required for a capacity for eating well, which would have resulted in a sociability of good taste, did not form. The gap left by these unformed interdependencies was filled instead with disgust. What these encounters at the back of the fridge show, then, is that anxiety can interrupt and intervene in a capacity for eating well.

Having shown how kitchen encounters can be fraught with anxiety, I go on to consider two other spaces within the kitchen, in which particular encounters can help to show some of the otherwise invisible ways in which the capacity for eating well comes to be interrupted or restricted through affects. Looking next at encounters at the dinner table, I add the affect of isolation to the analysis in order to show how it can *constrict* a capacity for eating well.

The dinner table

In practical terms, a dinner table is a device that can enable practices of eating well. But it is also an object that is loaded with meanings, memories and significance, which are related to social norms and ideas about commensality. Consequently, material practices of sitting and eating at the table also involve

personal connections with others, present and absent. Indeed, for many I spoke to, the idea of the table was key for a 'proper meal'. Consequently, I consider encounters with the dinner table as both a relevant material device central to eating practices and a metaphor for commensality, particularly familial interaction: a site where, according to dominant social norms, people are *meant* to come together. I therefore use the table both literally and metaphorically to show not only how material conditions of precarity were manifested but also how affects of isolation emerged. For participants, discussions about the kitchen table led them to reflect on eating alone, triggering memories of better times when they would share food and space with loved ones.

*I've got a coffee table but it's too low but my little other table ...
I've been looking out for something ... Something with the drop-
down sides, just so I can just tuck away in a corner somewhere,
but big enough so that, if someone did come around for dinner,
it'd be big enough for a couple of people to sit on. Keep my eyes
open in the second-hand shops and that... Yes, but we had a
lovely dining table, probably about the size of this table, proper
wood, had the big chairs and that to go with it but then, I dunno
what happened, we got new furniture and with the furniture
and the dining table in [that room] it was a bit too much so I
gave it to my sister ... A great garden set I've got as well, I'll
never use it again but [my friend] said she wouldn't mind it, she
has quite a few barbeques around at hers, she's got a few
neighbours that comes around for barbeques and things like
that, she's got family that comes down.*

Vicky, Dinner Plus.

Vicky revealed her changing circumstances as she reflected upon her lack of a ‘proper’ dinner table: now she had less money to live on than before, and now – living alone – she had no-one with whom to share the dinner table. For many participants, the dinner table was a space where isolation emerged and was keenly felt. This is chiefly a material concern. As mentioned in Chapter Five, a table setting allows foodstuffs to become a meal and the table itself offered a form of propriety and a (perhaps idealised) sense of normalcy, which, in its absence, constricted the encounter, limiting what the body could do.

Jackie: ‘Well my son likes to sit at a table. Unfortunately, we don’t have a dining room table. We’ve got space for one, but our support worker has been promising me, promising me since April when I moved into that house that she was gonna get us a dining room table – no joy. But we’ve got one of those great big green plastic ones out in the garden ... So, [my son] will often sit out there and eat ... his tea. But the other night, it was raining and I said to him “You can’t eat your tea out there!” He said “Yeah, go outside, go outside!”, and I went “Fine, fine!” You need to work out for yourself that you can’t go outside and sit in the rain, and he loves rain ... He ended up eating in the living room ‘cos we don’t have anywhere else to eat inside ... So, sometimes I’ll eat it in my room, sometimes, if it’s nice, I’ll eat it outside on that table, but... other than that, it’s on my lap in the front room.

Which isn’t ideal but you gotta do what you gotta do haven’t you?... It’s not something I’d choose, I would rather sit at a table and eat properly ... It will be one, one of the top things I have to buy when I move. It has to be. Because A, it helps [my son] eat,

*and B, I just, I'd rather have a table and chair than a sofa ...
Yeah, when you have to start again and re-evaluate your life it's
shocking what you prioritise ... A dining room table is one of the
higher things.'*

(From an interview with Jackie, EFA client and Clever Cooking participant.)

At the time of her interview, Jackie lived in a refuge for survivors of domestic violence. She cared for her son, who suffered from severe learning difficulties. Jackie had lost everything when she left her partner. Jackie was not receiving the benefits that were due to her son because they were paid to her ex-partner, who did not share the money with her. Living in a DV refuge, she had little control over the conditions in which she lived. While some of these constraints were protective measures (such as not allowing visitors to the shelter), it also meant she felt unable to provide a 'proper' meal for her son. In this case, the lack of table was indicative of a wider lack of control over the facilities for cooking and eating at home. This was also shown by her feelings of being unable to cook in the way she would like. For Jackie, this encounter with the dinner table was a reminder of her current situation. She cared for her son in challenging circumstances, but at dinnertime a host of elements also drew up at the table: her reliance on a support worker, the difficulties inherent in sharing a space and the desire to offer her son a 'proper' meal alongside the challenge of managing his complex needs. For Jackie, then, putting food on the table was an exercise in making the best of the situation. In the absence of an appropriate table, she became aware of the importance that this object held in her everyday life.

We might speculate further that having her son to look after gave Jackie an impetus to come to the table in the first place. For participants who lived alone, encounters with the dinner table were entangled with a different set of issues.



Figure 49: Ali's signature dish from his foodmap interview. Fish (from the fish-and-chip shop), soup and carrots (from the EFA store).

Laura: 'You prefer to go and buy things rather than cook from home?'

Ali: 'Mostly, a few times I can cook, mostly I eat, in a way it's junk or rubbish food in a way but I can eat, really whatever now, because only to be still alive ... In Sweden, I lived in that time with my wife and my two children – it's completely different, I was cooking a lot and I was eating and cooking more healthier food for all of us ... It was a lot of fresh food, and I

*know, still I know how to cook but when [you're with] family, it's
different to when you are alone.*

*It's different when you're alone, difficult to sit down and cook a
lot of food and then you can't eat it – but when [you're with a]
big family and so on, even if I'm not eating too much with them
still I can eat something with them because [I'm] kind of
socialising.'*

Ali, EFA client.

For Ali, eating well came more easily when he was living in Sweden with his family. Being with his family was an impetus to cook and to use fresh ingredients, and eating well was less about what he ate, or how much, but instead emerged through the sociability of the meal. In contrast, now he finds it difficult to cook.

Throughout the fieldwork I carried out, the challenges of shopping, cooking and eating alone was emphasised. Being alone poses a very real barrier to a healthy diet. In the first instance, it is a material and economic challenge. Cooking for one is relatively more expensive than cooking a social meal, and pots and pans, serving dishes, kitchens, tables, recipes and portions in food packets (with the obvious exception of ready meals) are all designed to facilitate social eating. This shows an important way in which the infrastructures of our homes and food system are often not well-designed for the practicalities of living and eating alone. However, more relevant to the *feelings* of food insecurity were participants' repeated references by to intangible barriers to cooking and eating well. Indeed, from Ali's quote, not only is it 'difficult to cook' but 'then you can't eat it'. Here, 'eating well' appears difficult to achieve when alone. This does not

simply relate to eating in solitude; the act of eating a meal brings up memories and emotions of loss, grief or regret for those absent – those with whom participants once shared a table. Cathy told us that when her husband ‘goes back home’ to visit family she struggles to manage; not simply because she will not be able to share the chores of cooking, but because:

Cathy: ‘I’ll be struggling where, I won’t be able to ... Eat when he’s not here ... And because, with the bills ... [pause] It’s difficult ... I mean, I feel ashamed, got myself in this mess and I’ve got to try and get myself out of this mess, do you know what I mean?... And a lot of these flats ain’t catered for, I mean, just sitting in the kitchen...’

Emma: ‘Yeah. Kitchens are often too small to eat in, nowadays. So, you’ve got a little table. So, do you sit around the table?’

Cathy: ‘Well my husband sits on the coffee table when he comes and visits me, I still feed him! [Laughs]’

Emma: ‘Okay, so that’s like a low table then?’

Cathy: ‘Yeah, a small coffee table ... He sits on the settee and sits on there.’

Laura: ‘Okay. So, do you eat most of the time on your own? You said sometimes you eat with your husband ...?’

Cathy: ‘Yeah, sometimes I’m, I do eat on my own.’

Emma: ‘How does that feel?’

Cathy: 'Horrible ... It's not nice. I just feel like you're missing a person and sometimes you feel like you don't wanna eat? Because you're there on your own.'

Interview with Cathy, Clever Cooking attendee

Eating well when alone is materially more challenging than eating socially: it is more expensive and it involves more work and more waste per meal in relative terms. However, for Cathy there was something intangible about being alone that made her feel 'horrible' and unable to eat well. For some, this was related to habit – particularly in the case of women who were living alone after previously living with and cooking for family; the skills they were reliant on left them ill-equipped to eat well alone.

'I don't know how to cook for one person ... It's always two or three people yeah. So... Then, I'll do something else with it ... Sometimes it's an effort isn't it, just to cook for yourself, for one, for one you know, for one person. Yeah, it can be off-putting ... My friend said, "Just cook in smaller pots, put less food in the pot!", but you know, I can't cook like that.'

Jackie, Clever Cooking attendee

This echoed the point raised by Gladys in Chapter Six, where routine practices of buying milk in the supermarket brought home the loss of a loved one. Jackie and Cathy's quotes show this is an issue that may be felt at home even when the absence may be temporary, as in the case of Cathy's husband. For participants in all of the organisations I worked with, it was common to feel that there was no point in using a table even if it was there; being alone, it became pointless. This feeling of hopelessness extended into an atmosphere of anxiety, coupled

with the material difficulties of eating. The flows of cooking and eating well were obstructed in and through these anxieties.

Vicky: 'The thing is, I've got loads of food in my freezer, I've got sausages ... I thought I'd buy them for a cheap meal sometimes, but I've got it all in there and I don't use it ... I think I just can't be bothered because it's just me ...'

Laura: 'Does anything put you off having to cook?'

Vicky: 'Maybe if I've had a busy day. [Pause.]. Or, some days, I'll be home all day but because I'm home all day. I just can't be bothered. I just feel lazy or something, I dunno, nothing sort of motivates me when it comes to it [cooking], I just can't be bothered.'

Vicky, Dinner Plus attendee.

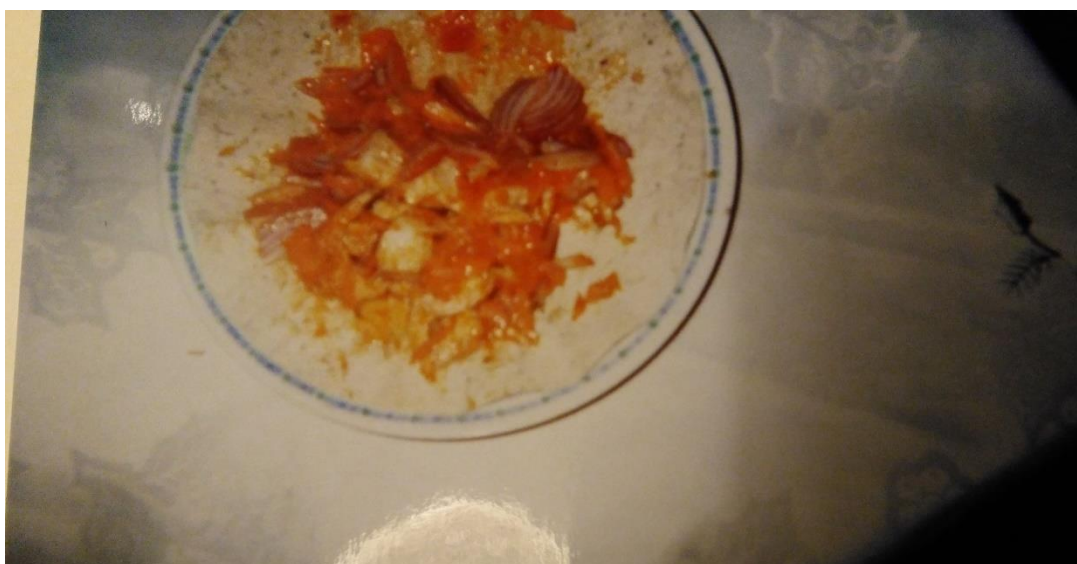


Figure 50: Photo food diary from Vicky. Scrambled egg on toast, sweet and sour chicken with rice and small cupcakes she made herself.

Emma: 'Do you ever cook for anyone else?'

Gary: 'No.'

Emma: 'You just make nice meals for yourself.'

*Gary: 'Oh, well I used to, you know. But I'm living on my own
now so it's, now I don't, no.'*

Gary, EFA client and Clever Cooking attendee

Others told me they did not have a table or space for one, and this meant it was hard to have a 'proper' meal. While for some, mealtimes were events of loss or absence in which isolation was felt, others expressed some tension and anxiety about sharing meals with others. Here, isolation took a different form, intersecting with anxiety. Eating with others was not simply a positive experience; participants were not able to express their own reflexive take on eating well. It was striking that in these cases mealtimes were marked not by a shared affinity between diners but rather by a lack of confidence to eat as they would like to.

Emma: 'So, how does it feel when you're in company?'

*Cathy: 'It's all right. Yeah, they make me eat! [Laughs] When I
go and visit his friends, they give me a big plateful and they say,
"You're not moving until that's empty!" [Laughs]'*

Laura: 'Do you enjoy that? When you go and see other people?'

Cathy: 'Yeah, I do but not to force, to make me eat.'

Laura: 'It's sometimes a bit too much?'

Cathy: 'Yeah.'

Cathy, EFA client and Clever Cooking attendee.

This shows that familial relationships might enable some to eat when this would otherwise be a challenge, either offering the impetus to cook for another or the potential to share a meal with someone close. However, from some participants' accounts, this was not simply 'eating well' but rather a more fraught relationship. Danni described how her way of caring for her family often involved putting their needs and preferences above her own.

[I cook what my family want] all the time. It's always what they want, never what I want. That's why, when I joined this cooking group and [Katie] said, "Well what do you want to do?" ... They ask me what I want and I couldn't tell you, do you know what I mean?'

Danni, Dinner Plus attendee

So, while cooking and eating with family is often associated with care-full practices, such care is not always nourishing to the caregivers and it can have uneven effects in terms of eating well. While for Danni, putting her family first was a way of showing her love for her family and perhaps validating her role as a caregiver, it had come to a point where putting others first meant she had totally lost a sense of her own preferences. So, even when eating with her family she still experienced feelings of isolation.

Isolation was also evoked in the practices of cooking, as particular foods evoked memories of family and distant places. Joy had moved to Bristol from Jamaica and had recently been diagnosed with cancer. For her, as with Danni, cooking

for others was something she took pride in. She told us her recipe for rice and peas was popular at her church, but recently her illness had made it hard to offer food for others, and because of the distance from her family in Jamaica and the long hours her family in Bristol had to work there was no-one to return the care she had given them.

Joy: '[What was I] Eatin'? Ackee. Saltfish and ackee. Kallaloo and saltfish with dumpling, and rice... And soft yam. Yam and banana ... My mum teach me ... She say I must stand up in the kitchen, and watch her when she cooking.

So, I stand here, watch her... [and] when she gone to work I started, I started to do the cooking for me and my brother then ...'

Laura: 'How old were you then?'

Joy: 'Thirteen. I just grew up in that way, you know? And I had eight kids, and then I start to cook for them. 'Cos no-one look for them but me. Until now. But just too – I is too sick now. Have to leave that now. With them. 'Cos I too sick now. But they all like when me cook rice and peas. Say my rice and peas is just like back home. So, they want like when I put the rice and peas up here. But I am sick now, I cannot do. I usually cooked for 'em, and I used to volunteer, for the church. With cookin', too. My pastor used to like it when I cook the food, that's when the people would come for all the food ... They would like the rice and peas like that too!'

...

Joy: 'I can do my own little thing ... I am here now so I just cook my little rice and peas in a little pot and just steam my little chicken ... I cook up my vegetables, a little broccoli, cauliflower, carrot, yeah. That's how I cook, yeah.'

Joy, EFA client.

What these relationships of care and eating together show is that we should be circumspect of reference to social factors of eating together or alone and positing that one may be 'better' than the other. From a wellbeing perspective, such an assumption is again reliant on normative ideas of what counts as eating well; for example, should we be looking for meals to be spaces where people eat more (Hays and Roberts 2006) or less (Fischler 2011)? Moreover, while Vicky found it hard to eat alone, she found some comfort in sharing food with her dog. Eating well is therefore a relation that comes about from an innate sociability; a propensity to form meaningful connections through and around food.

'The gammon I had left over, I had it in a sandwich the next day and then yesterday, and the last bit I give to the dog. [Laughs] Don't tell [Katie] that though! I shouldn't really, she [my dog] has quite a lot of what I have, even curried, but I usually just gives her the last little bit with rice, yeah she'll eat anything.'

Vicky, Dinner Plus attendee.

In these encounters with the dinner table, eating well emerged in line with ideas of a 'proper meal' in that it involved a set of materials and devices – especially the table itself – in order to become 'proper'. The material conditions of participants' homes meant that some did not have tables or space for tables, or

that the type of table that they had was not suited to their needs. Additionally, having little control over one's own home and the things in it – for example, being reliant on a support worker to get a new table, as in Jackie's case – meant the materials required for a 'proper' meal were unavailable and unattainable. Yet, importantly, the relations of 'eating well' differ from formal norms of dining. They are enabled by materials such as a dinner table, but are not *determined* by them. Importantly, what the encounters with the dinner table show is that the affect of isolation can – as with the affect of anxiety – *constrict* an encounter, intervening in and interrupting a capacity for eating well. So, while a capacity to affect and be affected – a body's force of existing – comes from the openness of the Spinozist promise (Clough 2008; Gregg and Seigworth 2010), it is always mediated (Anderson 2014). In these cases, the conditions of living precariously meant that home settings were not reliable and were likely to change at short notice. These conditions of precarity meant it was harder to form the attachments necessary for 'eating well' because of increased vulnerability or a lack of (reliable) other bodies to attach *to*. The materials in these spaces have affective force in and of themselves; the wrong kind of table, mushy vegetables, a tin of food but no tin opener – all can contribute to the affects of isolation or anxiety.

The kitchen cupboard



Figure 51: Gus's kitchen. The configurations of kitchens often provided physical difficulties for participants, particular those who were older. Gus's kitchen was well stocked, but he had trouble standing for any period of time and so spent as little time in the kitchen as possible.

In Chapter Six I argued, alongside disability scholars (Dyck 1995; Hansen and Philo 2007; Winance 2006), that it is helpful to consider the ways in which bodies are rendered capable or incapable within the material and social configurations of different environments. I take up this point again here to show how kitchen practices were sites in which changing bodily capacities met social relationships (or a lack thereof) and the material spatial settings of the kitchens in ways that restricted a capacity to eat well. While these arguments may be true for people of all ages, the older participants I worked with were more exposed to these dynamics.

This is important because conditions of precarity are unevenly distributed. The mundane experiences that support life – such as cooking and eating – are easier for some than others, and for those who are older, embodied vulnerabilities such as reduced mobility and issues such as social isolation are particularly relevant (Durcan and Bell 2015). The relative lack of attention to the differences in experiences and health outcomes in terms of age need to be addressed in discussions of food insecurity.

Senescence and anorexia of ageing are part of the body's natural decline as we age, but this decline emerges in concert with the spaces of kitchens, as the devices and layout (the worktop, the oven etc.) now create dissonances – where once these spaces enabled, they come to disable. This can be mitigated to some extent by others – devices, or people who can facilitate smooth use, such as the bus driver who gets off the bus to come in and change lightbulbs for a passenger because they are unable to reach. However, these spaces can produce dissonance with others, such as competing for shared space in Jackie's fridge in the DV shelter.

The size and layout of the kitchens were one example of this problem for those in sheltered accommodation. Although I could not arrange to see the kitchens themselves, residents in two of the properties told me of the difficulties they had in cooking in the manner in which they had done in the past because of the small size of the kitchen.

'As Katie rubs the butter into the flour for the scones, she asks everyone: "Who has one of those food processors?" Nobody responds. She goes on to say that this tool can make the job a bit easier, particularly if you have problems with your hands or wrists ... One resident tells me that she does not buy equipment

*for her kitchen because there is no space. There is limited
countertop space and where would she keep it?*

... Another resident tells me that she has tried the local meals-on-wheels service. But the meals come in plastic trays. She does not have a microwave, and has little space for one in her kitchen. When heating the meal in her oven, she has been afraid of burns because the plastic tray flexes when hot, and is hard to remove.

... I ask her [another resident] whether she bakes often. She tells me that she does not bake here because the kitchens are too small. When the oven door is open, there is no room to move in the kitchen, particularly as she relies on a walker. The oven remains unused.'

(From fieldnotes taken during a trip to promote the Dinner Plus course at a sheltered accommodation facility.)



Figure 52: Promoting Dinner Plus with a cooking demo. Katie brought a food processor along as she expected that some residents at the sheltered accommodation might use these to overcome arthritis. However, most told us they did not have space for gadgets.

Importantly, the tools, devices and equipment necessary for eating well are variable (Hennion 2007), relating to one's embodied ability to move and to manipulate certain foodstuffs in relevant ways. As with Gus, when he realised he would now have to be more careful about the sell-by dates and safe storage of what he ate for fear of food poisoning, the different facilities in kitchens were points by which he marked the changes in his own embodied abilities.

While this was a pronounced issue for older participants, the lack of adequate facilities and equipment also made it harder for others to eat well:

'She bends down to look at the cans of soup on the floor, moving the ones that are stacked on top to see the others below. She tells me that she's looking for tins with ring pulls, because she and

her partner don't have a tin opener. "Sometimes he'll open it with a knife," she says, "like this." She mimes a vertical stabbing motion above the tin. "But I hate to see it, I can't look in case one day he misses..." This was a problem that I hadn't thought of, it's scary to think of having to go through that just to open a tin ... Even writing it now, I wince when I imagine him opening the tin like that.'

(Reflections on fieldnotes taken at the EFA centre.)

The bitter irony of having food to eat but not the equipment to open it is an example that reveals the importance of understanding food practices as being enabled or limited by capacity rather than simply matters of access. As shown in Chapter Five, eating well is an activity that requires suitable devices and settings. While the form that these may take is not fixed, the differential risk entailed in this anecdote shows the importance of understanding food insecurity in a way that accounts for the flows – the easing and constricting – of what a body can do within an encounter (Anderson 2014). Relying on opening a tin with a large knife is fraught with risk, and this enhanced vulnerability generates anxiety. Such anxieties relate to material-affective settings of precarity in the most basic sense, because the materials and devices available to eat well are missing. While those on the community bus (Chapter Six) had food practices eased through a set of attachments, in these kitchen settings the devices to which such attachments might be formed (thus enabling food practices) were often missing, because of the effects of the political economy upon participants' lives and practices.

For those living in shared accommodation, the available area for food storage was often limited – because the kitchen itself was such a small space, because

the kitchens had been fitted poorly or because shared facilities left little space for storing food and having equipment. Several of the participants mentioned having so little space to store food at home as a barrier to being able to buy items more cheaply (such as in bulk). Consequently, while the domestic kitchens had their own dynamics related to food insecurity, there were some connections between the ways in which eating well was problematised at home and the practices of getting food discussed in Chapter Six.

Participants mentioned these limitations in passing when discussing their cooking and shopping practices. It is therefore important to emphasise the relationship between cooking facilities, equipment and adequate kitchen setup. Once again, the experience of sharing domestic spaces with others was an issue for participants in hostels, where kitchen spaces were fraught and rules of the hostel – as well as potentially difficult relationships with others – had to be negotiated. Often, this meant that residents here were unable to feel secure in these spaces. For Ron, this meant cooking your meal and leaving for your room as quickly as possible:

*Ron: 'I had my own flat with a microwave and stuff but the
bailiffs took that.'*

*At the hostel, it's a shared kitchen so it's an industrial cooker ...
You have to take your own pots and pans and stuff, if you leave
them in the kitchen they tend to go walkabouts... [The staff] are
trying to curb [the parties and other disturbances] but there's no
staff there on a weekend so they find it very difficult to control.'*

Laura: 'So, when you're in the kitchen, you get yourself sorted ...'

Ron, EFA client.

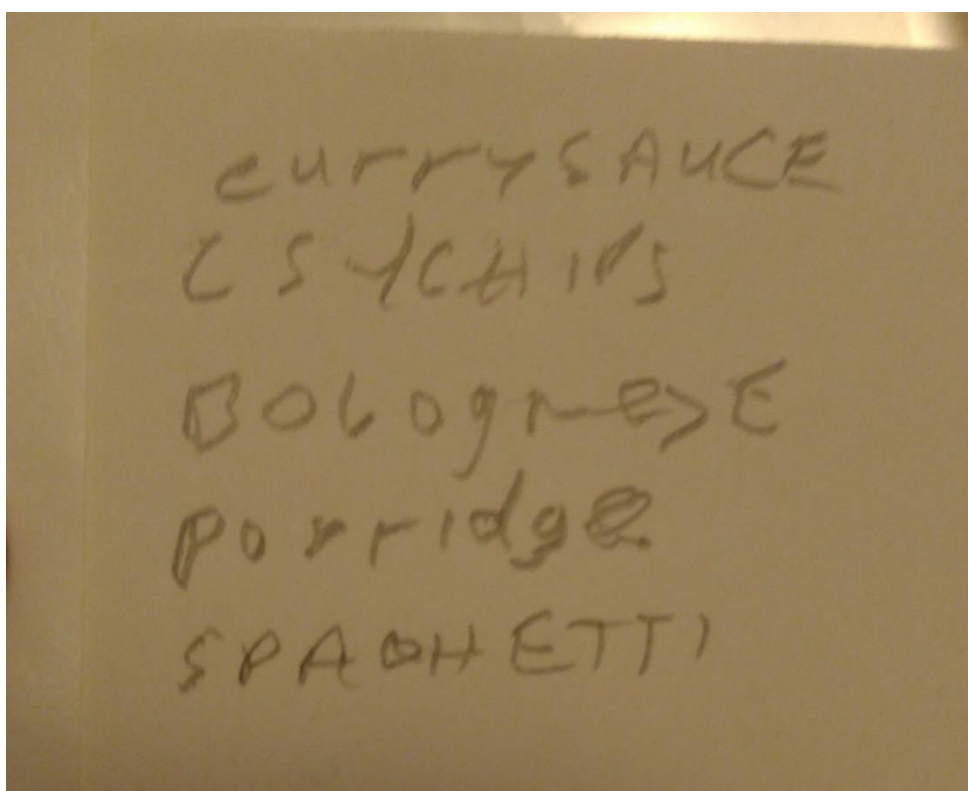


Figure 53: Ron's speciality meals: curry sauce, curry sauce ('CS') and chips, Bolognese, porridge, spaghetti. He relied on the cheapest packets of sauce in the supermarket to go with his rice or pasta.

While the physical conditions of the kitchens were often a problem for those in all types of housing situation, the *unreliability* of these spaces posed its own problems. Rapid changes in circumstance – such as being evicted, having to leave an abusive partner or losing a partner or one's cohabitant through bereavement or relationship change – made the home situations of the participants uncertain and more precarious. Moreover, socio-spatial relations between other inhabitants compounded this precarity, either through

unwelcoming attitudes of others or (more subtly) feelings of not wishing to associate with others.

[At the hostel] I had a little halogen cooker and a microwave so I could go back in my room, so whatever I had to cook, if I had a jacket potato or something I could just sling them in there... I just couldn't cope with... I didn't want to mix with everyone, really. They were just like a funny lot, and it was like... I just thought at the time: "Well I'm not in the mood to mix with people at the moment with the pain and that", you know what it's like.'

Gary, EFA client and Clever Cooking attendee.

Joy: 'Sometime, I'm very, very stressed. Sometime I cook the food and don't even eat it till the next day. 'Cos sometimes I say, "I wish I could go home back there [home to Jamaica]" ... 'cos my mum's down there. My mum she tell me to "Come home, to come home" for I am sick. She say I need somebody to stay with me. To look after me. Because sometimes I really can't manage myself. When my granddaughter was living with me, at her mum's, and when I was with her mum, she used to look after me and thing but now nobody can't come here. "Come live with me," they say. And so I'm alone so she tell me to use the TV, just to keep my mind going you know?'

Joy, EFA client.

*'My husband told me he doesn't like my food so I'm not cooking
anymore.'*

Ellie, Dinner Plus attendee, taken from fieldnotes.

In addition to financial threats, problems in familial and social relationships were striking in their effects on participants' living conditions. Jackie had been living in a DV refuge since leaving her husband after one particularly abusive incident. Sally, an attendee at Dinner Plus, told us that her relationships with others had brought her to the brink of leaving the sheltered accommodation she was currently in, and Gary's story of living in a hostel shows that shared accommodation makes us particularly vulnerable to relationship tensions with housemates and other residents. The stresses of these relationships – both the stresses upon them and the stresses that precarious relationships themselves can generate – shaped practices within the domestic setting, as well as making it likely that an increase in tensions might result in having to move. Being forced to move when resources are already stretched to the max can be a financial and emotional burden that tips a person into a 'crisis'. Therefore, precarity rendered these domestic spaces unreliable and unsafe, in terms of both the facilities they offered and the social and economic relations that went along with these spaces. The inability to rely on a home was one major source of anxiety relevant to participants' capacity for eating well.

The rise of the domestic as a site of inquiry for academics and others requires that we are sensitive not only to the tensions and stresses that emerge within the domestic sphere (these are most notable in this study because of the financial situation of the participants) but also cognisant of the fact that relationship issues such as DV cut across social classes; therefore, the

assumption that the kitchen is the heart of the home is a very normative one. What counts as 'domestic' requires careful consideration to avoid imposed normativity around living arrangements, particularly in a context of what appears to be a seismic shift in terms of housing (Fitzpatrick, et al. 2016). This is particularly the case as changes to social housing have meant that a stable and affordable place to live is harder and harder to come by. There are long waiting lists for social housing and rising numbers of people housed in temporary accommodation such as bed-and-breakfasts and hostels. Alongside this insecurity in social housing and a rise in homelessness, informal and temporary living practices such as 'sofa-surfing' have become salient adding to the diversity of domestic spaces and arrangements . Consequently there is a need for a nuanced analysis of kitchens that attunes to these diverse ways of living as well as the interconnections between inequalities in housing and the capacity for eating well.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown that kitchens are spaces containing hidden geographies of food insecurity. Specifically, the practices of cooking and eating at home under conditions of precarity reveal vulnerabilities that have not yet been featured in our understandings of either food insecurity or emplaced wellbeing. I have considered food encounters in the back of the fridge, at the table and in the kitchen cupboard, and these physical and metaphorical

encounters reveal the ways in which anxiety and isolation interfere with the potential for eating well.

This is important for developing our understandings of the very real effects of how food insecurity emerges through lived practices, revealing not only the forms it takes (Stewart 2012) but also the effects it has on our capacity for eating well. While all life is made up of precarious entanglements (Anderson 2014, p.93; see also: Butler 2010 2004; Tsing 2015), we live in a world in which the effects of this precarity are distributed unequally, producing pervasive injustices and inequalities. For those in this study, precarious life restricted their capacities for eating well in many diverse ways, and embodied affects became sites in which global and local production of precarity is absorbed and digested – to the cost of those involved. Understanding these issues through a taste-full analysis makes it possible to begin to unpick some of these precarious hidden geographies and get to grips with the scale and insidiousness of food insecurity on the terms of those affected.

As shown in the literature review, those interested in wellbeing and food practices have already stressed the importance of social isolation in terms of shaping food practices. Those studies have shown that isolation correlates with poor health outcomes and what has been termed ‘anorexia of aging’ (Hays and Roberts 2006); yet, those studies have shown little curiosity into *how* social isolation shapes everyday life and how this relates to food practices. Anxiety has also been discussed predominantly in terms of food *safety* rather than in terms of food *security*, and thus has not been brought to a critical analysis of inequality. Furthermore, while literature on food insecurity has shown the importance of emotions, it has yet to move beyond the examination of shame and there is a need to broaden its scope of research into emotional states.

Intangible elements are clearly important in our understanding of food insecurity, but we have yet to get to grips with how they feature in daily life and within food encounters. To get to grips with anxiety and isolation in this chapter, I have developed an analysis of the intangible elements of food insecurity through ideas of affect. This shows how encounters – in this case, with food – can *constrict* as well as open up possibilities for what a body can do (Anderson 2014). This is an important addition to the literature on embodied food practices, in which connection, positive feelings and meanings are often brought to the fore but what a body can *do* is often framed in terms of potentialities and possibilities. I have also emphasised the diversity of bodies that play a role in shaping a capacity of eating well, showing how materials and devices – such as those found in encounters at the back of the fridge, at the dinner table and in the kitchen cupboard – play a role.

I have attempted to consider the *hidden elements* of food insecurity. This addresses the research question ‘How does food insecurity feel?’ by attuning to the material-affective elements of eating at home. This research question was designed to attune to the embodied, emotional and affective elements of food insecurity. During my time working with participants, it became clear that *feelings* of insecurity were diffuse, intangible and often invisible to others, either because participants hid them from others (see Chapter Six) or because the outward signs were not immediately visible to others. Consequently, there often seemed to be an invisible barrier to eating well – even when material resources to do so were available. To take this invisible barrier into account, I have used literature on affect to zero in on the effects of anxiety and isolation on the practices of eating well. I have shown that affects are not only about openness and attachments but can also bring about a closing down.

This chapter is also an argument for more literature on food practices to pay attention to the place of the 'household' and the heterogeneity of this construct. Domestic spaces in a context of insecurity can be rendered unsafe and unfamiliar. The social welfare landscape in the UK meant the risk of losing one's domestic spaces permeated the experience of being at home, creating anxieties. This study emphasises the importance of approaching the domestic sphere without an assumption of what counts as 'domestic'. The homes of those in these studies had become precarious in a range of different ways. Many of the EFA clients had recently been evicted by private landlords and the local authority, and some were sofa surfing – relying on the kindness of others for a place to sleep. Two of the participants at Dinner Plus were also unsure of the security of their home after the changes brought about by the bedroom tax, a situation which left them unable to make rent easily. In situations such as these, it takes only a small financial, emotional or physical shock to bring about a crisis in which the security of one's home could disappear. More specifically, I have considered the need for attention to the micro-geographies that take place within places such as the kitchen. By looking at the back of the fridge, the dinner table and the kitchen cupboard, a host of otherwise invisible elements can be taken into account.

Eight. Conclusions

We need to change how we understand food inequalities. Raising this point in the introduction to this thesis, I not only drew attention to the severity of the rising levels of food inequalities and hunger in the UK but also emphasised that the framing of this issue in the current guise of *food insecurity* fails to get to grips with the scale of the issues: the insidious creep of inequality within the spaces, practices and feelings of everyday life. Such a framing also fails to offer scope for intervening in a way that disrupts the status quo.

To tackle this problem, in this thesis I have designed and applied a *tasteful* approach to food insecurity. This innovation meets the pressing need for a reconceptualisation of food insecurity at a time of increasing hunger in the UK. Drawing on material-semiotics and theories of affect, a *tasteful* approach accounts for the fleshy materialities of embodied life as well as the affective force and material agency of foodstuffs, thus grounding the study of food inequalities within everyday encounters with food.

Moving away from *access to food* and towards a *capacity for eating well*, this study of food inequalities does not presume a separation between subject and object, eater and eaten, in any straightforward sense, but remains open to the multiplicity of these relationships. This is not to diffuse the impact or injustice of food inequalities but rather to strengthen it, showing how the *capacity for eating well* can never be guaranteed but that it is something that emerges and recedes, shaped by the material-affective conditions of a situation. The shared vulnerability that emerges from the brute fact that we all must eat does not flatten out inequalities but rather heightens our awareness of them, helping to prevent seeing those affected as inherently *other*.

The primary theme of this study was a conceptual move away from fixed ideas of insecurity as *access to a good diet* and towards a dynamic and emergent one

through a *capacity for eating well*. As shown in Chapter Two, this shift enables us to better understand how food insecurity emerges, recedes and is felt within *messy entanglements* of food practices. The motivation behind this conceptual shift was a dissatisfaction with the contemporary literature on food insecurity, in which the defining concepts of *access* and *a good diet* fail to take into consideration the aforementioned messy entanglements. I have therefore used the term 'capacity' to develop a relational understanding of inequalities – not to focus on individual empowerment (as might be the case in community governance contexts) but to bring to the fore the material-affective elements – to understand how the constellation of materials, devices and settings (Marres and Lezaun 2011) at play in food encounters are intertwined with intangible forces that enable or constrain a situated capacity to eat well. Here, the Spinozist interest in the *potentiality of what a body can do* takes form via investigation into how material-affective conditions of encounters with food both enable and constrict bodily capacities (Anderson 2014; Clough 2008). Importantly, by avoiding the trap of referring simply to social or cultural factors as *complexities* that can be factored in or out of the equation (Shove 2010), I remain true to the material-semiotic imperative to account for the networked agency of materials (Latour 2005; Murdoch 1998).

Tasting food insecurity: a summary

In this thesis, I have shown the importance and potential of understanding food insecurity through a lens of taste. Providing much-needed ethnographic research on food insecurity in the UK, I have endeavoured to look beyond foodbanks to show how inequalities go further and deeper by considering how

they are experienced and shaped within a host of spaces of everyday life, including but going far beyond emergency food aid.

In Chapter Two, I examined the existing literature on food insecurity to answer the question: *how has food insecurity been made to matter?* I argued that food insecurity has been made to matter in such a way that it has post-political consequences. Specifically, food insecurity has entered the arena of post-politics because there has been a media preoccupation with the new arrival of foodbanks in the UK. Furthermore, this post-politicisation has been exacerbated by the discourse of crisis that has accompanied foodbanks' emergence into British public life. While interest in these new spaces is understandable, an overemphasis on responses that address 'the meantimes' (Cloke et al. 2016) cannot hope to bring about an end to food inequalities (Poppendieck 1999; Riches 2011). Indeed, a focus on narratives of crisis and the rolling out of such ad-hoc care measures – which only offer help to people for a few days – casts the space of food poverty outside of everyday life. Drawing on literature on the politics of precarity, I argue that we must look for food insecurity within the forms of everyday life (Stewart 2012), within terms of unreliability (Anderson 2014) and arising from the pressures of living well on limited means (Berlant 2011). Consequently, studies of food insecurity have focused on certain spaces (particularly foodbanks and urban neighbourhoods), while neglecting a great deal of the other spaces (particularly micro-spaces) in which food practices occur. Therefore, throughout this thesis I have attempted to look into these neglected spaces; spaces such as the community bus, the lunch group, the sheltered accommodation facility and the aisles of supermarkets. I also looked at an EFA centre that operated under a different model to the dominant Trussell Trust franchise. Each of the three empirical

chapters addressed encounters with these spaces, and within these chapters I used material encounters to consider how a capacity to eat well has been enabled or restricted. This helps to give a fluid and dynamic understanding of how insecurities/precarities are *sensed and made sense of* (Evans and Miele 2012) reflexively within the encounter, thus escaping a normative lens of external measurement that sees such inequalities as fixed.

In Chapter Two, I argued that we might reconfigure the concept of food insecurity in terms of taste, to account for *capacity* by developing a relational understanding of the terms ‘eating well’ and ‘access’, and also bringing in the concept of ‘precarity’ – something that moves away from a narrative of security and towards a relational ethic of care. This reconfiguration is then tested in the three empirical chapters (Five, Six and Seven) by looking at material encounters within common spaces that are excluded from – and therefore rendered invisible in – most public discourse on the topic.

Having developed this approach to food insecurity, I went on to develop a methodology to research these issues. In Chapter Three, I elaborated on the approach of bricolage, showing how I engaged with sensory methods (alongside other visual and mobile ethnographic methods) to help study food insecurity *on the terms of those affected*, and thus move beyond the verbal. In this chapter, I also outlined some difficulties with more-than-verbal research methods. Rather than shying away from these difficulties or glossing over the messy entanglements of everyday life, the bricolage method places this multiplicity at the heart of the matter by incorporating a range of different methods and registers to provoke new understanding, rather than seeking to accurately represent meaning.

In Chapter Four, I offered some context of the case studies within the wider setting of Bristol. Bristol is a well-off city with a progressive governance structure (an example of this being the Food Policy Council) and large numbers of community-led and 'alternative' food projects; yet, there remain some wards that are among the worst off in the UK in terms of wellbeing indicators, particularly those related to food practices and diet-related ill health.

Furthermore, the gap between these areas and the rest of the city is growing rather than declining. The example of Bristol, then, offers an interesting case for a productive critique of innovations in food governance that focus on environmental sustainability while social inequality grows ever more acute.

In Chapter Five, I began to situate these theoretical discussions within the empirical context. Asking: *how does food insecurity taste?*, I examined the practices and processes of two cookery courses: one run by an EFA centre and one run by a health and wellbeing charity. I considered the ways of enacting different practices and knowledges of *eating well* in these situations. While cookery courses have been criticised by some for being sites of biopolitics (even to the extent of being fascistic (Fitzpatrick and Tinning 2014)), the empirical material from these courses does not point to the imposition of a reductionist 'hegemonic nutrition' (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013). Rather, the courses offered settings in which experiments in good taste could take place, thereby supporting a proliferation of articulations (Latour 2004) of good taste.

While eating and cooking together helped participants to overcome some of the material and emotional challenges of living and eating alone, *eating well* in these settings was reducible to neither the food nor the social interactions. Rather, it was a fragile and contingent relation, which emerged within the material-affective setting. Interestingly, the attendees did not take much away

from the courses; nor did they always enjoy the food or the social side. The fragility of these articulations of *eating well* has consequences for our understanding of the role that food practices can play in bringing about healthier lifestyles. Indeed, while food *can* be multifunctional (Morgan 2009), cutting across areas of health, poverty, education and so on, this study shows that food is not necessarily effective as a means of engagement, nor as a means to deliver wider policy outcomes. This also has consequences for community groups and a public health initiative that attempts to use food practices to tackle issues such as wellbeing, poverty and social exclusion; it highlights that while food practices may be engaging for some, benefits of food-based activities are often limited to the situations in which they take place. Further, the types of engagement facilitated by food practices may be partial and fragile; the measurement and evaluation of such practices might therefore be better related to effects within such classes, rather than looking to change people's lives.

Chapter Six moved on from these ideas of *eating well* to engage with ideas of capacity, specifically by looking at the practices of *getting food* in different contexts of insecurity. Using go-along interviews from the community bus and the EFA centre, I considered the material-affective encounters that took place within the mundane practice of *getting food*. These two interventions ostensibly solve the problem of access to food by bringing people and food together; yet, examining these encounters in terms of *capacity* brought a more nuanced picture into focus. Looking at how different interventions to enable access to food focused on independence of movement and choice, I argued that the value of such interventions came not from an ability to be independently mobile, nor from an ability to make one's own choices (albeit from a limited array of

options), but rather from the *interdependencies* that formed through these practices.

Drawing on material-semiotic approaches to disability and old age (Moser 2000; Schwanen et al. 2012; Winance 2006), I showed how these interdependencies shaped the atmospheres differently within each trip on the bus and within the aisles of the EFA centre. Some relations of care were enacted (such as Peggy and Lynn looking out for one another on the ‘happy bus’), while others (the ‘smelly man’ and his carer on the ‘smelly bus’) were excluded from such care. Additionally, in the food aid centre the volunteers and clients adjusted to one another, the foodstuffs and the food store in ways that were shaped by the data recorded in the client’s files. Attuning to this new practice of getting food, new capacities emerged; however, these capacities were not only heterogeneous but also uneven, opening up the possibility of what a body could do but also *constricting* this potentiality. Consequently, I responded to the research question: *how do people get food in contexts of insecurity?* by showing that practices of getting food are dynamic, distributed achievements entailing material-affective elements of an encounter. Here, interdependencies can bring about a capacity for eating well by enabling practices of getting food that resemble the idea of the independent consumer. However, these practices of *getting food* can also be *constricted*, disabling some bodies while enabling others.

Building on this point, the final empirical chapter, Chapter Seven, looked at the hidden geographies of domestic kitchen practices and considered how conditions of precarity restricted a capacity to eat well. This brought the hidden geographies of food inequality to the fore by using material from all of the case studies in which practices at home were discussed. Here, I used encounters

within kitchen practices to consider how a capacity to eat well can be *constricted* through affects of anxiety and isolation. Approaching these issues through encounters within the micro-spaces of the kitchen – at the dinner table, the back of the fridge and the kitchen cupboard – I went on to reflect on the ways in which affects of isolation and anxiety emerged and were felt, and how this affected people’s capacity to eat well. A central presence in this chapter (and indeed throughout this study) was the acknowledgement that it is possible to have financial or physical access to food and the means, facilities and ability to cook it, yet still be unable to eat well. A spatial or economic analysis fails to account for such invisible barriers; considering this issue, boiling down food insecurity into catchphrases such as ‘assets, ability and attitude’ (Shaw 2006) results in further erasure of the types of struggles that people face and denies their own reflexivity – a reflexivity that comes into play when making sense of these challenges.

Contributions

The primary contribution of this thesis is a conceptual shift towards understanding food insecurity in terms of a capacity for eating well. This shift cuts across disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries, for example bringing cultural geography literature on affect together with material-semiotics in order to reframe food inequalities in new ways. As a consequence, the contributions to the academic literature are not solely focussed in one area but contribute to a range of contemporary debates in the social sciences around food, politics and the forces that shape everyday life. These contributions come through four main avenues: first, by adding a theoretical development to the newly developing literature on food insecurity in the UK; second contributing to food studies

literature by adding a more nuanced take on the relationship between food practices and wellbeing. Third to two important theoretical trends in cultural geography — theories of affect and material semiotics— I bring these theories together in a new way through the idea of *capacity*, offering the chance to ask new questions about the forces and collectivities that shape affective experience and inequality. Finally, I contribute to methodological debates around the study of sensory experience by using methods such as foodmaps (Marte 2007) which have not been used for the study of food insecurity in the UK before.

I have contributed to the political economy and ethnographic studies of food insecurity in the UK by broadening the scope of food insecurity to look in different places, as well as taking into account a range of affective experiences in order to show how food insecurity does not simply come about from resource distribution but that it also emerges within intensities of everyday life. The findings I offer in this thesis deconstruct the idea that the distance between a persons' home and the supermarket is the primary issue in whether or not they eat well. By challenging the assumptions about how we relate to and through food, I have offered further weight to the devastating critiques offered by Guthman (2011) and Colls and Evans (2013) of the obesogenic environment thesis. Agreeing with these authors that these spatial analyses fundamentally misapprehend the relationship between people and places in a way which misrepresents the role of both, the analysis of taste, as both social and material relationship with and through food, also extends these critiques by offering a new way in which to understand how people sense and make sense of food.

The second area that I have contributed to with this thesis is that of critical food studies. Building on an emerging thread which focusses on food practices as always been 'more-than-food' (for a review see Goodman 2016) I develop this

theme which emphasises the sensuous, visceral embodied elements of food practices (Carolan 2011, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2013 Longhurst et al. 2009). My contribution to this literature follows in the wake of critical voices in this area who argue that food studies has often overlooked the inequalities within 'alternative' food movements and practices (Guthman 2008, Kato 2013, Slocum 2008). Through a focus on mundane food practices, rather than 'alternative' ones I have addressed this critique by widening the scope of food studies to include the issues raised by experiences of food insecurity in the UK. Additionally, by framing *eating well* relationally as a 'learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat' (Derrida 1991, p.115) rather than normatively i.e a fixed set of practices or foods, make space for hybridity of food practices without presupposing the identities or politics at stake a priori, instead making space for these to emerge through and within practice (Mol 2002). This helps to escape a dualism in understandings of food practices such as cookery courses or food aid by showing that they are never simply benign nor 'fascistic' (c.f Fitzpatrick and Tinning 2014) but rather, scholarly attention is best placed within the heterogeneity of this relationship in order to consider how these tendency emerge and are sensed and made sense of.

In particular I position this study alongside those 'more-than-food' debates which take for granted the agential force of materiality and specifically the *messy entanglements* and multiplicity of food practices (Barad 2012, Bennet 2010) and in which boundaries between human and non-human, self and other are transgressed (Caldwell 2014; Mol 2008; Tsing 2015) . I use these ideas as a jumping-off point from which to understand in the ways in which we relate to one another and the world around us. Specifically, with an interest in sensuous, affective bodies as well as material-semiotics, my *tasteful* approach is

positioned alongside those interested in the “vital” (re)materialities of food’ (Goodman 2016, p.258). This enables an approach to issues of food inequalities in which food is no longer a resource like any other but rather one that affords socio-material entanglements which require us to think beyond rational choices when it comes to helping people who are living precariously to eat well.

The third major avenue through which this thesis contributes to existing debates is through a theoretical development of cultural geographies of affect. By bringing this literature (i.e. Anderson 2014, McCormack 2008) together with strands from those that afford agency to materials (Barad 2012, Bennet 2010) and specifically, through the analysis of food insecurity in terms of *capacity*, I have contributed to existing work on the affective dimension of politics and inequality through the lens of precarity (Anderson 2014; Berlant 2011; Stewart 2012). Yet, influenced by material-semiotics, I emphasise the importance of the material-affective, ‘not merely the affectivity of the human body but ... matter’s capacity for self -organisation’ (Clough 2008, p.7).

While the literature that brings politics together with affect in cultural geography has most saliently been put to work to understand intangible experiences (Adey et al. 2012, Anderson 2014, Bondi 2005, Massumi 2002) through my analysis, I have emphasised the material within the transpersonal affect. Indeed, by taking up and developing the notion of *capacity to affect and be affected* which is a central Spinozist theme of the literature on affect, and applying it to inequalities in *eating well*, I have put the idea of capacity to work in new ways. This has significance for how we understand food insecurity as it means that we need to look less towards empowering individuals but more towards creating nourishing conditions that enable interdependencies to form as it is through the attachments of interdependencies that capacity emerges.

Through the operationalisation of the term capacity, I have also contributed to the literature on affect by considering not only the openness of the capacity to affect and be affected but also the ways in which a situation can *constrict*.

Picking up this thread from Anderson's comments on Fanon's experiences of racism (2014), I have developed this idea to apply it to food insecurities. I have shown how material-affective conditions of anxiety and social isolation work to constrict the formation of interdependencies within otherwise hidden geographies of everyday life, thus constricting the capacity for eating well.

The final contribution of this thesis is to study food insecurity with new methods. The use of sensory methods to understand food insecurity in the UK is a novel contribution which furthers not only the literature on food insecurity but also on qualitative methodology. While I have not carried out a sensory ethnography in the fullest sense, my approach differs from uses of sensory methods so far. To date, sensory approaches to food and eating have looked at food in alternative food networks (e.g. Pink 2009) but not practices in EFA centres, supermarkets and on the community bus. By using foodmaps, I answer Sutton's call to develop this methodology further (2010), as part of a bricolage of methods for studying food practices that are otherwise 'not on the map' (Marte 2007). This is significant because sensory ethnography and studies of the visceral risks being interpreted as being somehow *more* real or truer to life. My contribution to methodological discussions is to show that attuning to sensory experience is not about creating research that is more vivid or powerful or necessarily richer. Using sensory methods such as those used in this study is important rather because it enables us to ask new questions and look at things in new ways by incorporating experiences that are otherwise silenced. This subtle distinction is important for the trend in food studies towards visceral and

sensory research if we are to appreciate that methods help to create realities (Law 2004, Mol 2002) rather than pursuing sensory methods to uncover truths.

Fundamentally, a shift towards understanding food insecurity as *a capacity for eating well* exposes and begins to address the shortfalls of current academic and public understandings of what food insecurity is about. While political economy has been important in showing the inequalities in the food system, and while food studies and studies on consumption have added great depth and nuance to our understandings of how we relate to food, neither of these have yet been able to adequately answer the salient issue of food insecurity. Indeed, neither have been able to adequately address the issues faced by participants in this study. By bringing a rich understanding of food practices to the study of inequalities and, at the same time, offering a critical take on these issues, I have made first steps towards a radical reconceptualisation of how we make sense of food insecurity.

New questions

Throughout this thesis, I have been concerned with the issue of how to make *sense* of food insecurity in a way that neither imposes normative ideas of a good diet upon others nor elaborates individualist responses to overcome food inequalities. By accounting for taste in this study, I have contributed to the literature on food insecurity with a new approach; notably, addressing calls for more qualitative and ethnographic research that puts those who struggle to eat well at the centre of the analysis (Garthwaite et al. 2015; Wells and Caraher

2014). By embracing the messiness of everyday lives and food practices rather than aiming to erase such complexity, I have shown that fluctuating daily experiences of physical and mental health and wellbeing are not simply *outcomes* of food inequalities but that they *contribute* to our capacity for eating well. Affective conditions of anxiety and isolation can prevent us from cooking a meal or going out of the house. Mobility problems and physical pain emerge and recede through time and across spaces: we are all ‘only temporarily healthy’ (Borst 2008). The burden of our bodily frailty can be eased through material-affective settings such as the bus and the EFA centre; however, the precariousness of life is not evenly distributed (Butler 2004), making this harder for some than others.

Moving away from access to food and towards a capacity for eating well means that new questions can be asked about food, inequalities and wellbeing. In this thesis I have begun to answer some of the questions that arise from this, with a particular focus on the everyday lived experiences of food insecurity. Having summarised how I answered research questions related to this above, there remain further questions that can be asked. Additionally, by pushing researchers to be more curious and speculative about food practices and, in particular, the relationship between food practices and wellbeing, my approach has been concerned with considering how we can open up new spaces of inquiry into this topic.

The study of the spaces and hidden geographies of food insecurity opens up new avenues of investigation. There remain many hidden geographies of food insecurity that I did not touch on in this study. Often for important ethical reasons, I did not push participants who showed some reluctance to let me in to their homes to carry out research and consequently there are important reasons

that some elements of food insecurity might best remain *hidden*. However the motivation to be more curious, speculative and open minded when it comes to the geographies of food insecurity remains. Particularly relevant avenues include the practices of referral into charities and organisations that offer support for food insecurity, the informal spaces of support that help people to eat well without relying on EFA and questions around the practices of food donation.

Referrals are important to consider because one of the challenges for both of the cookery courses discussed in Chapter Five was the challenge in recruiting and retaining participants. Despite evidence of need for support with cooking and eating and a positive reaction when the charities spoke with their target groups, the challenges in recruitment and retention show that there is a need to better understand the groups that are commonly understood as ‘hard to reach’ such as those who are socially isolated. This includes a consideration of how offerings can be better tailored to the interests and needs of local people who are socially isolated including reflexivity as to whether projects such as cookery courses are in fact the best way to support this group.

Additionally in terms of referral, further questions could be asked with regards to referral agencies for EFA charities. The role of the Jobcentre and its staff are particularly relevant here and future work might look at the ways in which new spaces of care and responsibility are opened up as well as the changing routes that are available to benefits claimants and the ways in which charitable agencies respond to this changing landscape. With this in mind however, there are significant barriers to access when it comes to research with Jobcentres as this has to be cleared by the Department of Work and Pensions. Yet there is a great deal to be gained through a better understanding of the changes and their

impacts as well as by researching and sharing examples of best practice. This is particularly important in a context of rapidly changing welfare policies. For example the roll-out of Universal Credit which makes beneficiaries responsible for their own financial management, rather than paying housing benefit direct to the landlord for example, is likely to have profound implications not only for how beneficiaries manage their money, but also for daily processes and practices of Jobcentre staff. Questions could be asked therefore around how referral processes into charitable assistance with food can best be managed to reduce the burden on charities such as EFA centres and what opportunities there are to work with beneficiaries and staff to prevent sanctions being imposed for example.

The hidden practices around informal food sharing arrangements are also raised as an issue from this study. Having shown that interdependencies are key to developing a capacity to eat well, it follows that more research into the ways in which people get by without relying on formal support such as EFA would help us to understand the extent of food insecurity beyond points of crises. Moreover, the emphasis on EFA charities formed on Christian principles and using the model of giving food parcels runs the risk of excluding a range of different forms of support in different faith traditions and in other cultures. The EFA centre that I worked with for this study was explicitly a Christian organisation it and helped people from a wide range of cultural and faith backgrounds, yet salient examples such as the provision of food in Sikh Gurdwaras and informal food sharing among non-Christian spaces and groups contain geographies of food insecurity and support that have so far remain hidden from view in the UK food insecurity literature.

Consequently, the finding that interdependencies rather than independence are key to the capacity for eating well means that further questions emerge around how these interdependencies are strengthened and weakened. There is therefore a need for more sensitive and participant-led research on informal networks of getting by, if we are to understand the food practices and interdependencies that enable people to not reach crisis point. Relevant questions would centre around: what informal spaces and practices exist, how do they fit in and around more formal provision and support and how these can be best supported to enable people to avoid people tipping into crisis? Again, it is important to keep a keen ethical sense of where the boundaries lie for researchers here however as some informal practices may involve illegal practices and the benefits of research into this area must be carefully weighed against the cost that may be paid by participants.

Next, in the growing literature on EFA, little attention has been paid to the donors of food. Touching on this issue in Chapter Six, I have highlighted some of the obvious tensions at play in these practices, yet there nonetheless remains a great deal more that could be researched when it comes to understanding the practices and affective experiences of donating to emergency food aid providers. The types of food that are chosen by donors and the ways in which this relates to practices of care, the attitudes of donors as well as those who do not donate, the ways in which supermarkets adapt their practices to incorporate food aid donations and charitable giving from shoppers would fill out research which already exists on the issue of food waste and donations (e.g. Midgley 2014). In particular attuning to the material-affective conditions within practices of donation would offer rich theoretical insight into the dynamics of food insecurity.

Similarly, questions emerge around the tipping points that shift people from precarious circumstances and into crises. What causes them and how might they best be avoided? These questions would most powerfully be addressed alongside critical theoretical work around the framings of 'crisis' itself, building on the work of Williams and others (Williams et al. 2014; Cloke et al. 2016). This is an area that would be particularly of interest to foodbanks, where such tipping points are key. Indeed, while also tricky to access, the perceptions of EFA, barriers to use and the alternatives that people use are all important areas which are hard to research but are important if we are to be more curious about the scope of food insecurity and also situating food aid practices within the wider context of getting food. In particular, this study makes space for understanding the complexity of cultural and emotional elements of food practices which go beyond shame and stigma and, as shown in Chapter Six, the practices of getting food are not directly related to ones' socio-economic status but are equally shaped by the material and cultural context of daily life. This might be approached by documenting the journeys of participants over time, for example by researching participants for months or years after they have received EFA or attended courses. This might also shed light on any continuities or overlaps between service provision. For example, Vicky was an attendee of Dinner Plus but had used EFA in the past and was concerned that her benefits situation might put her back in that position again in future. Longitudinal research would offer the opportunity to flesh out some of the existing research on food insecurity in order to help situate understandings of the topic within the wider context of lived experiences.

Finally, by developing the theoretical, tasteful, approach in this thesis, a number of questions emerge for theory. Having shown that an analysis of

affective life is not only an awareness of openness to form such attachments and movements (Gregg and Seigworth 2010), but also that the *constriction* (Anderson 2014) of a setting can close off the opportunity to develop attachments and therefore interdependencies, adds an impetus to consider affect in contexts of inequality and poverty, where the limits of this openness may be starkly felt. Relatedly, by bringing the materiality into the issue of affect, further questions emerge around the ways in which we can begin to understand affective life (Clough 2008). Specifically, this line of thought enables us to ask further questions around the ways in which affective conditions afford either openness or constriction and how we might not only govern through affect (Friedli and Stearn 2015) but also help improve lives this way.

Making space for taste? Challenges for policy and practice.

In several ways, this thesis offers important steps away from current public and policy understandings of food insecurity. First, it helps to link the wider political landscape with these practices in a nuanced and contextual way by showing how the material and affective conditions of the political landscape are manifested and interpreted within daily lives. Second, it moves beyond an assumption of a rational actor who can be motivated to change through shaping their attitudes, behaviours and choices (or ABCs) (Shove 2010) but instead *ascribes a reflexive agency* to those whom we are discussing. Life in conditions of precarity is not simply shaped by it; people interpret and make sense of these

conditions and this has consequences for the ways in which we can help people in such positions. Third, in this thesis I have offered a provocation for policy and practice as well as academia to be more curious into the relationships between food practices and wellbeing, requiring that we are more nuanced in our evaluation of the benefits of food practices as a means of delivering health and social care. These findings are most directly tied up with institutional practices of care. Indeed, the aim of this thesis was not to offer general policy recommendations but, by paying attention to micro-practices of food insecurity, there is scope for better aligning national policy with local practice. A great deal of work remains to establish practical solutions for welfare and to enable the commissioning of health and social care that prevents food insecurity from arising in the first place, but the findings from this study help to orientate where these changes may most effectively take place.

Taking a step back from this study, it is also important to reflect briefly on the proviso that this thesis was not looking for a 'solution' to the issue of food insecurity. Indeed, what the tasteful analysis provides is an understanding that food insecurity is not straightforwardly related to income or socio-economic indicators. That being said, it is important to recognise that, as others have shown, an important contributing factor to the rising numbers of people relying on food aid are entangled with several very specific policies which were put into place as a programme of neoliberalisation and, latterly, political austerity which shifts the responsibility for welfare onto the Big Society and individuals (Lambie-Mumford and Green 2015). As a consequence, a great deal of the stresses and insecurities that were experienced by participants in this study could have been alleviated by the abolition of the 'bedroom tax', the abolition of sanctions on benefits and a reversal of the changes to the Disability Living

Allowance towards a more stringent Employment Support Allowance, as well as an escape from the bind imposed by ‘no recourse to public funds’ condition on some residency permits which leaves many with no income or safety net. These reforms were the tipping point for most of those in the EFA centre and also adversely affected participants in both the cookery course and on the community bus.

Therefore, while food inequalities would not easily be escaped through national policy because, as I have shown, they are complexly intertwined with lived experience, it remains the case that it is likely that guaranteeing the minimum living for all, including those seeking asylum, would reduce the severity of inequality in the UK by ensuring a reliable safety net that doesn’t leave people with very little or nothing to live on. Moreover, as I have touched on in throughout the thesis, the political economic project of neoliberalism more generally, and recent forms of austerity in particular, have created conditions of precarity which have a direct impact on everyday life (Duff 2015; Friedli and Stearn 2015) and our capacity for eating well. Consequently, while, for important reasons, this study has not centred on political economy of insecurity at the national level, it seems clear that changes to political economy, such as guaranteeing a minimum income that is free from sanction or delay would profoundly improve the chances of participants in this study of eating well. Importantly though, a tasteful analysis shows that this would not be enough to guarantee that all food inequalities are overcome, nor that everyone has the *capacity* for eating well. The main implications for policy from this thesis therefore centre on a reconceptualisation of public, policy and academic understandings of lived experiences of *eating well*.

The primary policy implication from this study comes from the imperative of incorporating lived experiences into policy and the practices and procedures of different organisations. What this study has shown is that, by attuning to lived experiences through that material-affective conditions of everyday encounters, a different picture of food insecurity emerges than is otherwise offered by a political economy analysis. By arguing that capacity to eat well is not in any straightforward way an outcome of certain socio-economic conditions, nor is it the result of culinary or nutritional knowledge or education, I offer an analysis which does not lead to easy policy or practice implications. On the contrary, sustained efforts for a long time to encourage policy makers to understand the importance of life beyond numbers have seen some changes but a profound change away from a focus on individual behaviours remains at the heart of policy and practice around issues of food insecurity (Shove 2010). Additional difficulties arise when it comes to trying to include sensory experience — slippery and intangible by nature — and no obvious solution presents itself in order to shatter the dominance of a reliance on figures in policy. Yet while there is no straightforward answer to this, in this thesis I have shown that there are several threads that could be picked up for further work to engage policy and practice with material-affective conditions of life and the practices of sensing and making sense of food.

There is an imperative to bring more collaboration and co-production into solutions for food insecurity. This is a double edged sword because it also relies on an increased responsabilisation of those who are vulnerable however, findings in this thesis show that large discrepancies can emerge between volunteers and staff of interventions which help those at risk of food insecurity and there is a need for these to be closed up in order to improve delivery and

experiences of being a recipient of care. In this study, this was strikingly the case in the EFA centre where participants such as Alice, unable to make sense of the food options available to her, did not leave with as much food support as others. While widening avenues for participation and encouraging co-production is by no means a panacea (Reason and Bradbury 2012) an increased role for service users in the delivery of food aid and food-based interventions is one way in which the needs and interests of clients, volunteers and staff can be productively brought together.

On a related note, there is a need to re-consider the role that food policies and practices can play in bringing about improved lives. While recent policy traction has been gained by food-centred analyses which argue for the multifunctionality of food policy to affect change on social, wellbeing and environmental areas, a central theme in this thesis has been to offer a nuanced critique of the idea of food as a multifunctional device to bring about change. Having shown that, by understanding food practices through the material-affective lens of taste, the accomplishments achieved by food oriented interventions are fragile and contingent, often not travelling beyond the context in which they are enacted (see Chapter Five), several issues are raised for policy and practice. In offering this finding, it does not follow that we must move away from food-based solutions but rather that we are more sensitive to their limits and potential. If we are to use food practices to improve wellbeing such as cookery course and nutritional education, there is a need to reframe the ways in which this relationship takes place and recalibrate measurements of success. Rather than a pre-occupation with indicators such as BMI and a focus on wider health and social outcomes, space should be made for measurement and evaluation of the benefits within a practice or space in order to more accurately

and sensitively understand the ways in which food practices may bring about benefits which are present not *out there* in the wider world but which have most impact within the setting. Emphasis on the functionality of food practices as a means to deliver wider health outcomes and ultimately reducing the financial burden on the state, funding for wellbeing interventions —such as the cookery courses in this study —often put these wider health concerns at the heart of deliverable outputs of such courses, even though these relate to much wider issues and concerns on which a cookery course cannot hope to impact.

The result of this overemphasis on an idea of the wider world, and the lack of value ascribed to small scale achievements in and of themselves, means that organisations are often spending large amounts of time and energy on metrics which only weakly reflect on what they have achieved. An important improvement to policy and practice of funding organisations in particular would be to recognise the benefits in situ. This does not mean that these projects achieve less, but it means that the achievements are not valued on their own terms. One way of shifting attention towards such achievements would be to work more closely with commissioners in order to transform the kinds of evidence that are relevant to them as well, as developing a robust evidence base based on in situ outcomes. This would require the active engagement of funders to collaborate with researchers, practitioners and participants in order to understand how and why to account differently. Inherent to this process is likely to be a long, slow process of building trust between commissioners and practitioners.

Moreover, as part of this process, it is important to let go of the imaginary of a linear process from intervention to a final (successful) outcome. For example, I have shown that mental health and wellbeing is not simply an outcome

dependent on getting the right nutrition (such as adequate amounts of omega-3); nor is it always about culturally dominant ways of knowing and appreciating food. In these two frames, positive mental health and improvements to mood are outcomes of the *right* food practices and materials. Contrary to this understanding, improved mental health and wellbeing in this study was not simply an *outcome* of certain food practices but rather a major element that *shaped* a capacity to eat at all – let alone to eat well. This important factor is essential in understanding how to help people living in food insecurity, and I frame this as a plea for future research that is more speculative about the relationship between eating well and being well. Specifically, it shows the importance of not treating food and bodies functionally, but instead being open to the multiplicity and potentiality of the messy entanglements of eating.

Final reflections

So, this thesis has addressed the research questions. However, there is one important question that I have not addressed: how do we *solve* food insecurity? Just as the ingredients and relations that bring about *good taste* are impossible to determine in advance, the practices, policies, interventions and forms of care that can even out food inequalities are multiple and contextual rather than defined in advance. So, this thesis has not offered steps to ‘solve’ or attempted to define the problem – as if food inequalities were reducible to one problem. The change I argue for is in how we understand and approach these issues: by opening them up rather than closing them down. Central to this is a belief that while there is no easy answer to the problem of food insecurity, there remains an imperative to at least move beyond centuries-old normative and moralising assumptions that underlie much of public discussion on the topics of poverty

and diet. In this thesis therefore I have offered some first steps in the direction of developing a more curious approach to understanding the relationship between food environments and wellbeing. I have done this by pushing analysis of precarious food environments away from assumptions of bounded bodies and choices, towards a more contingent and fluid approach.

One of the limitations of this study relates to the amount of time I spent in the field. Though I have a deep interest in the ways in which food inequalities emerge and recede in participants' lives, and the fact that *crises* such as those associated with foodbank use are only the tip of the iceberg, a longer ethnographic engagement was not possible within the scope of this project. However, it is possible that a longer engagement might have brought up wider issues than I have discussed here, as well as giving more opportunity to reflect on how some of these factors might have changed over time.

Second, the scope for producing and reflecting on multisensory elements of the research was limited to some extent. While the sensory experiences in the field were rich and informative, for this thesis I relied on visual and written elements to reflect on taste. This was partly out of necessity, to meet the academic standards of a thesis. However, future research could push the boundaries of sensory research, perhaps by including a different mix of methods and collaborating with artists, taste experts, food technologists and biomedical researchers interested in a richer panoply of sensory experience than I can nail with words on a page.

Finally, while I have begun to bring out *some* of the hidden geographies of food insecurity, this study was somewhat limited in that I was only able to reflect on a few of the diverse domestic arrangements in which food insecurity is felt. Future research might consider the contexts of sheltered accommodations and

hostels for the homeless in terms of how these spaces shape food practices and wellbeing. There is also exciting scope for action research, working on some of the issues that participants shared with me but that I was unable to follow up on; for example, the effects on mental health of the architectural layout, social conventions and rules in hostels for those who are homeless.

In conclusion, the time spent eating, cooking and shopping with Bristol residents facing issues of food insecurity has given me the chance to begin to formulate new questions, the answers to which should broaden our understanding of food inequalities. By offering a *taste* of food insecurity, I have touched upon just a fraction of the issues shared with me. Still, I hope these provide fertile ground for not only future research but also fostering interdependencies that nourish and support those around us.

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Appendix: interview schedules

Interview Schedule- photo diaries

Explain what the research is about: how people access a good diet and challenges they might face in doing so.

This interview will involve some questions about the things you eat and where you buy them. About the photos that you took and may ask you to draw some pictures. There are no right or wrong answers.

Run through ethics and sign consent form. Give them information sheet. Ask if they have any questions?

A. Introduction

1. Please tell me about how you came to know about the course? What interested you in coming along?
2. How are you finding it?
 - What do you enjoy? Anything you don't enjoy?
 - Do you find it's changed how you cook or eat?
 - Have you tried any of the recipes at home?
 - What new skills have you learned?

B. Diaries task

Here are the photos you took, please arrange them into order for each day of the diary. [LC to number and make note of the order that it goes in]

1. Please can you tell me about each of the days?
2. Please can you describe the meals for me?
3. What was happening?
4. Where were you?
5. Who was with you?
6. Please tell me about how you made the meals?
7. Do you enjoy cooking?
8. Can you tell me about your signature meal? Something you make often or enjoy making.
9. Is there anything that you didn't take a picture of? Why not?
10. Looking at the diary, how does it strike you?
11. Are there any differences between how you eat now and how you have eaten in the past?
12. How did you find the exercise?
13. Follow up with any emerging questions/relevant discussion.
14. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the diary?

C. Shopping trip

Now I'd like to ask you about your food shopping habits.

1. Please can you tell me how do you get your food and where from?
2. How do you get there and back
3. How often do you buy your food?
4. Are there any challenges in getting to the shop?
5. When you're there, can you get hold of the kinds of foods you would like?

6. Would you mind telling me how much you spend on food on average?
Either as a figure or as a percentage.

D. Wrap up

1. Any follow up questions from me?
2. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Debrief: Thank you for your time. This picture will be used for my research, by signing the consent form, you are agreeing to let me keep this picture (securely and anonymously) and use it in my PhD thesis and any related publications. Ensure they have information sheet.

Interview Schedule- Foodmaps

Explain what the research is about: how people access a good diet and challenges they might face in doing so.

I am going to ask you to draw some pictures. Feel free to draw whatever you like, this isn't a test on how well you can draw but to help me get a better idea of the things we talk about.

Run through ethics and sign consent form. Give them information sheet. Ask if they have any questions?

A. Introduction:

3. Tell me about how you first came to the foodstore?
 - Follow up questions if relevant.

A. Drawing: Meal

4. Can you draw a picture of your favourite meal/signature dish?
 - Can you tell me how you made it?
 - Where you got the ingredients from.
 - What do others in your house like to eat?
 - How often you make it, why/when you make it, who you share it with, how it relates to other meals that you make.
5. Can you give an example of a time when food made you happy? Or unhappy?
6. What would make it easier for you to eat/make more foods that you like?
7. Follow up questions as relevant.

B. Drawing: Shopping trip

Can you please draw me a map of your shopping trip? Either to the foodstore or to another place that you get your food?

8. How do you get your food and where from?
9. How do you get there and back
10. How often do you buy your food?
11. What do you normally buy?
12. Are there any challenges in getting to the shop?
13. When you're there, can you get hold of the kinds of foods you would like?
14. What would make it easier?

C. Budget

1. What proportion of your budget do you spend on food?
2. How does this compare to other times in your life?

D. Wrap up

1. Any follow up questions from me?
2. Is there anything you'd like to add?
 - E. **Debrief:** Thank you for your time. This picture will be used for my research, by signing the consent form, you are agreeing to let me keep this picture (securely and anonymously) and use it in my PhD thesis and any related publications. Ensure they have information sheet

Interview Schedule: Home/Lunch interviews

1. Please could you tell us a little about your life-story and how food features in it.

- Do you have a story about food when you were a child?
- Do you have a story about when you started to cook for yourself?
- How did you learn to cook and buy food?

2. What challenges have you faced in the past and currently around buying and cooking food?

3. Have you any reflections about the cost of food and how that has changed over time and in relation to your personal circumstances?

4. Do you worry about food in terms of – access/availability?

- nutrition/healthy eating?
- special dietary needs?
- quality of food?
- Amount of food you eat?
- Price of food?

5. When does food make you happy? Or Unhappy?

- 5 a) Where do you eat food?

5b) When do you eat food with other people? When on your own?

6. How do you manage your weekly food needs?

- Budget-ing?
- Accessing Food aid – free meals or free food?
- Achieving a balanced diet?

6a Could you tell us about your kitchen? What is the layout? If I opened one of your cupboards what sort of things would be in there?

7. When do you feel most confident /least confident with food?

8. Have you ever done a cookery course? If so which one?

9. What did you learn from it?

10. Has your eating, cooking and / or shopping changed as a result of the course?

11. Has your food usage changed, since the cookery course, over the last few years?

12. What was happening in your life that led you to be referred for emergency food aid?

12a) What does it feel like when there isn't much food in the house?

13. Can you tell us about your experience of receiving emergency food aid from the foodstore?

14. Can you identify anything that has changed in your life since you started receiving emergency food aid (from the charity)?

How you live? What you eat? How you feel? Direction your life is going?

15. Do you ever think about how the food reaches the foodstore? The donors?

Thank you for your time.

Debrief.

Interview schedule: Stakeholder/staff interviews

Interview schedule for stakeholders/staff

Explain what the research is about: how people access a good diet and challenges they might face in doing so.

This interview will involve some questions about the issues you face in your work related to food insecurity and your experiences of dealing with these issues.

Run through ethics and sign consent form. Give them information sheet. Ask if they have any questions?

1. Could you please explain your role?

How long have you been here? What changes have you seen?

What got you interested in this?

2. What are the main issues around food (in Bristol) that you see in your work at the moment?

a. How do these appear in your day to day work?

b. [if food insecurity not raised] what do you think about food insecurity?

Is that an issue that you face? Is it more/less important than other issues?

(Follow up on issues raised)

3. What role do you see you and your organisation as having in tackling these issues?

a. How do you go about this?

b. What challenges/opportunities are there?

c. What would you like to do if you had more money/time/resources?

4. As you see it, what are the main challenges in your area for helping people to access good food?

(Follow up on the challenges raised)

5. What measures would most benefit you and those you work with in order to improve access? What barriers exist for these measures?

(Opportunities)

6. Would you say your area of Bristol/ interest has particular take on these issues that would not be found elsewhere?

a. How do you see your work as fitting with Bristol and the rest of the UK?

b. Where do you see this going in ten years' time?

7. What do you think your clients would say about these issues?

8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Debrief.