

## Food and Ethical Consumption

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# Food and Ethical Consumption

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Welcome to this special issue of Journal of Consumer Ethics themed around *Food and Ethical Consumption* which has been my pleasure to edit. Having studied food and ethical consumption for almost 30 years – covering issues related to fairtrade food brands (Szmigin *et al.*, 2007); farmers markets (McEachern *et al.*, 2010), convenience and family food consumption (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006), sustainable tourist food consumption (Carrigan *et al.*, 2017), and most recently the role of generativity and family food sustainability (Athwal *et al.*, 2018) – it is apparent that there is significant interest and growing concern among researchers and campaigners about how we produce and consume food, particularly in industrialised countries. Ideas about the ethics of food and consumption are contested, and often controversial, but they are also important to everyone. What we eat shapes our physical and emotional selves, and consumers or ‘citizens’ play multiple roles in our global food systems (Cura, 2017). Our food choices and understanding of food systems emerge from a complex landscape that includes what constitutes ‘good food’, where it comes from, what we should be eating, how to prepare and share it, and the politics of hunger, eating, getting, growing and wasting food (Goodman *et al.*, 2017; Paddock, 2017; Evans *et al.*, 2017).

The purpose of the issue is to bring together work that contributes to our understanding of food and ethical consumption, and the papers that feature illustrate how broad and complicated some of the challenges are relating to food and ‘eating well’. Recent decades have seen an emerging agenda to support better food quality, greater authenticity and localness in production, sustainability, fairtrade, and animal welfare (Eden *et al.*, 2008). Issues such as food labelling, food justice and food poverty, alternative food networks, food tourism, slow food and food waste are increasingly at the forefront of discussions about the ethics of food consumption. While the special issue may raise more problems and challenges than it provides answers and solutions, it signals fruitful territory for future research in food and ethical consumption.

It is timely that JCE has chosen food as one of its early special issue topics, since food is central to all our lives. Researchers have for some time explored the role and importance of food in the shaping of families, and the identity and agency of individuals (Carrigan *et al.*, 2006; Valentine 1999). Warde and Yates (2016:1) said that “*food and what we should or should not eat is one of the contemporary world’s most troublesome topics.*” For some consumers, food is plentiful and pleasurable; for others the task of accessing food is an exhausting, daily challenge (Hall and Holmes, 2017). The Food Ethics Council (2017) recently highlighted that while for many years consumers in industrialised countries have experienced the ‘era of cheap food’, increasingly volatile food prices are becoming a significant global political and economic issue. Rising food prices tend to disproportionately impact upon poor and vulnerable consumers the most, yet we also need to acknowledge the unrealistic cost of food at the till. How can we make food high quality, respect animal welfare and ensure sustainability, while keeping food accessible and affordable?

Critics point out that our current food system while providing relatively cheap food, does not reveal the hidden costs of food production and consumption that impact on natural capital and human health (Warde and Yates, 2016). Until recently, environmental and social sustainability were overlooked in the pursuit of food industrialisation and commercialisation. However, the reality of how food production and consumption impacts upon greenhouse gas emissions, depletes finite natural resources, accelerates global warming and climate change is gaining mainstream attention (Garnett, 2016). There is a moral imperative to produce enough food to feed the world's growing population; but also to do so with high standards and integrity while working with nature to harness and protect its benefits, and to ensure the health and nutrition of consumers by providing access to a healthy, balanced diet (Food Ethics Council, 2018). While around 800 million people worldwide go hungry, two billion suffer debilitating nutrient deficiencies and another two billion are overweight and obese, vulnerable to a plethora of disease such as heart conditions, strokes, diabetes and cancers (Garnett, 2016).

For example, food security has risen up national and international policy agendas in recent years, as experts tackle the challenge of feeding current and future generations by increasing agricultural productivity without increasing environmental degradation (Kneafsey *et al.*, 2012). Food scientists, campaigners and researchers are ever more vocal regarding the unsustainability of current food supply practices and policy. Food insecurity – where people are unable to access sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food (Marovelli, 2018) – has become a persistent feature of urban inequality during the current climate of austerity (Hall and Holmes, 2017). The problem is more complex than simply increasing global agricultural productivity or sustainable intensification, as this alone will not end global hunger. Access is at the forefront of food security, as is food quality in relation to concerns about nutrition, food safety, taste and social acceptance. Even though food is abundant in developed countries, lower income consumers find they often have to compromise on nutritional quality, and the enjoyment and pleasure that is derived from 'good' food (Goodman *et al.*, 2017). Thus researchers need to study both the experiential and the emotional dimensions of food security, concerns about the affordability of healthy food - currently and in the future - and how to reduce the stress of food shopping on a low income when faced with the tensions of juggling a tight budget and the seductive proposition of cheap, convenience food.

Two of the papers in this special issue focus on the problems of food security within low income communities in the UK. Firstly, 'Where's my shop?' by Deirdre Shaw, Andrew Cumbers and Hugh Kippen examines consumption ethics in a context of long term deprivation and limited food retail access. The paper notes the social significance of food in urban space and the importance of the interaction and engagement of communities. The role and importance of community in food security is further explored in our second paper 'Food, Ethics and Community: Using Cultural Animation to Develop a Food Vision for North Staffordshire' by Emma Surman, Mihaela Kelemen, Helen Millward and Sue Moffat. This article presents a communal grassroots food initiative driven by a collaboration featuring a community food network, a local university and a theatre. Specifically the authors capture the often unheard voices and untold stories within food ethics, using creative research methods to bridge individual and state driven interventions of food consumption.

Contributing to many of the challenges of food and ethical consumption has been the distance – geographically and cognitively - that has grown between food producers and consumers in the developed world. This disconnection means that few consumers are aware of, nor understand the sometimes negative social and environmental impacts that make food production possible. Few people grow their own food, or understand how food is produced; cognitive distance is exacerbated by new technologies of production, such as genetic modification and intensive animal farming. In many countries food is increasingly bought through large multinational retail stores rather than small, local shops, serviced by global food production, extensive, fragmented food supply chains and high food miles.

Food researchers and campaigners have for some time problematized these methods of production and called for a reconnection of consumers with the people and places that produce their food (Bos and Owen, 2016). This has increased attention on alternative food networks (AFNs) with specific agendas to deliver closer relationships between food producers and consumers by producing, processing, distributing and consuming food within a limited region or local area, while avoiding the need for long, multi-actor food chains (Cox *et al.*, 2008). Examples of AFNs include farmers markets, farm shops, farm gate sales, community supported agriculture, food box deliveries, consumer co-operatives and community gardening initiatives (Bos and Owen, 2016). These shorter, more transparent food supply chains are potentially redefining relationships between producers and consumers, are founded upon quality and provenance, deliver more sustainable and ethical ways of food production (Carrigan *et al.*, 2017), and provide a route for consumers – not necessarily motivated by food politics - to contribute to the wellbeing of their local towns and communities (Schoolman, 2017). However, many argue there is still a need for researchers to push such ethical consumption developments beyond mere shopping choices to consider the broader cultural, political and economic structures that enable and limit consumption practice (Welch *et al.*, 2018; Huddart Kennedy *et al.* 2018).

Values-driven food consumption has been around for many years, although what it means to be an ethical food consumer is often contested. Many western consumers are living through an age of unprecedented anxiety (Jackson, 2010; Paddock, 2015) particularly when it comes to meat consumption. Global consumption of meat and milk products is on the rise, with countries such as China and India increasingly adopting a meat-intensive diet (World Economic Forum, 2016). Conflicting messages about health and hygiene, provenance and nutrition as well as animal welfare and disease underpin the powerful and contested mediated biopolitics of eating (Goodman *et al.*, 2017). In North America and Europe the call to eschew meat in our diets is gaining attention, either through encouraging consumption reduction – for example, ‘Meat free Monday’ - or replacing it with alternative proteins such as insect based foods or plant based alternatives.

Being vegetarian is becoming more broadly accepted, while some critics suggest humans should not consume meat or dairy foods at all (Linne and McCrow-Young, 2017) a decision that certain scientists argue is the single biggest way to reduce our environmental impact on the planet (Carrington, 2018). Meat abstinence is gaining traction even among non-vegans/vegetarians, as personal health concerns, environmental anxiety and animal welfare are driving the ‘reducitarian’ movement where consumers refrain from absolute abstinence while making substantial reductions in their traditional meat consumption practice. Navigating these uncertainties to establish what is ‘good’ food, where it

comes from and what is best for them inevitably leaves many consumers frustrated and confused. Our third paper by Morven McEachern '*Ethical Meat Consumption: Transitioning Towards Sustainability?*' provides a thought-provoking commentary on many of these issues surrounding meat consumption and abstinence.

Different stages are distinguishable in the food consumption process: planning, shopping, storage and preparation of food, consumption itself, cleaning up and disposal of items (Carrigan *et al.*, 2006), and eating is mostly driven by habits and routines, social obligations and pressures (Warde and Yates, 2016). What is the right food to buy and eat is influenced by crises and food scares, and the increasingly powerful and vocal movements that address ethical and political concerns about our contemporary food system. Food waste is just one of many modern consumption habits that are attributed to the wasteful practices and attitudes of consumers (Lazell, 2016; Evans, 2014), whereby 60% of food wasted is avoidable (Bray, 2013). Yet, the ethical framing of food and food waste is replete with tensions and contradictions; more recent work identifies a distributed responsibility for food waste that incorporates the interface between supermarkets and households (Welch *et al.*, 2018).

Our final paper '*From bean to cup and beyond: exploring ethical consumption and coffee shops*' by Jennifer Ferreira and Carlos Ferreira illuminates some of the complexities consumers face around ethical consumption in the retail environment, namely coffee shops. Recent years have seen the development of a vibrant coffee shop culture around the world, but this growing demand for coffee while driving increased consumption, has escalated waste production on a massive scale. Traditional discussions of ethical coffee have often focused on aspects such as fairtrade coffee supply chains (Lekakis, 2013) and coffee consumption in general, rather than considering the coffee shop as the point where ethical choices can be made. The paper opens up the discussion about the many and complex ethical choices facing the consumer, while highlighting how the responsibility for fostering such ethical behaviours does not always lie solely with the consumer, and requires efforts by businesses throughout the industry and policy makers to foster greater awareness of ethical consumption choices in the coffee shop industry.

We are also featuring in this issue Dan Welch's review of the monograph by Yana Manyukhina, titled '*Ethical Consumption: Practices and Identities, a realist approach*'. In completing this special issue, I firstly wish to thank the authors who have made their contributions to the papers that appear. I am also grateful for the support and advice of my colleagues on the JCE Editorial Board, and the reviewers who gave their time and helpful feedback in the preparation of the special issue. Special thanks goes to Dan Welch and Sarah Marie Hall who have been a constructive and supportive sounding board for me along the way, and of course our main Editor, Rob Harrison, for his cheerful tolerance of my deadline slippage.

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## Biography

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## For Citation

Carrigan, M. (2018) Food and Ethical Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 2(2):1-7

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ISSN 2515-205X



# Where's my shop?

*Deirdre Shaw<sup>1</sup>, Andrew Cumbers<sup>2</sup> and Hugh Kippen<sup>3</sup>*

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## Introduction

Research in the area of consumption ethics has privileged a focus on niche groups of self-defined ethical consumers (e.g., Black and Cherrier, 2010). A notable exception is the work of Hall (2011) who has explored the ethics of consumption during austerity. We seek to extend the reach of this research by examining consumption ethics where deprivation has existed over generations and where retail access to food is limited. In keeping with research highlighting the social significance of food in urban space (e.g., Crossan *et al.*, 2016), in this short paper we emphasise the importance of the 'social', in terms of the importance of the interaction and engagement of communities, neglected in research where food access is challenged and place is disrupted through urban renewal processes (Howerton and Trauger, 2017). To illustrate our case we focus on the social significance of cohesive local communities in issues of food access and in doing so we find issues of local economy, food waste and sharing important.

## Ethics of Consumption

Research exploring ethical consumption has grown significantly over recent decades (e.g., Caruana *et al.*, 2016; Newhom and Shaw, 2007). Much of this work has approached consumption ethics as a lifestyle choice. This neglects the potentially wider ranging nature of this topic. As such, we prefer the term "ethics of consumption" as a means to explore more broadly the multiple motivations, practices and places that constitute everyday consumption (e.g., Barnett *et al.*, 2005; Hall, 2015). Such a perspective allows us to consider an ethics of consumption among those for whom their consumption lifestyle is less of a choice but more reflective of imposed and continued adversity. How ethics are played out in such circumstances has been overlooked in research to-date (Hall, 2011; 2015). For many, in their everyday food consumption choices they face challenges in relation to access to affordable produce in their local community (e.g., Mills and Wright, 2015). In this paper we seek to explore how ethics in consumption may manifest in a community experiencing these challenges.

## Background

In examining how consumption ethics play out where food access is limited, we draw upon ongoing research into food provision in a classic old industrial city that has undergone both deindustrialisation and various attempts at regenerating and reimagining over the past three decades (MacLeod, 2002, Helms and Cumbers, 2006, Cumbers *et*

*al.*, 2010). The area of the city where the research is located has undergone three waves of regeneration seeing the population fall from over 50,000 in the 1950s to less than 2,000 today. This is as a result of manufacturing decline and a programme of demolition. The area is home to some of the highest levels of deprivation in the UK. Past attempts at regeneration have failed and the latest regeneration project, resulting from a successful bid to host an international event, was heralded as an opportunity for the development of new infrastructure and facilities that would provide the catalyst for economic rejuvenation. This project, however, was driven largely by property based development without accompanying services, while eradicating much of the existing local food retail facilities. For example, to make way for the event the high street of shops and community centre were demolished. Nearly four years later the site remains among the country's most deprived neighbourhoods, across income, health and education indicators. Displacement of local people and a loss of retail services has meant that access to food has become a critical issue. Repeatedly in our interactions with the local community we are told, 'we just want our shop'. Given the lack of access to food, particularly for those without access to a car, this community is now living in a food desert (Howerton and Trauger, 2017).

In this case, we see a severe disruption to the places of food consumption at the local level. Displacement of place identity, attachment and resultant social bonding (e.g., Lewicka, 2008) that were bound up in previous consumption practices also displaces the spaces of consumption ethics. How we understand places of consumption ethics assumes a renewed significance as people seek to manage the complexity, compromise and organisation of food access in a food desert. Such disruption also necessitates a renegotiation of everyday consumption routines. We explore this in the empirical evidence that follows and find an ethics of consumption in coping in the present, memories of the past and aspirations for the future.

## Method

The empirical work used to support our arguments took place over a 6-month period between August and December 2017 and is part of an ongoing project concerned with food provision, health and sustainability. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 local residents, obtained through snowballing which sought demographic diversity<sup>1</sup> (see Table 1). Participant observations were conducted at local food and community related events as a means to both generate interview participants and to observe interactions and discussions around food. A field journal was used to record researcher thoughts, feelings and interactions. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and pseudonyms have been adopted throughout the reporting of this research. Interview transcripts, along with observations, were open-coded to form initial categories and emergent themes. Through an iterative process across and within the data, initial categories were modified to reveal key relations (Miles and Huberman, 1994). During this process interviews, observations and field notes were placed in dialogue with each other to facilitate a wide-reaching understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The analysis process was conducted in parallel by the authors and deliberated until agreement was reached.

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<sup>1</sup> We experienced a bias towards females being willing to talk about food and managing household food decision-making.

**Table 1 Participant Table**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Children	Employment Status
Alex	M	65-70	Y	Retired
Anna	F	20-25	Y	Student
Brandon	M	25-30	Y	Employed
Bryony	F	40-45	N	Employed
Charlie	M	25-30	Y	Employed
Claire	F	30-35	Y	Unemployed
Cory	F	25-30	Y	Employed
Dawn	F	45-50	N	Employed
Derek	M	50-55	N	Unemployed
Esther	F	20-25	N	Employed
Felicity	F	40-45	Y	Unemployed
Gemma	F	40-45	N	Unemployed
Georgia	F	25-30	N	Unemployed
Harriet	F	35-40	N	Employed
Hazel	F	60-65	Y	Unemployed
Iris	F	45-50	N	Unemployed
Jackie	F	60-65	Y	Retired
Jane	F	20-25	Y	Unemployed
Natasha	F	70-75	N	Retired

## Findings

In what follows we present our findings organised around 3 emergent key themes of ‘local provision – social place’, ‘concerns about waste’ and ‘caring and sharing’.

### Local Provision – Social Place

In consumption ethics, research has explored the concept of the ‘local’ from the perspective of sustainability (e.g., Berti and Mulligan, 2016), food miles (e.g., Schnell, 2013) and ‘buy local’ (e.g., Bianchi and Mortimer, 2015). In our current research, we find local food provision as critical in supporting a social infrastructure for individuals and community, combining people and place in an ethics of consumption. The food provision that had existed prior to regeneration served as an important ‘third space’ for the local community (Soja, 1996) that facilitated informal gathering, conversation, social bonding, connectedness and trust (Peters, 2016):

*“You went to the shop it took you about two and a half hours! You’d only have went for a loaf! Because you did meet everybody and you would gab [talk] on the way there, and especially when we had three shops, the fruit n’ veg, the butchers, and this sort of convenience...and there was an off sales as well at one time...it didn’t matter if you weren’t going into all the shops because if you were gabbing to someone and they were off to the butchers you automatically went with them. And while you were in the butchers you were like ‘Oh I’ll try some of that’. That all worked, you know... You found out*

*everything in the locals because they were all shops that were run by, or worked in by folk that stayed here...Especially at the bottom of the road...that corner, people stood at corners and blethered and gabbed and put the world to rights...It was great here... it was right up until they brought the diggers in...slowly blocking folk out...and there were fights to keep the shops and 'Nah nah doesn't matter, compulsory purchase, your shop's shut'...that's when it all changed" (Hazel).*

Among participants, and as illustrated by Hazel, we found place attachment through long-term residence and social ties (Stedman, 2003), place identity through distinctiveness as a member of this specific community (Proshansky, 1978) and place memory embedded in physical and social structures (Lewicka, 2008). We spoke to families with 4 generations living in the community, who were born and raised in the area and who shared stories centred on local food provision and social bonding. Local shops were trusted as reliable sources of quality food through which families had interacted and shared knowledge about down the generations.

While no longer in the physical environment, the local retail provision that had existed prior to regeneration was kept alive in memory. Urban reminders abound for residents that included new housing developments and derelict land where new retail provision was promised, but yet to materialise and where old retail provision had been. Although regeneration brought new housing and residents, the loss of third places of food provision has not allowed connections to be forged between existing and new residents, leading to tensions and 'othering' via difference. Thus, we find tensions with local authorities responsible for regeneration and with new residents who have come into the area as a result of the regeneration:

*"They told us there were going to be shops and 24 hour cafes and there was gonna be this and that, but it was all going to be in the village [new housing development]. They were excluding, we were excluded because I'm on this side, I'm no in the village. We are the ones that have been inconvenienced, they weren't here from the start...I never got offered one of them [new houses]" (Francis).*

Without a local retail place, the ethics of consumption experienced between people and places was disrupted and, in some instances, eliminated. The loss of local food provision goes beyond issues of geographical access (Howerton and Trauger, 2017), emotional bonds have an impact on well-being, providing psychological balance and a sense of stability (Lewicka, 2008). This is particularly significant where an existing place-based community has been disrupted, as evidenced in the current research. With a static physical means of food access dislocated, some residents turned to a community facebook page in their attempts to locate place in their local environment. Many noted that this online platform is dominated by the question "where's the van?" "The van' is a traditional ice cream van, which, following the removal of in-community retail provision, begun stocking essential items for local residents.

While research has explored the interaction between physical third place and online spaces (e.g., Forlano, 2009) and suggested that online space can function as a third place (e.g., Kleinman, 2006), in the current research online space was used predominantly as a means to locate physical local food provision in diminished circumstances. Further, physical place was essential for those residents not connected to the community online space. 'The van' was viewed as a poor substitute for previous food provision in the area. In an area, however, where many residents have mobility issues, car ownership is low and where food access is hampered by a 20 minutes walk to a large supermarket, across a busy road,

with an unreliable bus service, the van played an important role in the community in providing essentials such as bread and milk. Further, the van was considered local by virtue of being resident in the community, unlike supermarkets some 20 minute walk away. Further, supermarkets were regarded as playing a frustrating role in encouraging waste.

## Concerns about Waste

Food waste has a significant environmental impact and the role of the consumer in food waste remains a key concern (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Hall (2011) highlights issues of waste in relation to austerity. While in keeping with Hall we find financial implications important, for our participants we found such concerns bound up with the need for local food provision:

*“...there’s a plethora of giant supermarkets and I hate going to the supermarket...yes I have to use Tesco or Asda. But I always end up coming out with stuff that’s just more than I expected to buy, or less healthy options. Stuff that I didn’t want to buy but I’ve ended up coming away, cos it’s 2 for 1 or 3 for 1, or whatever else. So I would like to be able to buy daily essential, fresh produce, things that I use all the time” (Harriet).*

Packaged fruit and vegetables and multi-buy offers were viewed as wasteful by participants who wanted to buy exactly what they need. They did not like supermarkets due to the large range of stock on offer that was a temptation when trying to locate the items they planned to buy. Many found the practices of supermarkets ethically questionable in terms of product placement designed to encourage purchasing. Unlike a small local food shop, in large supermarkets “...you can’t buy loose, so you feel like you have to buy an 8 bag of apples but you might only want 2” (Esther). Block et al. (2016) argue that consumer food waste occurs in the sequence from point of sale, acquisition, consumption and disposition. We find consumers who wish to avoid waste at the beginning of this cycle and view local retailers who enable the purchase of loose unpackaged produce as a means to achieve this. Such a view runs contrary to the efforts put into motivating consumers to reduce food waste post-purchase (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Indeed, contrary to Block et al. (2016) we find our participants are good planners and tend to shop with a list that they stick to, driven in part by financial restrictions.

## Caring and Sharing

Residents were very aware of those left vulnerable as a result of the loss of their local food provision, demonstrating an important and resilient sense of urban community and self-help (Cumbers et al., 2010), despite the ruptures brought about by regeneration. Many took action to ensure that their elderly neighbours and/or those with mobility problems could access food. This took the form of going to get their shopping, sharing cooked meals and, as the following excerpt reveals, growing vegetables to provide for neighbours:

*“He and I went out for a full day a couple of months ago to find an allotment or plot to start growing vegetables in, because quite a few of his neighbours are from Poland and he is really concerned they don’t have enough money to buy quality vegetables for their kids” (Georgia).*

For many the sharing of food was an established practice. Some participants cited not having or using a freezer as any leftover food would get used by family or neighbours. Again, however, the social dimension was central, Felicity notes the:

*“Significant impact on elderly, they miss out, you don’t see anybody now, there’s naebody out, see before they could pop out and they were always talking in the street, you don’t see anybody” (Felicity).*

Through practices of sharing, residents were able to help ensure not only that those in need had access to food, but also to social interaction. There has been research interest in sharing as a means of more ethical/sustainable consumption (e.g., Ozanne and Ballantine, 2010). Beyond, for example, online platforms and sharing schemes (e.g., Möhlmann, 2015), the current research highlights the critical role that sharing plays in social reproduction and ultimately human survival (Belk, 2018). Here we see the emotional, human bonds and sense of responsibility that has been theorised as consumption ethics (e.g. Carrier, 1990; Miller, 1998) that goes beyond a focus on the physical sharing of such activities. Our participants very much position caring in sharing.

## Conclusion

In this research, we reveal how an ethics of consumption is negotiated for a deprived community living in a food desert. We highlight the importance and preference for local small-scale food provision pertinent to developing local economies (e.g., Hughes and Boys, 2015; Schmitt et al., 2016). Such provision is neglected in food desert research (Howerton and Trauger, 2017) and, as such, the role of local provision and social interactions in food access is overlooked. Large supermarkets fail as a substitute for the third places of local food provision. They do not offer the spaces of sociability and, as such, fail to encourage the sharing of information, lending of support and social interactions critical to social bonding among disparate groups where old residents remain and new are jettisoned in. Supermarkets lack appeal in terms of size, layout and approaches to packaging fresh produce. Our findings suggest that economic development that integrates community organising and place making are key to mitigating social exclusion in food deserts. Thus, rather than supermarkets we see the potential for community based retail and social enterprises. A range of global initiatives based around such approaches abound offering important learnings for the current community and other communities facing similar problems (e.g., Caspi et al., 2012; Mount et al., 2013). Such provision was viewed as critical to social integration within our community:

*“Get a shop here as soon as possible. Once we get a shop here it’ll change everybody’s views and perceptions, once we get a shop here people will start integrating and become part of the same community...if you can get people to buy into it then they will buy from it” (Brandon).*

We, therefore, find an ethics of consumption in and around the people and places that make up a local community and highlight the significance of local space in understanding, and facilitating, ethics in everyday food retail experiences.



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## For Citation

Shaw, D., Cumbers, A., and Kippen, H. (2018) Where's my shop?. *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 2(2):8-16.

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ISSN 2515-205X

# Food, Ethics and Community: Using Cultural Animation to Develop a Food Vision for North Staffordshire

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## Introduction

Eating ethically involves a plethora of activities, being both a contingent and a challenging practice (Williams *et al.*, 2015). The desire to be more ethical in our food choices is connected to anxieties over food consumption, including how and what we should be eating (Ashley *et al.*, 2004), the conditions of production and distribution, highlighted through various food scares from BSE to horse meat in burgers (Jackson, 2010) and the amount of food that gets wasted in the process (Evans, 2014). Such are the range of issues that it becomes hard for consumers to identify a precise focus for the anxiety beyond a general 'lack of confidence in food' (Osowski *et al.*, 2012:58) with the result that they feel unsure as to how to respond (Benson, 1997).

Individualistic, choice focused narratives of responsible eating remain dominant in food discourses which make structural inequalities opaque and obscure the impact media and food corporations have on what is desirable and legitimate in terms of food interventions and ethical food consumption (Goodman *et al.*, 2017). Such narratives see individual behaviour as both the source of and the solution to existing food system problems (Johnson and Cairns, 2012). The ideal food choices inscribed in these narratives are socially and culturally mediated, hiding the power struggles over the regimes of truth that underpin the social construction of individual responsibility, healthy food and ethical food consumption. By focusing on the individual, they miss out the communal, socially negotiated and culturally informed experiences of people's relations with food.

In this paper we explore a communal grassroots food initiative spearheaded by a community food network from Staffordshire in collaboration with a local university and an award winning theatre. The members of this network are not experts with authority to speak about food to or on behalf of the community. If anything, they are typically the unheard voices in any institutional narratives about food and their stories would be hidden at the deep end of the biopolitical nexus of food ethics (Goodman *et al.*, 2017). It is to these untold stories we turn to in this discussion piece for we believe that grassroots initiatives and experiences such as these have the potential to bridge individual and state driven interventions of food consumption and go beyond individualistic choice driven food narratives.

The North Staffordshire Community Food Network (subsequently referred to as the 'Food Network') was formed in 2014 following an EPSRC grant on food poverty held by Keele University's Community Animation and Social

Innovation Centre (CASIC) in collaboration with the outreach department of a local theatre, New Vic Borderlines. The grant brought together individuals and groups from North Staffordshire who were concerned or involved with issues of food poverty and healthy eating/living. Subsequent to the research, members of the community came together to form the Food Network to develop the connections made and build on the discussions that evolved during the project. The Food Network has since received funding from the Public Health Department at Stoke-on-Trent City Council and formed as an unincorporated association with an agreed constitution. CASIC researchers and administrators provided support in the early stages of its development while New Vic Borderlines offered the theatre as a meeting space and their facilitation skills to run various events.

CASIC (<https://www.keele.ac.uk/casic/>) is a multi-disciplinary research centre that aims to foster community-based research via creative and artistic means of engagement. Through a series of AHRC, ESRC and EPSRC funded research projects between 2012 and 2018, CASIC researchers developed, in collaboration with New Vic Borderlines' theatre practitioners, a distinct methodology of knowledge co-creation and community engagement, entitled 'Cultural Animation' (CA). We argue in this commentary paper that the Food Network evolved due to this particular way of working and furthermore, that the network members themselves bought into this methodology and used it to collaboratively develop a food vision for their local area.

We start by giving a brief introduction to the area to contextualize the economic and social conditions in which the Food Network was set up and explain the process by which the membership created a food vision. We then provide further detail about the methodology of Cultural Animation before discussing how it was employed in the initial development of the food vision. We conclude by highlighting some of the limitations of the methodology and suggest how cultural animation could be used in other areas of food ethics and consumption research.

## Food, health and Stoke-on-Trent

North Staffordshire is a conurbation in the North West of England surrounding the city of Stoke-on-Trent. According to Public Health England (2017), Stoke-on-Trent is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England and has about 28% (14,400) of children living in low income families. Health inequalities within the area remain high with life expectancy being 9.3 years lower for men and 7.1 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of the city than in the least deprived areas. 22.7% of children are classified as obese, worse than the average for England while levels of teenage pregnancy, GCSE attainment, breastfeeding initiation and smoking are also worse than the England average.

Despite such negative health indicators, Stoke-on-Trent is one of the fastest growing local economies (JSNA report, 2015). The same report states that in 2015 unemployment levels were at pre-recession levels (9,000 persons). Nevertheless, unemployment in Stoke remains above national rates: 7.5% compared with 6.2% nationally. The City's successful bid to create one of the UK's 26 enterprise zones, i.e. the Stoke on Trent Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone, will create 9,000 new jobs and rejuvenate 140 hectares of brownfield land as well as ensure sustainable economic growth by harnessing existing manufacturing know how and creative skills in the area. In addition to pursuing economic

resilience, the city is investing in numerous community initiatives focused on education, music, sports, local heritage, health and food. Of relevance to the discussion here is one of these community initiatives which aims to develop the City of Stoke-on-Trent into a sustainable food city. To progress this initiative the City Council chose to collaborate with the Food Network, a collaboration that was enabled and facilitated by Cultural Animation Methodologies of engagement and knowledge co-production to which we turn in the next section.

## Cultural Animation

Cultural animation (CA) was developed as a methodology of community engagement more than 15 years ago by Sue Moffat, Director of New Vic Borderlines. As a result of collaborating with CASIC academics on various research projects, the approach evolved to also become a methodology of knowledge co-production underpinned by an American Pragmatist philosophy (for a detailed discussion see Lorino 2018). In a nutshell American Pragmatism sees thinking and acting as two sides of the same coin: to think means to experience the world and not accounting for this experience means escaping into abstract and useless theory. To act meaningfully in the world is itself an act of thinking and reflection (Kelemen and Hamilton, 2018).

Since 2013, CA has been used in a broad range of research projects including community leadership (Kelemen *et al.*, 2017), volunteering, disaster recovery (Goulding *et al.*, 2017), marketplace exclusion (Burgess *et al.*, 2017), food poverty and health in the community (Kelemen *et al.*, 2018) both in the UK and overseas (Japan, Canada, Greece and the Philippines). CA is located within the broader field of creative methods and its main aim is to create safe spaces in which dialogue can take place and new relationships between diverse parties can be formed (Goulding *et al.*, 2017). Drama, music, poetry, art-making and other creative activities are the practical vehicles by which participants become involved in a process of collaborative learning and sharing. Within this process, a central role is played by the 'cultural animator', best described as a facilitator, who helps participants advance personal and collective views about past and present circumstances as well as imagine futures in which they could play a more central role (Kelemen and Hamilton, 2018).

In the collaborative activities participants focus on tasks which require little or no formal skills/training. They have the opportunity to discuss, dispute or share meanings for themselves rather than bow to the academic's privilege of abstracting accounts on their behalf (Kelemen *et al.*, 2017). By giving equal status to academic expertise, practical skills, common-sense intelligence and the relevance of day-to-day experiences, CA views knowing and doing as deeply interconnected. Although CA aims to dissolve boundaries (between theory and practice, between knowing and doing, between expertise and practical skill), it also acknowledges that boundaries are inescapable on numerous levels - between researcher and researched, between differing academic traditions and positions, between academics and practitioners and between people of different cultures and language. However, it is important to recognise them and work to break them down at least on a temporary basis through a collaborative process that encourages intimacy, honesty and recognition of power differentials (Spaniol 2005). One powerful way in which such distinctions can be transgressed is via the use of boundary objects. Star and Griesmer (1989) introduced the notion of 'boundary objects' as



objects that facilitate communication among diverse actors who hold different viewpoints and knowledge. Represented in CA by ordinary objects such as cups, mugs, plates, buttons, fabric, ribbons etc, these collaborative artifacts (Carlsen *et al.* 2014) help individuals taking part in CA workshops to express their ideas and emotions without necessarily resorting to specialist language. In so doing, they level the playing field ensuring that academic expertise, practice-based expertise and lived experience are valued equally.

CA shares some similarities with Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Indeed, inquiry arises out of, and its results feed back into, the practical activity concerned while its ethos is egalitarian and participative. However, unlike PAR, CA is more explicit about its knowledge co-production agenda and it employs primarily creative arts based techniques to enact it and affect change.

## Cultural Animation Workshop: Developing a Sustainable Food Vision for North Staffordshire

The one day workshop took place in 2016 and included over 50 participants comprising policy makers, charities, academics, NGO's, community groups and the public. The participants were recruited by the Food Network with help from New Vic Borderlines and the event was held at the New Vic Theatre. The morning session was facilitated by the first author and consisted of a number of invited community speakers from the UK and abroad who highlighted their involvement with food and the challenges and successes of various projects they had been involved in. The aim was to inspire and challenge participants to think carefully about the future of food in the local area.

The afternoon session consisted of a CA workshop, comprising three distinct activities facilitated by the fourth author and her team of theatre practitioners from New Vic Borderlines. Having heard about the experience of others, these activities were specifically developed to facilitate the creation of a food vision for the North Staffordshire area including Stoke-On-Trent. Participants were split into three groups and remained in these for each of the activities.

For the first activity, groups were asked to map the current local food environment using colourful buttons of different shapes and sizes and similar small items. One group described their food map as comprising distinct 'silos', groups that worked on food matters in isolation rather than collectively. Similarly, another group explained that the pink and red buttons in their picture were the 'experts' and the gold buttons were "STP's". The group explained that this stood for 'the same ten people', members of the community - the same core group, the ones who willingly and repeatedly undertook activities for the benefit of the wider community.

The subsequent group discussion suggested the existence of many problems, slow progress, missed opportunities and connections along with the desire to do something different. The participants discussed the opportunities that existed for change but also the frustrations experienced in progressing these.



Figure 1 – Cultural Animation activity, mapping the food environment with buttons

For the second CA activity, the groups were asked to use ordinary items (boundary objects) that the theatre practitioners had placed in the centre of the room to create a picture depicting the food future that they would like to see for the local area. Each member of the group selected an item and presented it to the remaining group members explaining what it represented to them. As an example, one individual selected an umbrella, explaining that it is important to have protection when you ‘don’t know what’s coming’; another selected a camera, which could be used to collect stories of the ways in which people worked together. Someone else selected a net, which they displayed fully stretched out across the wooden frames. They explained that ‘throwing out the net’ was a central part of their future vision, catching and helping those in need but also allowing connections and bonds to be made.

The final CA activity required participants to draw on the discussions and reflections from the first two activities to create a collective food vision. To encourage them to distil what had been wide ranging discussions into a clear message, each group was asked to develop and present a cinquain (a poem comprising five lines) and a haiku (a Japanese short poem of 17 syllables shared between three lines). The cinquain poems have a defined format: the first line contains one word (the title), the second line has two words that describe the title, the third line contains feelings associated with the title, the fourth line has four words which are actions required to make the title happen and the final line contains a single word which is an alternative word for the title. In a haiku, the first line contains five syllables, the second seven and the third five. The cinquains and haikus were then performed by the groups via human tableaux using objects from the selection in the room.

One of the groups produced the haiku below:

*Creating a noise*  
*Shine a light to show the way*  
*Dreaming together*

The group drew on the items and messages that formed part of their picture in the second activity to focus on a food vision. The beam of the torch was used to describe the way in which they wanted to focus attention on food matters and a mug which they chose to use as a drum, made the noise and created the rhythm for change that caught the attention of fellow citizens.

The Haiku of another of the groups was also a call to arms:

*Change the way we think*  
*Make things happen don't hold back*  
*Do it together!*

This rallying cry was an explicit message designed to go beyond 'the same ten people' and increase involvement. It is this collective responsibility, a broadening of participation that was seen as central in this particular food vision.

In producing their cinquians, participants were asked to reflect on the change that was needed to move towards their desired food future. The first group emphasised the theme of harmony that can only be achieved through fairness and sharing, as seen in the cinquain below.

*Enough*  
*Needs satisfied*  
*Rooted healthy fair*  
*Growing evolving including sharing*  
*Harmony*

The second group saw the possibility of the journey from poverty to wealth by transforming the individual story of poverty into a community story of connections, empowerment, education and support.

*Poverty*  
*Need vulnerable*  
*Hungry anxious lonely*  
*Connecting empowering educating supporting*  
*Wealth*

## Discussion: Food, Ethics and Community

We began this piece with assertions that individuals are experiencing ‘an age of anxiety’ (Jackson, 2010:147) when it comes to food consumption. Participants in our workshop certainly articulated some of these anxieties and concerns in their depictions of their current food worlds. They also outlined some of their frustrations in finding ways to address their anxieties. Some of these came from their own experiences as consumers but also from their attempts to address these issues collectively through involvement in communal food projects.

Our experience in working with the Food Network to produce a food vision for North Staffordshire highlights the potential of CA to contribute to the field of ethical food consumption. The CA techniques used in the workshops encouraged all participants to experiment with new ways of working together, promoting collaboration, collective learning and respect for difference and diversity in imagining a shared vision for food in their local area.

The CA methodology facilitated genuine engagement with the theme by stimulating a variety of contributions from the participants in both narrative and visual/experiential formats. The participants contributed as much or as little as they felt able to and in whichever format they felt comfortable with. This led to a sense of openness and fun in which the focus was on listening and sharing rather than judging.

By employing CA, deep beliefs as well as insights into what is possible were revealed. Reflections on what had been lost were then focused on the future and what could be changed. CA enabled research participants to articulate personal and communal ambitions with regards to the ethical consumption of food and create a common agenda for change in a collaborative bottom up fashion.

While, as far as we were aware, all participants were comfortable with the CA methodology, there are however limitations: as we argued earlier, not all boundaries can be dissolved and some participants may find it difficult to open up in front of strangers or to respond creatively to the tasks set by the facilitator. Academics may also find it difficult to accept the forms of knowledge co-created in this process as valid and rigorous. The immersion in such processes can be uplifting for some, while others may find it daunting and emotionally challenging.

Despite such limitations, we hope to have illustrated through the vignettes presented here, the potential of Cultural Animation to stimulate knowledge co-production practices that lead to self-reflection as well as to collaborative action in the field of ethical food consumption. Further studies could focus on how to harness the creativity of individuals who, for various reasons, are excluded from the market place by bringing their experiences to the fore in order to tackle deprivation and poverty in marginalised sections of society. CA techniques could also be applied to studies of food prosumption, consumer understanding of food labour processes and sustainable food production and supply chains by encouraging a bottom up understanding of the ethics surrounding such processes which is currently missing in the literature.

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## For Citation

Surman, E., Kelemen, M., Millward, H. and Moffat, S. (2018) An Food, Ethics and Community: Using Cultural Animation to Develop a Food Vision for North Staffordshire. *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 2(2):17-25.

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ISSN 2515-205X



# Ethical Food: Transitioning Towards Sustainable Meat Consumption?

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## Introduction

Contrary to its 'mythical' status, the ethical consumption market continues to show impressive growth (Newholm & Shaw, 2007; Newholm, Newholm & Shaw, 2015; Carrigan, 2017). For example, in contrast to the conventional food market which declined by 0.9% in 2015, ethical food markets grew by over 5% and are estimated to have a net value of just over £9 billion (Ethical Consumer, 2016). These consumption trends are further supported by the mainstreaming of ethical food products sold in supermarkets (Doherty & Tranchell, 2007; McEachern, 2015) and increasing availability of ethical retail outlets<sup>1</sup> such as Unicorn in Manchester and HiSBe in Brighton (McEachern & Warnaby, 2017). Despite these positive foundations and greater visibility of the ethical consumption movement, ethical food consumption remains challenging for consumers as it requires continuous information-seeking, deliberation and negotiation across a variety of food contexts. Thus, triggering what appears to be flexible and often unpredictable consumption behaviours (Carrigan & Atala, 2001; Schröder & McEachern, 2004; Szmigin, Carrigan & McEachern, 2009; Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2014; Newholm, Newholm & Shaw, 2015; Carrigan, 2017). When attempting to transition towards a sustainable, responsible and/or ethical lifestyle<sup>2</sup>, a particular consumption behaviour that continues to challenge consumers is the responsible consumption of meat. This consumption dilemma is especially highlighted by Schröder and McEachern (2004) and DEFRA (2008) who both draw attention to the increased concerns of consumers towards animal welfare, social justice and the environment but simultaneously acknowledge the reluctance of consumers to adapt their meat consumption to achieve a lower impact diet. Although this food purchasing context has received substantial academic attention over the last twenty years (see Frewer et al., 2005; McEachern et al., 2007; Miele & Lever, 2013; Graça, Oliveira & Calheiros, 2015), revisiting this topic is considered timely as research points to an increasing awareness of the associated environmental impact and animal welfare issues (Miele & Lever, 2013; Wexler, 2016) as well as a distinct shift in consumer attitudes towards reducing meat consumption (Lever & Evans, 2017). Consequently, this commentary aims to update previous knowledge and provide a more current overview of the underpinning ethical issues associated with the consumption of meat. In so doing, this article contributes to a more nuanced understanding of ethical consumer behaviour in this context, as well as shed light on the more flexible coping strategies adopted by consumers to reduce consumption behaviours that are perceived as being unsustainable.

## Ethical Issues Associated with the Consumption of Meat

Throughout the 20th century, the growth of environmental and animal rights activism led to animal welfare and the environment as being the two main dimensions when discussing sustainable and/or ethical food production (Miele & Lever, 2013; Grunert, Hieke & Wills, 2014). Although public concern about animal welfare began as early in the 1960's as a result of Harrison's (1964) seminal work titled 'Animal Machines', it was only after a series of food scares and prominent media campaigns around animal confinement (e.g. tethered sows, battery hens, veal crates etc.) in the 1980s and 1990s, that consumer concern reached a broader level of awareness, resulting in public calls for greater assurances around safety, animal welfare and quality. As seen in Table 1, the UK food industry duly responded with a variety of assurance schemes and quality labels to assist the consumer in making ethical choices (McEachern & Tregear, 2000; Ortega & Wolf, 2018).

**Table 1 Main UK Meat Assurance Schemes**

<b>LABELLING SCHEME</b>	<b>The Red Tractor</b>	<b>Freedom Food</b>	<b>Lion Quality Mark</b>	<b>The Soil Association</b>
<b>Standards Covered</b>	Food safety Animal welfare Envt. protection	Animal Welfare	Food safety Diet Traceability	Animal welfare Diet Envt. protection Food processing Packaging
<b>Certifying Body</b>	Assured Food Standards	RSPCA	British Egg Industry Council	The Soil Association
<b>Date Established</b>	2002	1994	1998	1946

However, aside from the RSPCA and the Soil Association (i.e. international organic certification), most schemes/labels largely emphasised the safety and traceability aspects (see Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000) rather than go beyond minimum standards relating to animal welfare criteria (McEachern & Tregear, 2000; McEachern et al., 2007). Moreover, minimal attempts to educate the consumer regarding underpinning animal welfare and environmental standards of these initiatives resulted in consumers making limited cognitive links between their consumption behaviour and the live animal (Schröder & McEachern, 2004). Since the 2000s however, only a minority of consumers saw animal welfare as a top priority when purchasing meat (Verbeke, 2009; Brook Lyndhurst, 2012). Similarly, despite much attention given to supermarket policies on farm animal welfare as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies (see McEachern, 1997; Maloni & Brown, 2006; Spence & Bourlakis, 2009), a focus on animal welfare is seen as risky by the industry<sup>3</sup> and thus, largely ignored in favour of reporting on wider concerns around environmental sustainability (Lever & Evans, 2017). With growing meat consumption in other parts of the world such as China, it is also argued that little priority and/or any consistency in animal welfare standards across International markets are put in place to help educate/inform consumers.

Despite the evidence being mixed with regards to whether consumer concerns around the environment and animal welfare are associated (Brook Lyndhurst, 2012), improved animal production is widely linked to improved sustainable development (De Backer & Hudders, 2014; Lever & Evans, 2017). Much of this literature relates to two key environmental issues associated with meat production – greenhouse gases and the use of water. Interestingly, throughout the meat consumption discourse, limited criticism and/or consumer-led campaigns centre on agriculture's use of water. This is surprising given that the agriculture and food sector are by far the largest consumer of water, extracting up to 70% of all global withdrawals (The World Bank, 2018). Although the added greenhouse gases of methane and nitrous oxide which are considered to be much stronger than carbon dioxide, Wexler (2016) compares the beef industry as recording a greenhouse gas impact of up to 129 kg CO<sub>2</sub>; the chicken industry as 6 kg CO<sub>2</sub>; and the soya-based meat substitute sector as much as 2 kg CO<sub>2</sub>. This reveals a greater environmental impact of the red meat sector compared to pork and chicken production. However, should the production of soya beans take place on deforested land in the Amazon, this would increase the greenhouse gas impact to 16.5 kg CO<sub>2</sub> (Wexler, 2016). This is problematic for the consumer to make an informed choice due to inadequate country-of-origin labelling legislation, thus emphasising the warranted importance of transparent and credible labelling surrounding the origin/provenance of food products. Nonetheless, in contrast to animal welfare communication policies, sustainability-led campaigns around the environmental impact of meat production have been plainly-spoken and avoided weakening the cognitive links between consumption of meat and the impact upon our climate. This has resulted in growing public concern and more importantly, greater engagement during purchase and therefore, become more visible and widespread since the beginning of the 21st century (Miele & Lever, 2013).

## Sustainable Consumption of Meat

The success of the environmental argument around food production and how it is inherently associated with the sustainability discourse is clear to see. While many continue to question the limits of consumers' willingness to pay, or adopt sustainable alternatives, especially when it comes to meat (see Ortega & Wolf, 2018), 7% and 5% of the UK population are now considered to be vegan and vegetarian respectively and 25% of consumers have reduced their meat consumption (Vegetarian Society, 2013). This statistic is offset against the consumption of meat as a symbolic value of celebration (e.g. the wedding feast) and ritual (e.g. the meat-based Christmas dinner) which proves difficult for many consumers to give up. Browne et al., (2017) also identifies cultural reluctances to give up meat and acknowledges the tensions between rising incomes (e.g. ability to afford meat) and increasing urbanisation (i.e. expanding disassociation with the rural landscape) as reasons why global meat consumption continues to form a key part of the diet and in some cases, increase consumption further. Another primary reason that prevents consumers from giving up meat is their attachment to meat consumption (Corrin & Papadapoulis, 2017) especially in terms of inter-generational practices being passed down as part of family traditions; and secondly, an unwillingness to give it up completely (Graça, Oliveira & Calheiros, 2015).

Arguably however, an increasing awareness of the sustainability issues from younger Western consumers has played

a significant part in persuading consumers to reduce their meat consumption (De Backer & Hudders, 2014). Supported by meat reduction campaigns such as 'Eating Better' by NGOs and celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall who calls for consumers to eat less meat and support farming systems that benefit the environment, health and animal welfare (see WWF, 2013). Other NGO campaigns such as Meat-free Mondays and Veganuary, led to over a third of consumers indicating a willingness to reduce their meat consumption (Vegetarian Society, 2013), resulting in the worldwide growth of 'flexitarianism' and 'reducetarianism' dietary trends. Flexitarianism describes a trend whereby the individual remains flexible but is conscious about food decisions, as well as ethical and environmental concerns (Ambler, 2017). While flexitarians mainly eat plant-based foods along with the occasional consumption of meat, eggs, and dairy, reducetarians instead, gradually reduce their consumption of animal products. This reductionism is also evidenced by Statista (2017) who conclude that 56% (i.e. 23% strongly agree; 33% agree) of consumers now feel that they do not need meat to have a good meal. Compared to the one-size fits all argument whereby meat eaters are condemned by vegetarians/vegans, the ethos of both reductionist trends away from meat consumption is underpinned by a pragmatic and flexible acceptance, that it is significantly better to make meaningful changes to our diet no matter how small. Interestingly, rather than respond with promises to implement improved animal welfare and environmental policies, the meat production industry in the US has retaliated by launching a website titled 'Meat Myth Crushers' (2018), whereby attempts to refute claims around health impacts and environmental impacts are made. Simultaneously, the Veganuary charity (Veganuary, 2018) is capitalising on the popularity of flexitarianism and reducetarianism trends, and encourages consumers to shun meat/meat products throughout the month of January. In January 2017, of the consumers who participated, 67% say they will remain vegan in the future and of those not staying vegan 95% say they will reduce or stop eating meat from cows and 92% say they will reduce or stop eating meat from chickens. Small steps to achieve the latter are promoted by ethical supermarkets such as Unicorn and HiSBe (see Note 1) who are also aligned to providing local produce, improved welfare and sustainable fish/meat provision. However, these advances could be much greater if supported by the main retailers also regarding their CSR strategies (Lever & Evans, 2017). Thus, potentially enabling producers, retailers and consumers to lay the foundation towards a more sustainable food system overall.

## Conclusion

This commentary aimed to contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of ethical consumer behaviour in the context of meat consumption, as well as shed light on the more flexible coping strategies (e.g. flexitarianism, reducetarianism) adopted by consumers to reduce consumption behaviours that are perceived as being unsustainable. While these strategies become more popular with younger, millennial consumers, another sustainable option becoming more prevalent across the globe is the practice of entomophagy (consuming insects as food). Further research around whether flexitarians and/or reducetarians are willing to consume alternative sources of protein to save the planet could be undertaken to assess the impact this could have on the sustainability of the meat industry.

## Notes

1 Ethical retail outlets such as Unicorn and HiSBe are alternative supermarkets to the dominant retail multiples such as Tesco and Asda (McEachern & Warnaby, 2017). They are described as 'alternative' due to their alternative organisational structures (e.g. often associated with co-operative business models as opposed to shareholder business models) and their ethical principles associated with sourcing food products fairly and sustainably; provision of fairtrade, organic, and/or welfare-friendly ethical food products; provide a duty of care towards their employees; and contribute towards the community.

2 Although often used interchangeably, this commentary uses the term 'sustainable' to describe a food production system that meets environmental, health, social and economic concerns sustainably (e.g. see Belz & Peattie, 2010). The term ethical consumption covers a wide range of concerns/behaviours from animal welfare, labour standards and human rights to questions of health and wellbeing and environmental and community sustainability. Responsible consumption refers to taking personal responsibility for the environmental costs and consequences of your consumption patterns and lifestyle. Being responsible or ethical, can help an individual to follow a more sustainable lifestyle.

3 Animal welfare promotion (especially in Western markets) is seen as risky by the global meat industry as it reminds consumers that they are consuming what was once a live animal. As named farmers and celebrity chef's help to promote certain welfare-friendly brands, the retail sector generally design shopping environments and meat marketing campaigns to remove any such associations.

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## For Citation

McEachern, M.G. (2018) Ethical Food: Transitioning Towards Sustainable Meat Consumption?. *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 2(2):26-33.

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ISSN 2515-205X

# From bean to cup and beyond: exploring ethical consumption and coffee shops

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## Abstract

The UK has developed a strong coffee shop culture, with a growing demand for coffee, increased consumption, and waste produced as a result. Discussions of ethical consumption of coffee have often focused on both the coffee supply chains and coffee consumption in general, rather than considering the coffee shop as the point where ethical choices can be made. This paper illuminates some of the complexities consumers face around ethical consumption in coffee shops. This is done by applying three lenses which help appreciate the choices consumers make: the business model of the coffee shops they choose (chains or independents); the ethical qualities of the actual coffee consumed; and the waste produced in the form of coffee cups and coffee grounds. The results demonstrate that consumers must navigate a plethora of unknowns when faced with each of these choices. These unknowns hinder ethical decision-making, suggesting that responsibility for addressing the various ethical issues facing the industry cannot be left to consumers alone. This indicates a need for joined up approaches to ethical consumption in the coffee industry, in which the various stakeholder groups focus on what can be done in the space of the coffee shop.

Key words: Coffee; Coffee shops; Consumption; Waste; Recycling; Reusing

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## Introduction

In the United Kingdom there were an estimated 22,000 coffee shops in 2016, roughly doubling over the previous decade (Allegra Strategies 2017). With around one in five people visiting coffee shops on a daily basis, they have become a staple feature of the modern retail consumptionscape. As a consequence of this growth, there has been an increased demand for the products served in these shops. Beyond coffee itself, these products include other hot and cold drinks, as well as a range of food options, in addition to the shop space itself. Such activity inevitably produces waste, from various types of packaging to used coffee grounds. This paper illuminates the variety of ethical choices that face consumers related to their choice of coffee shop, the coffee they drink, and the waste generated. In doing so, it seeks to question what constitutes ethical consumption in coffee shops, and how considerations of ethical consumption need to move beyond the issues of coffee traceability and origins, to broader issues of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

This contribution draws on analysis of interviews with coffee shop owners, which were conducted as part of a research project exploring how businesses and consumers in the coffee shop industry can engage in the circular

economy. These interviews are used to demonstrate how coffee shops have been negotiating some of the issues around ethical consumption. This is complemented by document analysis, and in particular the analysis of newspaper articles to assess the different perceptions around negotiating responsibility for ethical consumption choices. The paper suggests that to foster greater consideration of ethical choices by consumers related to coffee shop consumption, knowledge and awareness about coffee, its origins, the waste produced, and broader sustainability are necessary.

The paper is structured as follows. It begins with an overview of the trends in coffee and coffee shop consumption in the UK. This is followed by an overview of how coffee and coffee shops fit with discussions of ethical consumption. It then moves on to discuss different choices consumers make, including in terms of the coffee shops themselves, the use of disposable coffee cups, and coffee ground waste. These are used as three lenses to delineate some of the varied choices ethical consumers face.

## Growth of the coffee shop industry

Coffee shops have become a ubiquitous presence in towns and cities of the UK, with over 22,000 in 2016, and predictions this could rise to 32,000 by 2025 (Allegra Strategies 2017). This growth has largely been driven by changing consumer trends, the impact of the recession, and growth strategies of chain and independent coffee shops (Ferreira, 2017). The market is dominated by three large coffee shop chains (Costa Coffee, Starbucks and Caffé Nero), but there are a number of rapidly growing smaller chains, such as Coffee #1, and a growing presence of independent coffee shops (Allegra Strategies, 2017). Alongside the mainstream coffee shops, increasing competition is emerging from fast food outlets, such as McDonald's with its McCafé range, and casual dining outlets such as Pret-a-Manger, which place a heavy emphasis on their coffee offering.

The growing presence of the coffee shop on the UK high street has been coupled with rising coffee consumption more generally (ICO, 2018). The majority of this coffee is still consumed in the home rather than in coffee shops, but many of the ethical considerations about coffee shop consumption also apply to home consumption. A key shift in UK consumption patterns has been a rising demand for freshly ground coffee, coffee of higher quality, and greater traceability of the origins of coffee, which has fuelled the growth of the specialty coffee industry in particular (Ferreira, 2017). Consumers have a variety of purchasing options, with coffees that are related to a number of different standards and certification schemes which seek to indicate a more ethical approach to coffee growing, from the well-known Fairtrade coffee to an ever-growing range of direct trade schemes. However, with growing criticisms of existing schemes, and the growing number of certification standards on offer, this can lead to confusion for the consumer about how ethical their coffee really is (Bray and Neilson, 2017).

While the consumption of coffee is an important element of coffee shop operations, the growing number of coffee shops is also related to the production of growing amounts of waste. It is estimated that each year in the UK 2.5 billion disposable coffee cups are thrown away, and that 500,000 tonnes of coffee grounds are produced as waste (House of Commons, 2018; Bio-bean, 2016). Given the environmental impact of this waste, these are two further areas where coffee shop consumers have the potential to make ethical choices.

The growth of the coffee shop industry has naturally led to increased consumption of a range of products and energy, and there is not enough space in this paper to explore them all; instead, it focuses on three areas – coffee shop choices, disposable coffee cups and coffee ground waste – as lenses to consider how there are a range of consumption choices facing consumers, and how knowledge and understanding of issues related to them has the potential to be a key driver in fostering ethical consumption.

## The foundations of ethical consumption

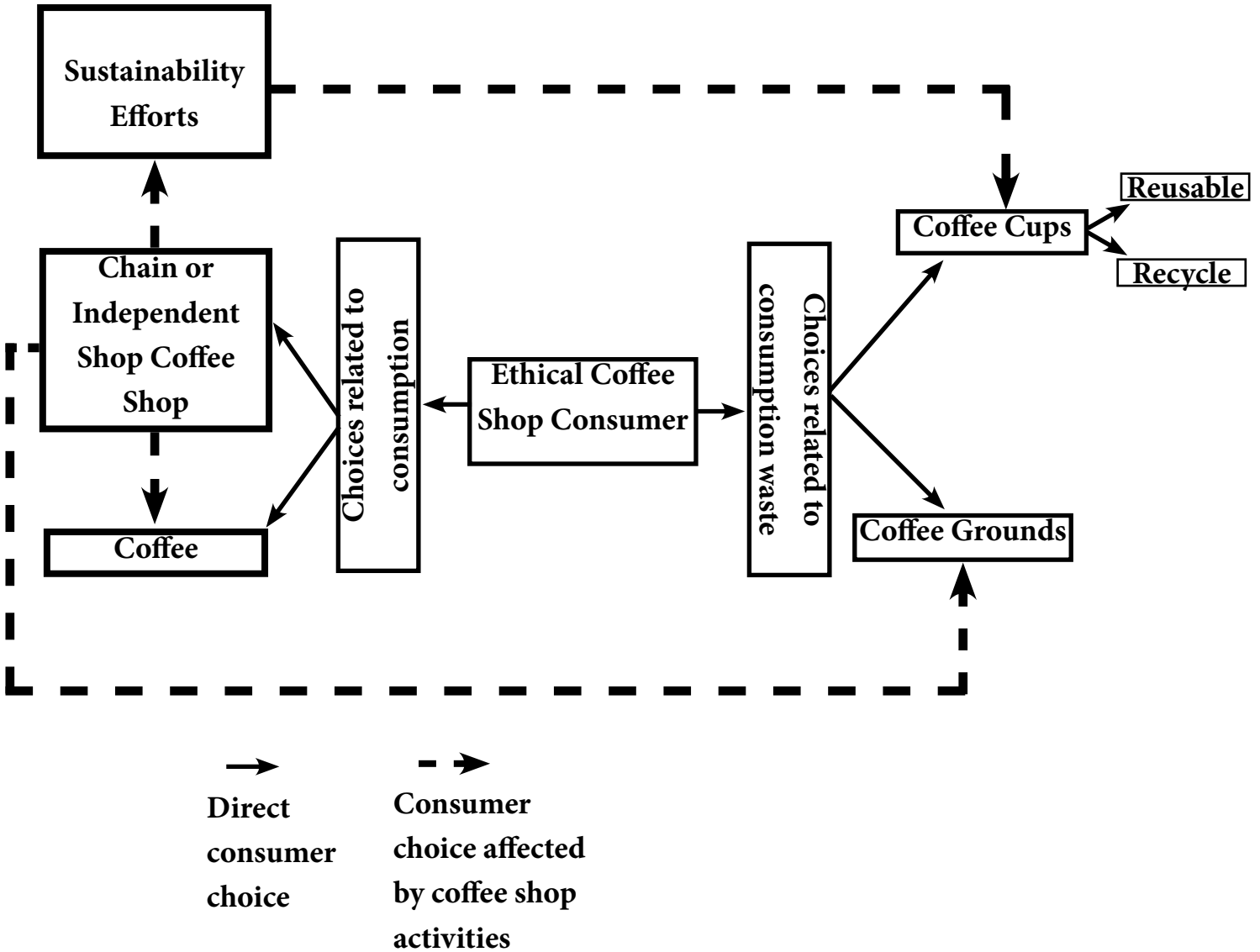
To consider ethical consumption in coffee shops, it's important to acknowledge broader notions of business ethics, particularly in retail. There has been extensive discussion over the definitions of ethical consumption (Lewis and Potter, 2011; Papaoikonomou et al. 2011), the politics of ethical consumerism (Barnett et al. 2011), the responsibility of consumers (Giesler and Veresui 2014), and the extent to which interventions in various forms can instigate new courses for action (Barnett, Clarke and Cloke, 2017). The notion of ethical consumption encompasses a wide range of practices, from the staunch anti-consumerist activist, which presents the reduction of consumption as the only ethical approach, to the accommodationist approach, where efforts are made to shift behaviours to include more sustainable and ethical practices (Lewis 2011). For some, ethical consumption includes the importance of practices related to sustainable consumption, while for others, ethical and sustainable consumption are different because sustainability objectives primarily seek to reduce resource intensity of production-consumption systems (Evans, Welch and Swaffield, 2017: 2). This paper assumes that elements of both are important for considering ethical consumption in coffee shops, in turn negotiating the economic, social and environmental impacts of coffee shop consumption.

In terms of the specific ethical issues affecting the coffee shop industry, much of the literature either focuses on Fairtrade coffee (De Pelsmacker et al. 2006, Lekakis 2013), or on boycotts based on the practices of coffee shops (Thompson and Arsel 2004). There is less discussion of the coffee shop consumer as a varied entity, who may seek to engage in ethical consumption practices in different ways. The concept of ethical consumerism has become mainstream (Barnett et al. 2011), with strategies such as Fairtrade relying on consumers as active agents, with the ability to 'make a difference' through their acts of consumption (Lewis 2011). As Lekakis (2015: 150) notes, "coffee politics have been increasingly interwoven not just with consumer culture, but also with the economics and development and the contentious politics of trade justice. The interplay between these traditions has resulted in the coffee commodity becoming a powerful object for ethical consumerism". Research has shown there is a diversity of coffee shop types targeting a range of consumer groups (Ferreira, 2017), indicating the existence of important consumption dynamics related to class, gender, geography and demography at play, which are likely to affect how ethical consumption choices are negotiated (Adams and Raisborough, 2010; Barnett et al 2005; Harrison, Newholm, and Shaw, 2005). Other factors which affect consumption dynamics include the urban location of many coffee shops and the targeting of middle class consumer groups in marketing messages. The coffee shop industry therefore provides a particular lens to explore a kaleidoscope of dimensions of ethical consumption.

The discussion above highlights that the coffee itself is just one element of how consumers can engage in ethical

consumption in coffee shops. The choices facing consumers around the choice of coffee shop, the coffee they drink itself, and actions taken around waste are summarised in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Coffee shop consumer choices**



Source: authors

In theory, consumers should be able to make ethical choices in terms of coffee consumption itself, as well as in terms of the waste produced. However, as noted in Figure 1, many of the choices in terms of the ethics of coffee consumption are constrained by choices made upstream, by coffee shops. Direct consumer choice is limited to what shop to patronise – specifically the choice between chains or independent coffee shops – and to limiting waste from single-use coffee cups and from coffee grounds. The paper will now consider the coffee consumption and the consumption waste issues in turn.



## Consumer action: ethical consumption in coffee shops

Beyond Fairtrade, or activism related to the coffee shop practices, there are many components which contribute to ethical consumption in coffee shops. Ethical Consumer devised a scorecard for ranking chain coffee shops on their ethical behaviour with scores given to a range of 23 features related to the environment, animals, people, politics and environmental sustainability (Ethical Consumer, 2015). Collectively this scorecard produces a score out of 20 with the highest score achieved by Soho Coffee Shops, Esquires Coffee Houses and AMT Coffee Shop with scores of 12, 10.5 and 9 respectively. The coffee shop market leaders had much lower scores, with Starbucks achieving one of the lowest scores, of 3 (Ethical Consumer 2015). The breadth of components included in this scorecard (from environmental reporting to workers' rights) highlights the range of potential components that help shape ethical consumption in coffee shops. While the informed ethical consumer may be aware of such ranking lists of coffee shops, the various components of this scorecard are not necessarily in the consciousness of the mainstream consumer, and so are unlikely to collectively impact on their daily decision-making processes; further research is necessary to understand the relative importance of such ethical consumption components.

## Choice of coffee shop: Chains vs independents

The UK coffee shop industry is dominated by coffee shop chains, with the top three (Costa Coffee, Starbucks and Caffé Nero) representing around 53% of the branded coffee shop market alone in 2017, despite the continuing growth of independent coffee shops (Allegra Strategies 2017). For some consumers, the choice between a large corporate chain coffee shop and an independent one is in itself considered an ethical choice, based on the decision to support local businesses, and in doing so becoming 'conscious consumers' (Adams and Raisborough, 2010; McEachern et al 2010), making choices between cost (a higher price) and potential economic and social impact (Lee, Kim and Rha, 2017). This is often related to perceptions that to patronise a local independent coffee shop would have a more positive impact on the local economy, encouraging an element of individuality to remain in the locale rather than contributing to the spread of branded chain stores and the development of 'clone towns' (Dobson, 2015; Hubbard, 2017). In addition, there is a growing awareness that large corporations do not always contribute to social good. For example, some of the coffee shop chains have received negative media attention for their tax avoidance; in 2012 this led to a series of consumer boycotts on Starbucks (BBC News 2012). There has also been active resistance against coffee shop chains expanding in some towns and cities: Costa Coffee in Totnes (Urquhart 2012) or Coffee #1 in Warwick (Warwick Courier 2016) are just two examples.

Most coffee chains seek to advertise their efforts in ethical activity and sustainability, with dedicated areas of their websites and throughout shops. This does not however mean that smaller independent businesses are not acting with these issues in mind. Interviews with independent coffee shop owners in the UK indicated that issues of sustainability and ethical consumption were often at the forefront of their business models. Independents often tried to differentiate themselves from the chains coffee shops by making visible effort to use local goods, reduce waste etc, but they did

not have the marketing resources of larger businesses to spend time advertising this to consumers. One area where independents felt they could really make consumers aware of their business ethos was on the coffee they served.

## Choice of coffee: Seeking ethical coffee

Like most areas of ethical consumption there are various perspectives about what makes coffee ethical, ranging from ensuring fair working conditions to workers, to a focus on the importance of sustainable farming practices. There are various ethical accreditation schemes and concepts seeking to certify the ethical credential of coffee, the most common of which are outlined in Table 1. Each has its own specificities about how it contributes to more 'ethically' produced coffee. Some focus more on the environmental impact, while others give more weight to issues such as workers' rights or living conditions. It has been argued that Fairtrade has become an integral part of ethical consumption (Lekakis 2015: 149), and while it is a common scheme, it is not without its critics (Doherty et al. 2013). Each of these schemes have their advantages and disadvantages (Neilson, 2008), but their very presence provides the consumer with even more ethical choices when frequenting a coffee shop, although more research is needed to understand if any of these labels are more effective in shaping consumer choices. In addition to the schemes outlined in Table 1, many coffee businesses have their own Fairly Traded Schemes. These are schemes which are not certified but often operate on similar principles, but are designed to remove the administrative and other challenges associated with the schemes outlined in Table 1.

With a plethora of schemes, certifications and independent arrangements for purchasing coffee, this can often lead to confusion for the consumer of what really is 'ethical' coffee, particularly given that the impact of coffee certification programmes on the livelihoods of farmers has been variable (Bray and Neilson, 2017). While Fairtrade is a widely known label, there has been significant criticism of its model. Furthermore, since it only operates with co-operatives it excludes all the independent small holder coffee producers, which dominate in the specialty coffee industry (Neilson, 2008; Sylla, 2014). For a consumer seeking to make a choice to consume more ethical coffee, there is now a multiplicity of labels to look for. In addition, while some coffee shops may explicitly advertise their efforts in this area, others, may not.

The choice of coffee shop and coffee consumed are just two areas of ethical consumption related to coffee shops; another focuses at the other end of the supply chain after the point of consumption to consider the waste producer, which this paper will now consider.

**Table 1: Selected coffee standards and certification programmes**

Programme	Features	Issues
<b>Fair Trade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To achieve certification producers are required to meet specific labour, environmental and production standards.</li> <li>Certified producers are guaranteed to receive a Fairtrade minimum price for coffee which aims to cover the costs of production.</li> <li>Additional Fairtrade Premiums received by producer organisations are used to invest in business or community improvements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns that the premiums were still not enough given the changing prices of coffee to cover production.</li> <li>Concerns that the premiums are not reaching the farmers.</li> <li>Only certain types of growers can qualify for certification (have to be a member of a cooperative).</li> <li>Quality of Fairtrade coffee is variable.</li> <li>The level of administration and record keeping is required is considered a burden and process is expensive.</li> </ul>
<b>Rainforest Alliance<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To achieve certification producers are required to meet specific environmental, social and economic criteria.</li> <li>Criteria are designed to protect biodiversity, deliver financial benefits to farmers and promote decent working conditions.</li> <li>Encourages sustainable farming methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doesn't offer a minimum or guaranteed price to producers so doesn't reduce precarity of farmers.</li> <li>Has been criticised for certifying products which contain low proportions of certified content.</li> </ul>
<b>UTZ</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To achieve certification producers are required to meet specific environmental agricultural practices to support productivity and sustainable production, as well as social requirements to improve lives of farmers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doesn't offer a minimum guaranteed price to producers so doesn't reduce precarity of farmers.</li> <li>Some criticisms that their standards for certification are too low.</li> </ul>
<b>Organic Certification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers undertake a number of practices to ensure crops are grown to organic standards which focus on health, ecology, fairness and care</li> <li>Certified organic coffees tend to achieve higher prices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental impact of organic farming has been questioned because of reduced yields which means they are more carbon intensive.</li> <li>There is debate around the nutritional benefits of organic food.</li> </ul>
<b>4C (Common Code for the Coffee)</b>	<p>Stakeholders involved in coffee industry can become members of 4C association which has a code of conduct for sustainability standards. Introduces baseline criteria for the sustainable production, processing and trading of green coffee and eliminates unacceptable practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses on improving farming practices providing a support network to training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core focus is on farming practices.</li> <li>Does not specify a premium for coffee.</li> <li>Membership fees.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> In 2018 Rainforest Alliance and UTZ certification program merged to combine expertise on conservation that drives responsible supply chains and expertise in bringing sustainable value chains to scale, with plans to publish a new certification programme in 2019 that will involve a new fee structure and labelling policy for certified products (Rainforest Alliance 2017).

Programme	Features	Issues
<b>Direct Trade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee roasters buy straight from coffee growers to removing middle organisations such as exporters, or certification scheme providers.</li> <li>• Designed to foster mutually beneficial relationships between roaster and producer where roaster can have more control over aspects that affect the quality of coffee, or other social and environmental aspects of the coffee growing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't require any certification of standards.</li> <li>• Relationships are built on trust.</li> <li>• While some relationships may provide some financial security if roaster guarantees a minimum price, but this is not a requirement. Each trading relationship between roaster and farmer will be different.</li> </ul>

## Choice of disposal: Reducing waste across the coffee drinking experience

It is estimated that in the UK 2.5 billion disposable coffee cups are thrown away each year (House of Commons, 2018). The polyethylene layer in many disposable coffee cups means they cannot be recycled in standard facilities, and as of 2017 there were only three facilities in the country that could process them. As a result, the majority of disposable coffee cups were still reaching landfill, despite consumers placing them in recycling bins (House of Commons, 2018). This issue entered into the mainstream media in 2016 when celebrity chef and food waste activist Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall turned his attention to coffee cup waste, challenging the big three coffee shop brands to address the issue. The initiative generated significant media coverage, and some changes did take place. These included coffee chains pledging to recycle any coffee cups left at their premises, as well as various separate coffee cup recycling schemes. One example, 'The Square Mile Challenge' led by the environmental charity Hubbub in partnership with the City of London Corporation, Network Rail and employers and coffee shops in the City of London, aimed to recycle five million disposable coffee cups in a year through a local network of recycling points in the streets, across businesses and workplaces (BBC News, 2017).

In 2017, the UK government, via the Environmental Audit Committee launched an inquiry into the use of disposable packaging (focusing on plastic bottles and disposable coffee cups) (Parliament 2017). The Committee report highlighted the scale of the issue, implications for the environment and economy, how there have been misconceptions around existing recycling practices, as well as making suggestions for action in three areas (House of Commons, 2018). First, around clearer consumer messaging on recyclability of cups to reduce consumer confusion. Second around producer responsibility for packaging disposal, with the recommendation that Government should introduce different fees associated with different types of cup depending on their recyclability. It was suggested increased revenue from some types of cups should be used towards more recycling facilities and the UK's 'binrastructure' for dealing with such waste. Related to this, it was suggested there should be a target for all disposable coffee cups to be recycled by 2023, and if this was not achieved to ban their use completely. The third area was around reducing consumption and recycling, encouraging the culture of the reusable coffee cup, and a recommendation to introduce a 25p tax on disposable cups, to

be paid by the consumer, with this money being used to fund recycling infrastructure and public awareness campaigns around reducing littering and recycling.

Reactions and responses to the report were mixed. There was a concern that the voices of independent coffee shops were not represented in this inquiry (United Baristas, 2018), with many responding online to the report that the introduction of such a tax would be damaging for their business, particularly smaller businesses which rely on a large takeaway customer base. Others argued they have been attempting to encourage increased use of reusable cups for years, but the interest from consumers has been minimal, and they were unsure if a tax would be enough to induce a behavioural shift. Many argued that they felt they should not have to introduce discounts for using a reusable cup, in part because it would damage their income, but also because it was felt consumers should be taking some responsibility for the waste they produce without needing a financial incentive.

Many coffee shops chains were already developing their activities around recycling of coffee cups and attempting to encourage greater use of reusable coffee cups at the time of the report's launch: Costa Coffee established a nationwide coffee cup recycling scheme, while Pret-a-Manger introduced a 50p discount for consumers with a reusable cup (Smithers, 2016; Pret, 2017). Since the publication of the report, many of the larger coffee shop chains have sought to be perceived as being active in tackling the packaging waste issue, looking beyond the coffee cups too, for example through schemes planned to install water refill points to try and reduce plastic water bottles (BBC News, 2018).

Consumers' responses to the report were mixed too. Analysis of comments responding to news articles on the so-called 'latte levy' from six mainstream newspapers indicated a number of viewpoints:

- People are spending too much money on coffee out of the home and should just make their own in the home/office.
- The responsibility (and therefore cost) should be with the coffee shops for choosing a cup that cannot be recycled, or with the manufacturers for producing such materials in the first place.
- Consumers should not be penalised with another tax.
- Happiness that reusable cup use might become more mainstream and more discounts might be in place.
- Confirmation of consumer confusion around recycling in the first place, highlighting how they were surprised that the cups they had been placing in recycling bins for years were not actually being recycled.
- It was the responsibility of local authorities to provide suitable recycling infrastructure so the cups would be recycled.

Much of the debate that has taken place in response to this report is about responsibility for this waste and whether this should lie with the consumer, coffee shops, or the manufacturers. In most cases, each stakeholder argues responsibility should be placed on another, or at least shared somewhat, and that government should have some role in ensuring this responsibility is addressed. Arguably the issue of coffee cup waste goes beyond coffee shops, with disposable cups being available in many circumstances, such as office meetings, conferences and others. Discussions around ethical and sustainable consumption of coffee need to address the different spaces where these goods are consumed, beyond the high street coffee shop, and into the places across everyday lives.

The issue around disposable coffee cups has become one of the most visible coffee shop waste issues, with much discussion in the media in 2017-2018, so it is likely to be one which consumers are most aware of. However, there are other ways in which consumers can consider waste produced in coffee shops – in particular how waste coffee grounds are used. It is estimated that the UK produces 500,000 tonnes of waste coffee grounds each year (Bio-bean, 2016). Many coffee shops offer free coffee grounds to consumers, which can be used for a number of purposes, most commonly in the garden. By doing this, they hope that the amount of waste which reaches landfill is reduced. However, interviews with coffee shop owners suggested that very often the coffee grounds were not taken.

On a smaller scale, there are various companies which have engaged in circular economy practices to develop innovative ways to use waste products. For example, Huskee Cup have created a range of cups that use the coffee husks in the creation of coffee cups (Huskee, 2017). In another case, a jewellery designer has created a collection of jewellery using coffee grounds (Rosalie McMillan, 2017). On a much larger scale, the company Bio-bean has pioneered the process of recycling waste coffee grounds into biofuels and biochemicals. Waste coffee grounds from coffee shops, offices, transport hubs and coffee factories are recycled into a number of products, from consumer-focused coffee logs (to be used in stoves), biomass pellets (for heating buildings), biodiesel and biochemicals (Bio-bean, 2017). Further research is needed to explore if concepts such as recycling of coffee grounds enters into the mind of consumers when making choices about which coffee shops they frequent, or more generally about coffee waste. As the scale of the waste collections from Bio-bean illustrates, ethical consumption of coffee reaches far beyond the coffee shop.

Investigating activities around disposable coffee cups and coffee grounds highlights the range of stakeholders which can have an impact on the sustainability of the coffee shop industry, from the coffee shops and consumers, to the cup manufacturers, waste management organisations and governments. Given the multi-stakeholder nature of these issues, it is likely that for changes in the industry to take place and be successful, effective partnerships and collaborations will be necessary. This has clearly been recognised by organisations across the coffee shop industry, many of whom have become involved in the Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group, a working group of organisations involved in the paper cup supply chain, established in 2014 to develop collection and recycling opportunities for paper cups, and to consider how to instigate more sustainable solutions (PCRRG, 2017). There is recognition from the industry that a joined-up approach to sustainability is needed from all stakeholders involved, and this extends to consumers too.

Questions remain around what actions are needed to make all stakeholders alter their behaviour to be more ethical. The final report of the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into disposable paper cups suggests that a tax on such items is not necessary because there is enough activity taking place across the industry. This is despite evidence that similar taxes implemented elsewhere can be successful, such as the 5p charge on plastic carrier bags which reduced their use by 85% within six months of its introduction in 2015 (BBC News, 2016). Whatever actions are taken to address sustainability in the coffee shop industry, the issue remains of who takes responsibility, where behaviour changes are required, and who should absorb costs. Negotiating responsibility for ethical consumption across the coffee shop supply chain is an issue which requires further research to assess how the most effective changes can be made.



## Conclusion

This paper suggests that ethical consumption in coffee shops necessitates the inclusion of issues around sustainability in the broadest sense, to consider not only the coffee consumed in coffee shops (and in other places too), but also issues around waste produced as a result of coffee shop consumption. It has highlighted three areas of potential for ethical consumption choices for coffee shop consumers, progressing beyond the more common discussions of Fairtrade and consumer boycotts. Consumers have the option of making ethical choices around the coffee shop they choose to frequent, the ethical nature of the coffee on offer, and then also around how some of the waste is treated in particular the disposable coffee cup and coffee grounds.

Through this discussion the paper sought to illuminate the variegated choices facing the consumer, as well as highlight how the responsibility for fostering such ethical behaviours does not always lie solely with the consumer. Efforts by businesses throughout the industry and policy makers are required to foster greater awareness of ethical consumption choices in the coffee shop industry – from incentives to use reusable cups, greater funding for awareness of sustainability issues, to consideration of the type of coffee served in a coffee shop. Given the scale of the coffee shop industry and its continued growth, consumer action has the potential to impact the way this industry operates, and the impact the industry has on society and the environment. More in-depth research is needed to consider consumer awareness of the various components of what constitutes ethical coffee shop consumption, how consumers navigate ethical choices in the coffee shop consumptionscape (and in food retail more generally), the extent to which it is possible for some of these choices to become part of mainstream consumer activity, and how different stakeholders in the industry negotiate responsibility for fostering ethical consumption choices.

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## Biographies

*Dr Jennifer Ferreira* is a researcher in the Centre for Business in Society, Coventry University. Taking an interdisciplinary approach her research interests focus around the global development of the coffee and coffee shop industries, as well as the economic, social and environmental impacts of these industries. Her current research projects investigate the coffee shop industry and the circular economy, and the transformation of coffee cultures around the world.

*Dr Carlos Ferreira* is a researcher at the Centre for Business in Society, Coventry University. His research focuses on how people, ideas, technology, data and power come together to produce the modern economy – or how they fail to do so. His current research analyses these issues in a number of specific contexts, including: sustainable and inclusive economic development; markets for biodiversity offsets; and digital business models.

## For Citation

Ferreira, J. & Ferreira, C. (2018) From bean to cup and beyond: exploring ethical consumption and coffee shops. *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 2(2):34-47.

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ISSN 2515-205X

## Why care about food?

### Review of Yana Manyukhina *Ethical Consumption: Practices and Identities, a Realist Approach*. Routledge Studies in Critical Realism. 2015, pp. 183 Hardback £84 eBook £17.50

*Review by Dan Welch<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Consumption Institution, University of Manchester, UK.

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I profoundly disagree with Yana Manyukhina's understanding of how the social world works. But I would recommend her monograph to fellow consumption scholars. Manyukhina is an advocate of critical realism, and the book, developed from her doctoral thesis, comes with a ringing endorsement—in the form of a Preface from Margaret Archer, one of the best known advocates of critical realism, and a former president of the International Sociological Association. My own ontological commitments lie in theories of practice. Critical realists assert the ontological (and analytical) separability of social structure and individual agency, while practice theorists assert that the dualism is a fundamental conceptual misnomer, to be overcome. But it would be churlish to criticise the book from the position of ontology. Clearly Archer's endorsement demonstrates that Manyukhina has accomplished parsing a critical realist approach into an account of ethical consumption. Having only passing acquaintance with critical realism myself this was illuminating, and challenging. Practice theory has come to represent the orthodoxy in some of the camps of consumption research and it is refreshing to see Manyukhina propose such a novel analytical viewpoint on consumption. It is a far harder job to swim against the tides of orthodoxy than with them. Addressing “an individual level analysis of the ethical consumer identity, with a focus on the personal emergent properties—reflexivity, self-awareness, intentionality” (p. 179-80), the book's concerns are about as far away as one can get from a practice theoretical account. That Manyukhina's contribution in elaborating a critical realist position on ethical consumption is probably unique says something rather troubling about intellectual fashions and theoretical silos in social science.

The book's subject is “what brings people to care about the ethics of eating” and how these concerns translate to action and “profoundly affect...self-image”. The research to fathom this question involved deep engagement with nine individuals “making their way towards ethical consumer identity” who were observed “in the privacy of their homes”, at social occasions and on shopping trips (p. 2-3). Where the book lays down a challenge to practice theory is in taking seriously the evaluative and reflexive stance that people have towards their own practices, the emotional force of the commitments that arise from such evaluations, and the intra-cultural variation that ensues. Practice theory has—until recently—offered limited analytical resources for the more contentious of its claims, such as the way in which practices shape desire and emotional engagement, aspects more commonly understood as the province of the individual psyche.

The book proceeds by exploring the key theoretical perspectives dominant in sociological consumption research (Chapter 1), and the relevance of critical realism for consumption studies, specifically focusing on Archer's account of identity and reflexivity (Chapter 2). It goes on to place ethical consumption in this context, drawing also on Coff's (2006) work on how people become sensitised to the ethics of food (Chapter 3). The rest of the book proceeds through the empirical study of self-identified ethical consumers. After offering methodological reflections and vignettes of the ethical consumers (Chapters 4 and 5 respectively), the book: analyses the participant's "narratives of their mental and emotional journeys towards ethical consumption" (Chapter 6); the challenges of attaining, and crucially, maintaining, "ethical consumer identity", explored through self-narration (Chapter 7); and finally an account of "social identity formation in ethical consumers", again drawing on Archer.

The book's claim is "to break through the limits of traditional perspectives on consumer behaviour", which, purportedly, oscillate between agency-focused accounts in which the consumer is sovereign, and "socio-centric" accounts of dominant social structure. It is true that what Manyukhina calls "socio-centric perspectives" are "clearly juxtaposed against explanations of consumer behaviour in terms of the individual actor" (p.31). However, Manyukhina's "socio-centric perspective" is to my mind too readily conflated with "an over-socialised subject" (p.177)—the individual as a social puppet dancing to the strings of habitus. What Manyukhina seems to miss here is her conflation of "consumer behaviour" with a more expansive notion of "consumption", and contemporary practice-based accounts, such as for example Alan Warde's (2016) *The Practice of Eating*, are very far from the "over-socialised" caricature.

Manyukhina invokes Gabriel and Lang (2006 p. 79) to the effect that identity has become the "Rome to which all discussions of modern Western consumption lead". There is a danger in Manyukhina's account, however, of taking this statement at face value. Rather, what much consumption scholarship that would fall into her "socio-centric" characterisation questions are the social and cultural conditions under which this statement can be taken as true. And thus it asks questions about consumption that do not proceed from identity. For Manyukhina, the critique of the active, reflexive consumer model is a denial of human agency, a denial that "the ethical consumer" may be "the author of his own projects in society" (Archer, 2003, p. 34)" (p. 177). I would argue however, that developed through literature such as Barnett et al's *Globalising Responsibility* (2010) (Endnote 1), it is, rather, a critique of a socially dominant, overly individualised and voluntaristic model of consumption that obscures institutional agency, as well as the constraining and orchestrating forces of culture, convention and habit. It is not necessarily one that elides individual agency or the lay normativity (in Andrew Sayer's terms), that Manyukhina is so intent to recover—the latter is a specific concern of Barnett et al. (2010), for example.

Ethical consumption presents a general problem for consumption research. Its committed advocates demonstrate behaviour—voluntaristic, deliberative, value-driven—which is both at odds with the character of much routine consumption behaviour (and arguably behaviour per se) and which does not tell us very much about the dominant, institutionalised contexts that condition much consumption. Manyukhina concludes by claiming that the ethical consumer she encounters in her research embodies the character of the individual that Archer's critical realism celebrates—"emotional, moral, value-laden...reflexive, evaluative and self-aware...an active and intentional agent" (p. 176-77). While conceding that the kind of consumption scholarship to which Manyukhina is opposed often has a



limited amount to say about such human capacities, there is a real danger of extrapolating from ethical consumption as a paradigmatic example. It does offer an interesting arena in which to explore the critical realist problematic of how the evaluative, normative individual navigates constraining and enabling social contexts. However, food consumption in the affluent world allows a voluntarism unusual amongst consumption domains—an important factor that should be foregrounded. Realisation of personal ethical commitment in other domains of consumption—electronic goods, for example—is far more constrained. Ethical consumption is the exception, not the rule, and so to derive a theory of consumption from it is profoundly problematic.

Manyukhina's monograph is suitable for a postgraduate or more advanced readership. She provides an admirably full account of the theoretical underpinnings of her work, necessary given how unusual the use of critical realism is in the field of consumption research. However, the book is perhaps closer to the doctoral thesis from which it was developed than is strictly necessary. For anyone keen to get onto the accounts of individuals' engagements with the ethics of food consumption there are 94 pages (of a 183 page text) to get through before we meet the ethical consumers.

It is challenging reading work coming from a diametrically opposed position to one's own. If you are going to commit time to doing so, you want that work to be worth your time. Reading Manyukhina's monograph has been time well spent.

## End Note

1 See Clive Barnett, Nick Clarke and Paul Cloke (2017) "Whatever happened to ethical consumption?". *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 1(1):5-11.

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## For Citation

Welch, D. (2018) Why care about food? - Review of Yana Manyukhina (2015) "Ethical Consumption: Practices and Identities, a Realist Approach". *Journal of Consumer Ethics*, 2(2):48-50.

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# News

## Conferences

### US

#### The Sustainable Foods Summit

The aim of the Sustainable Foods Summit is to explore new horizons for eco-labels and sustainability in the food industry by discussing key industry issues. How do organic, fairtrade and other eco-labeling schemes further sustainability? With growing proliferation in labels, what are the prospects for a single sustainability standard for food products? What are the practical application of sustainability metrics? What advances are occurring in sustainable ingredients? What developments are happening in formulation, production and marketing of sustainable food and beverages?

Organized by Ecovia Intelligence (formerly Organic Monitor)

Date: **16-17th January 2019**

Location: San Francisco, US

[www.sustainablefoodssummit.com/northamerica/about/](http://www.sustainablefoodssummit.com/northamerica/about/)

### Germany

#### Global Food Summit 2019

“Milk without cows, meat without cattle and greens without soil – the agriculture of the future won’t take place in sheds or on fields, but in urban nutrition laboratories in the heart of our cities. Sounds like science fiction, but is already reality.”

This conference will address issues surrounding the scientific advances in the realm of food production, particularly in relation to sustainability. How will our perception of food and nature change with the advent of increasingly high-tech and ‘urban’ forms of production? Curators: Prof. David Zilberman, University of California, Berkeley, Prof. Justus Wesseler, Wageningen University, Dr. Simon Reitmeier, Cluster Ernährung Bayern and Stephan Becker-Sonnenschein.

Date: **20 – 21 March 2019**

Location: Munich, Germany

[globalresearchalliance.org/e/global-food-summit-2019/](http://globalresearchalliance.org/e/global-food-summit-2019/)

### UK

#### The European Conference on Sustainability, Energy & the Environment 2019 – May 2019

Working with the University of Sussex and Birkbeck, University of London, this is an interdisciplinary conference. This will be the seventh consecutive year the conference has been running. The theme for 2019’s event is ‘independence and interdependence’.

There is a call for submissions around the topic. This can refer to such “concepts as autonomy and identity, rights and responsibilities, and power and control; and within a variety of contexts from politics and geopolitics to energy, sustainability and the environment; and from education, technology and logistics, to culture and language; from psychology and security, to considerations of equity and justice.”

Speakers to be announced.

Date: **9-10th July 2019**

[ecsee.iafor.org/](http://ecsee.iafor.org/)

## Publications

### Global

#### Journal of Global Marketing on Sustainable Consumption: A Global Perspective

A special issue of the Journal of Global Marketing will be published in 2020. It will focus on understanding sustainability and green aspects of contemporary consumption, and attempt to highlight the green behavior and sustainability related issues from different cultural perspectives. Different methods are welcomed, including but not limited to conceptual as well as empirical papers. The journal is inviting original papers, which are neither published, nor currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. The following are some of the suggested topics:

- Cross-cultural practices of sustainable consumption
- Global environmentally significant consumer behaviour
- Reduce, re-use and recycling habit of consumers globally
- Global consumers’ green values, green image and green trust

- Personality traits of consumers in choosing green products/services
- Cross-cultural psychological aspects in considering green products while shopping
- Ethical consumption behaviour
- Mindful consumptions

All papers submitted for publication will be double blind reviewed, following the review process guidelines of the Journal of Global Marketing.

Submission deadline: **1st December 2019**

[explore.tandfonline.com/cfp/bes/wglo-si-cfp-sustainable-consumption](https://www.tandfonline.com/cfp/bes/wglo-si-cfp-sustainable-consumption)

## UK

### Multisensory marketing tactics can lead to more ethical consumption

This paper, published by the Journal of Environmental Psychology, considered the unique way in which online shopping is marketed and how this affects consumers' decisions to buy more ethical goods. They write that a "key challenge is that the online shopping environment is characterised by limited cues compared to in-store experiences."

The authors found that the multisensory techniques (visual, auditory, and tactile stimulation) can lead to customers more positively evaluating an ethical brand, as well as a higher willingness to pay for it online. Even low-cost techniques can significantly influence customer choices to be more sensible by focusing on improving customer brand experience online.

This study is an early step towards a better understanding of the benefits of improving customer brand experience for e-tailing of ethical brands.

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296318302923](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296318302923)

## France

### Association between time perspective and organic food consumption in a large sample of adults

In many countries organic food consumption has increased during the past decades. This paper builds upon the literature which has examined consumers' motivations for choosing organic food, by studying and exploring the

psychological traits behind these motivations. The authors focus their study on what they term 'consideration of future consequences' (CFC), which represents the extent to which individuals consider future versus immediate consequences of their current behaviors.

Using a sample of 27,634 participants who completed the CFC questionnaire and an Organic-Food Frequency questionnaire, the authors compared psychological traits of non-organic food consumers to organic food consumers. Overall, the study found that participants with higher CFC were more likely to consume organic food. Further research would examine why some people have a higher CFC than others, and the extent to which CFC is a fixed psychological trait or is subject to change as a result of factors such as education, lifestyle and health.

Bénard, M., *et al.* (2018) Association between time perspective and organic food consumption in a large sample of adults. *Nutrition Journal*, 17(1): 1.

[nutritionj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12937-017-0311-0](https://nutritionj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12937-017-0311-0)

## Sweden

### Less meat, more legumes: prospects and challenges in the transition toward sustainable diets in Sweden

This paper tackles the potential concern that transitioning from a diet high in meat to a more plant-based diet could lead to deficiencies in nutritional intake. Through the exploration of a scenario in which meat consumption in Sweden is reduced by 50% and replaced by domestically grown grain legumes, the authors quantify and discuss the implications for nutritional intake on population level, consequences for agricultural production systems and environmental performance.

The paper finds that, at population level, the average daily intake of energy and most macro- and micro-nutrients would be maintained within the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations after the proposed transition. There would also be a considerable increase in dietary fiber and some increase in folate intake, which are currently below recommended levels. The transition would have a significant positive impact on the environment, both in terms of a reduction in climate impact and land use requirement. Multiple barriers to such as transition are raised, including low consumer awareness about the benefits of eating legumes, thus requiring joint efforts from

multiple actors.

Carlsson, G. and Carton, N. "Optimisation de la culture biologique de la lentille en Suède."

[www.cambridge.org/core/journals/renewable-agriculture-and-food-systems/article/less-meat-more-legumes-prospects-and-challenges-in-the-transition-toward-sustainable-diets-in-sweden/4B3B9B479B1B407B148D60860F77A088](http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/renewable-agriculture-and-food-systems/article/less-meat-more-legumes-prospects-and-challenges-in-the-transition-toward-sustainable-diets-in-sweden/4B3B9B479B1B407B148D60860F77A088)

## Sweden

### Coffee by women: the 'duty of ethical enjoyment'

Using the insights of political economy and psychoanalysis, this paper explores the contemporary trend of deploying feminist values for ethical branding. Through an examination of Coffee by Women, a campaign run by Swedish coffee brand Zoégas owned by the Nestlé Corporation, the authors show how 'a combination of development discourse, 'women's empowerment' and the opportunity to 'do good' is employed to sell coffee.'

The campaign, Coffee by Women, illustrates the threat of a future lack of coffee, which creates anxiety in the consumer, who then purchases Zoégas coffee with assurance that it will secure and educate new generations of coffee farmers, a significant percentage of which will be women. The consumer thus acts out of personal interest (securing quality coffee in the future), whilst also acting altruistically by 'empowering women' in the global South. The authors claim that the narrative of this campaign is built on a 'colonial fantasy of global sisterhood and shared interests that works to conceal the political conflicts connected to global trade and climate change.'

The paper argues that prior to the era of mass consumption, the structure of the social bond within communities was marked by a prohibition on individual enjoyment for the benefit of the common good. With the dawning of the age of mass consumption, this social bond was replaced by a duty to enjoy. In the current context of ethical capitalism, a phase that that has proliferated particularly after the 2008 financial crisis, the authors suggest that 'social bond is rather structured by a 'duty of ethical enjoyment', containing elements of both prohibition and pleasure.'

This paper puts forward an important critique of ethical consumption and the commodification of feminism, illustrating the way brands increasingly use the individual's

desire to empower themselves and others in order to increase profits. Ethical consumption is shown to frequently contain a contradiction: consumers shop ethically in order to try and right the abuses of an immoral system, but often unknowingly further entrench this system by putting money into the hands of multinational corporations who are at its heart.

Lauri, J. and Bäckström, H. (2018) Coffee by women: the 'duty of ethical enjoyment'. *Cultural Studies*. 1-22.

[www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09502386.2018.1510532](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09502386.2018.1510532)

## Romania

### Understanding consumer motivations for buying sustainable agricultural products at Romanian farmers markets

This paper seeks to examine the characteristics and motivations of consumers who choose to shop at farmers markets (piața) in Romania. Using primary data from 243 surveys carried out at 89 piața throughout throughout the country, the authors found that economic value, wealth, and educational level are important factors for consumers to choose sustainable products at the piața, with consumers generally being older, more educated and having higher wealth.

This research is important in regard to sustainable food consumption and production, as 'farmers markets are an important direct-to-consumer market that enables non-farmers to purchase locally, and often sustainably, grown produce and products.' The farmers market is a vital nexus where consumers learn, through direct contact with producers, about the food they are consuming and the means by which it was produced, and often are able to purchase it at reduced cost. Farmers also gain through cutting out wholesalers and building a relationship, and thus loyalty, with customers. The findings of this paper will help policy makers and suppliers develop and maintain sustainable agricultural production through the support and expansion of farmers markets.

Polimeni, J. M., Iorgulescu, R. I. and Mihnea, A. (2018) Understanding consumer motivations for buying sustainable agricultural products at Romanian farmers markets. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 184: 586-597.

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652618305730](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652618305730)

## Hong Kong

### Study recommends policies to encourage low-income households to recycle more

A study published in the *Journal of Environmental Management* found that higher-income residents on housing estates in Hong Kong were more likely to recycle than those on lower incomes. The authors explored the reasons for this. The study looked the volume of recyclables collected at 158 housing estates with an average population of 12,285. It showed that those living in public housing estates were less likely to recycle than those in private ones.

It was found that a major contributing factor was the recycling facilities available at the different housing estates. The paper states that there is a “strong correlation between recycling quantity and the type of property management agent. Private companies have an incentive to organize a variety of participatory activities within their remit, such as waste separation and recycling, because their performance as perceived by residents and their representatives is often linked to outstanding management outcomes, which might include a recycling award from a trusted institution, e.g. EPD or ECF. Public agencies have lower motivation to act. More efforts are therefore needed to promote waste recycling in public rental housing estates, particularly those currently managed by a public agency.”

They explored another possibility of higher-income residents’ tendency to recycle more. Higher income households have more disposable income to consume more material goods. This therefore generates larger amounts of waste and recyclable household goods.

The authors made policy recommendations based on the findings. This included “introducing demographically differentiated waste recovery policies [...] such as distributing more site-specific recycling bins in economically disadvantaged residential communities, and reversing the ECF’s funding rule that precludes public rental housing estates from submitting a funding application. Additional concessions towards management fees for these estates, particularly those managed by a public agency, might also be considered. This could create more economic incentives for residents and estate management to engage in waste recycling and separation.”

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301479718302524](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301479718302524)

## Books

### The Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics

The *Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, edited by Anne Barnhill, Tyler Doggett, and Mark Budolfson, incorporates work from philosophy but also anthropology, economics, the environmental sciences and other natural sciences, geography, law, and sociology. In the last several years, there has been a notable increase in philosophical work on these issues - work that draws on multiple literatures within practical ethics, normative ethics and political philosophy. This handbook provides a sample of that philosophical work across multiple areas of food ethics: conventional agriculture and alternatives to it; animals; consumption; food justice; food politics; food workers; and, food and identity.

Part Three is of particular interest for those engaged in the debates surrounding consumption. It features the following contributions:

10. Tristram McPherson-The Ethical Basis for Veganism
11. Bob Fischer-Arguments for Consuming Animal Products
12. Julia Nefsky-Consumer Choice and Collective Impact
13. Andrew Chignell-Religion, Fasting, Efficacy, Hope
14. Erich and Jaclyn Hatala Matthes-The Clean Plate Club? Food Waste and Individual Responsibility

Barnhill, A., Doggett, T. and Budolfson, M. (eds.) (2018) *The Oxford handbook of food ethics*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

### Farming Food and Nature: Respecting Animals, People and the Environment

A recently published book presents the case for urgent action to combat the damaging impacts of livestock production and to fix our broken food systems.

It includes reflections and commentary from some of the leading academics and actors in the field, such as: food activist Raj Patel; author Carl Safina; leader of the Sustainability Science Center Katherine Richardson; famous primatologist Dr Jane Goodall, PhD, DBE, UN Messenger of Peace; environmentalist Jonathon Porritt; sustainability policy expert Karl Falkenberg; and bee expert, Dave Goulson.

It also includes insights from the ‘Extinction & Livestock Conference’ – the world’s first ever international event



to examine this issue which took place at London's QEII Centre in October 2017 – as well as new contributions on plant-based & clean meat innovation, insects as food and feed, and the growing environmental and welfare impacts of fish farming.

The book was published at the start of November by Earthscan and is available for purchase online for £30.

D'Silva, J. and McKenna, C. (eds.) (2018) *Farming, Food and Nature*. Earthscan:

[www.routledge.com/Farming-Food-and-Nature-Respecting-Animals-People-and-the-Environment/DSilva-McKenna/p/book/9781138541443](http://www.routledge.com/Farming-Food-and-Nature-Respecting-Animals-People-and-the-Environment/DSilva-McKenna/p/book/9781138541443)