# The politics of the UK food sovereignty movement

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the political nature of UK Food Sovereignty Movement (UKFSM), focusing predominantly on its expression in England. In doing so this research informs an understanding of what the food sovereignty movement *is* in the context of the UK, and how it theorises and takes action to realise social change. I discuss how food sovereignty has been adapted to the UK and situate this expression of activism among a historical legacy of UK environmental activism. This research draws on my experience as a scholar-activist and takes inspiration from critical ethnography and participatory action research (PAR) methods in conducting fieldwork, in-depth interviews and participant observation with grassroots organisations and the Land Workers Alliance (LWA).

I discuss the relationship between the movement's theory and agroecological practice through a cultural lens, arguing that the movement's culture produces 'logics of action' that inform its practice, and simultaneously influence its culture. I explore the meaning associated with these practices to reveal opportunities and tensions that emerge in processes of cultural formation, while raising critical questions about the nature of the movement's politics. I ask how pervasive collective identities are and how necessary collective association is to generate collective action for food sovereignty. In doing so I discuss the radical potential of the movement's politics within the UK and the role of political consciousness raising in the formation of collective identity. I draw on critical pedagogy and Paulo Freire's 'praxis theory' in exploring the transformative potential of the movement, to argue that there is a role for political education in raising collective consciousness and strengthening collective identity. This research contributes to debates in social movement literature on the relationship between movement culture and approaches to social transformation, whilst offering a unique insight into the culture and political practices of the UKFSM.

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# Abbreviations

UKFSM – UK Food Sovereignty Movement

FSM – Food Sovereignty Movement

FS – Food Sovereignty

LWA – Landworkers' Alliance

LVC - La Via Campesina

Kindling – The Kindling Trust

OL - OrganicLea

MST – Landless Workers Movement Brazil

FSIN – Farmstart Incubator Network

VBP – Veg Box People

AFN – Alternative Food Network

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Food sovereignty is a term unfamiliar to many outside the alternative food movement or environmental activist scene, and even within them interpretation can be broad. As noted by Brent et al (2015, p.433) food sovereignty has grown from a banner cry shouted by peasant farmers in the Global South against the imposition of neoliberal trade policies, to a 'political project, social movement, and alternative theoretical framework' that has found global resonance. As a result, understanding food sovereignty is not as simple as giving a standard definition or summary of the concept, for food sovereignty is multivalent, underdetermined, and largely shaped by its contextual expression. It is the contention of this thesis that to understand the nature of food sovereignty as a political concept and practice it must be situated within the context it is applied. I consequently offer an analysis of food sovereignty in the UK, speaking to how it has been interpreted and applied to existing expressions of environmental and social activism. In doing so I discuss the politics of the UK food sovereignty movement and point to the tensions and opportunities that exist in realising a vision for food sovereignty in this context. Before this, it is first necessary to explain what food sovereignty is and how it emerged.

## 1.1 Food Sovereignty as a concept and social movement:

In 1996 the second international meeting of La Via Campesina brought together farmers, land workers, peasants, and foresters to discuss food sovereignty as a concept for the first time (see Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe, 2010). La Via Campesina, or LVC as it is more commonly known, stands as the international representation for the global movement for food sovereignty, representing over 200 million peasants, farmers and landworkers worldwide (Via Campesina, 2021). The formation of this movement was spurred by a collectively recognised need to challenge the existing industrial agricultural system. The LVC is critical of the agricultural practices which are degrading resources and depleting soil nutrients, simultaneously dispossessing farmers of autonomy and leaving many (often low-income consumers) unable to access healthy and nutritious food (see Patel, 2009; Alkon and Guthman, 2017; Clapp, 2020)

These criticisms of the failures of the dominant agro-industrial food system were coupled with dissatisfaction with food security discourse, promoted internationally as the solution to feeding a growing global population. The food security framework emphasises increased production and measurable supply and demand as well as technological and managerial 'fixes' (Jarosz, 2014). For food sovereignty activists this discourse does not sufficiently consider social control of the

food system (Patel, 2009), nor does it unpack power relations that determine who has access to and control of agriculture or how this food is being produced. This criticism was also influenced by the broader anti-globalisation critique in the early 2000s (see Jarosz, 2014) which was set in motion by the 1995 Zapista uprising in Mexico and the collapse of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meetings.

It is within this context that food sovereignty emerged, positioning itself in contrast to the ills, injustice and inadequacies of the prevailing industrial food system and the mainstream rhetoric of food security (Patel, 2009). Though an emergent concept, food sovereignty can be understood as rooted in the 'rights of nations and people to control their own food system' (Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe, 2010, p.2). The Nyeleni Declaration of 2007, which brought together the global movement for food sovereignty captures this sentiment by defining it as:

> The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations (Via Campesina, 2007).

This broad definition has inspired and continues to guide collective action for food sovereignty across the globe. It is similarly coupled with the shared principles of agroecology, framed as a transformative practice that can be strategically aligned with food sovereignty to counterpose the corporate food regime (Holt-Giménez and Altieri, 2013). The 2015 Nyeleni Declaration for Agroecology (Anderson, Maughan and Pimbert, 2018, p.15) stipulates that 'it [agroecology] is the answer to how to transform and repair our material reality in a food system and rural world that has been devastated by industrial production'. Thus, agroecology is endorsed and practised by the movement as a means for achieving food sovereignty. Agroecology is a broad concept, understood as a 'scientific enquiry, an agricultural practice and social movement' (Wezel *et al.*, 2009, p.505). However, for the purpose of this research I speak more specifically of agroecology as a principle and practice, employed in the pursuit of food sovereignty. These practices seek to 'improve agricultural systems by harnessing natural processes, creating beneficial biological interactions and synergies amongst the components of agroecosystems' (Gliessman, 1990 in Wezel et al, 2016, p.40). Examples include organic farming methods, biodynamic farming systems, indigenous farming practices, permaculture and other agricultural systems that are 'grounded in ecological thinking' (Gliessman, 2018, p.599).

While the concept and principles of food sovereignty and agroecology provide a unifying framework for collective action, the breadth of this frame leaves it open to interpretation - particularly in how the principles of food sovereignty are applied. The malleability of this framework has arguably contributed to its success in that it lends itself to diverse contexts, and is embraced by those that share its values beyond the Global South where it originated (Fairbairn, 2012) However, given the diversity of contexts in which food sovereignty is invoked, the principles defined at Nyeleni do not lend themselves to being clearly operationalised (Jones, Fink Shapiro and Wilson, 2015). In other words, the 'how' of food sovereignty is not homogeneous, but open to interpretation within the contexts that it resonates.

Thus, to understand how food sovereignty is interpreted and applied as a concept, and similarly associated with as a social movement, it is necessary to draw attention to how it is practised. In doing so I speak to the ontological position of interpretivism, which suggests we can understand the meanings associated with food sovereignty through analysis of action or practice. In this sense, I build on the position of Raj Patel (2009, p.663) who argues that while food sovereignty might be broad, 'it is the sort of thing one knows when one sees [it]'. Thus, this thesis brings attention to the expression and practice of food sovereignty in the context of the UK, which remains largely unexplored within the academy. I argue that by drawing attention to how food sovereignty is interpreted and applied in the UK, we gain a greater understanding of the meaning of food sovereignty and its possibilities for social transformation within this context.

## 1.2 The UK Food Sovereignty Movement:

Within the context of the UK, food sovereignty is not a term commonly used to describe or frame collective responses to the inadequacies of the dominant food system. Instead discussion, at least within the academy, has largely centred on achieving food sustainability through, consumer engagement in sustainable and ethical consumption practices (Seyfang, 2004; Burningham and Venn, 2020; Foden et al, 2022) or addressing questions of food poverty through a justice framework (see Food Ethics Council, 2010; Anderson *et al.*, 2016; Anderson and Ujuaje, 2018). As a result, there has been little scholarly analysis of grassroots and national collective action, from a social movement perspective and within the frame of food sovereignty. Even work on the radical potentials of agroecology in the UK is not discussed within the transnational movement framing of food sovereignty, and often treated as singular expressions of alternative practice among grassroots organisations (see Anderson *et al.*, 2019; Tornaghi, 2019; Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2019). This lack of discussion around food sovereignty as a framework and social movement means there is almost no academic understanding of the nature of the movement

and its politics in this context. Consequently, questions of how alternative food producers understand their own activism, whether there is a collective identity of food sovereignty in the UK or if we can usefully speak of a UK food sovereignty movement, are as yet unanswered.

It is the purpose of this research to offer an explanation to these questions and provide a window for understanding the nature of the UK food sovereignty movement (UKFSM). The following Chapters will demonstrate the richness of the movement's practice, which revolves around alternative local production through agroecological methods, as well as strategic organising at a national and local level for social transformation (see Chapter 5). I will discuss the formal and informal networks that connect grassroots organisations of the movement with the Landworkers Alliance as the national representative of food sovereignty in the UK, aside from the Scottish Crofting Federation in Scotland. For the purposes of this research, 'UKFSM' refers to grassroots organisations that are held under the umbrella of the Landworkers Alliance, as well as the LWA itself. I draw on three grassroots cases in Manchester, London, and Cornwall as well as interviews with strategists within the LWA. Whilst this research concentrates on grassroots organisations in England, I apply the term UKFSM, borrowing from the language of the LWA which frames the movement as representative of nations across the United Kingdom (LWA, 2022a). The conclusions of this thesis pertain primarily to England at the grassroots - however, there are implications for the UK as a whole in discussing the opportunities and tensions of the movement's collective approach for realising social transformation for food sovereignty.

## 1.3 Research focus: The movement's politics and practice

In considering the application and emergence of food sovereignty to the context of the UK, food sovereignty meets other expressions of environmental activism to produce a specific form of food sovereignty, influenced by activist traditions and repertoires of action that are embedded in activist culture. I draw attention to the influence of these histories and activist traditions in shaping UK activist culture and the form of food sovereignty in the UK. Similarly, the contextual constraints and opportunities of the UK influence what activists and strategists deem possible in realising a vision for food sovereignty. Context is essential in shaping the nature and practice of food sovereignty. Thus, this research draws attention to the process of adaptation and translation of food sovereignty to this context, which I argue is part of a process of meaning-making. In other words, how the UK movement makes sense of itself, understands its activism, and pursues practices to realise food sovereignty is a sense-making process that is part of the movement's cultural formation.

This research also highlights the cultural processes of the UKFSM as a means of understanding its politics, focusing on the internal dynamics of the movement. Fundamentally I argue that the movement's culture influences its practices and action, borrowing from Swidler (1986) in arguing that an assemblage of cultural 'tools' inform a movement's action. Understanding the nature of the movement's culture and its relationship with movement action is necessary in considering its politics. In discussing culture, I borrow from (Flesher- Fominaya, 2014, p.186) taking a wide lens and analysing how culture is 'produced, performed and reproduced' in everyday actions. I speak to elements of culture often associated with social movements, such as collective identities, consciousness, and ideologies of social change, whilst accounting for more implicit elements such as collective values, beliefs and symbols. Through this discussion I argue we are better able to understand the meaning associated with them and their relationship with collective action. In other words, this research draws attention to the meanings attached to what people do, and how those meanings influence the transformative potential of their collective action. What ideas inspire and inform action, and which values drive them? Similarly what values and ideas do these practices produce, given that culture is an emergent process, made of 'webs of meaning' (Geertz, 1973, p.5) that are continually being spun?

Consequently, I offer an analysis of the UKFSM's practices while pointing to the 'logics of action' (Chapter 6) that inform them. These 'logics' include the implicit and explicit elements of culture discussed above, which intersect and diverge in their impact on the movement's practice. Similarly, these 'logics of action' influence what the movement deems to be legitimate in realising food sovereignty. By drawing attention to the movement's logics of action and its practices, I explore the transformative potential of the UKFSM, highlighting areas of tension that emerge. In doing so I raise questions that concern the nature of the movement's practice, which is orientated around agroecological production, asking if it needs to be explicitly understood by its practitioners as a political practice. I discuss divisions of labour in the practices of the movement and ask how necessary a shared collective identity is for fostering collective action. This builds on the premise that association with the movement and a shared identity influences the degree to which members of a movement participate in collective action. I take this analysis of the movement's practice further in Chapters 7 and 8 to discuss the potential of the movement's political culture in creating a transformative politics of food sovereignty.

Throughout my work, I borrow from the framework of John Holloway (2010) discussing the practice and approach of the UKFSM as attempts to 'crack' the dominant system of capital and industrial agriculture. Through its alternative practices and attempts to construct a material 'other', I argue that the UKFSM produces 'cracks' or avenues from which an alternative food

system could be born. However, I speak to Holloway's calls to understand the contradictions that can be reproduced within these cracks, exploring their potential for realising social transformation. I similarly discuss the transformative potential of the movement's practice and politics, drawing on Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of 'praxis' (see Chapters 7 and 8) and exploring the relationship between reflection and action within the movement. I argue that 'praxis' as a concept and approach is useful in discussing the 'radical' potentials of the movement's politics, particularly in generating a political consciousness necessary for a transformed food system.

### *1.3.1 Methodological Approach:*

The methodological approach of this research evolved through my unique positionality in the movement's grassroots, which began in Manchester. As an activist and former employee of the Kindling Trust, a case central in this research, the field was familiar, and I was able to gain access to key actors and organisations through connections I established within the movement. This position, combined with my activist sensibility to support the movement through this research, led me to an approach that takes inspiration from critical ethnography (Hart, 2004) and participatory action research (PAR) methodologies (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010). In this way, I was able to conduct research through deep immersion in the movement, volunteering, working and carrying out evaluative research of grassroots projects. This approach not only enabled me to support the movement through my labour and research praxis, grounded in critical reflection but also lent itself to the study of movement culture. Taking this approach, I conducted 27 interviews across three grassroots cases: the Kindling Trust, OrganicLea and Tamar Grow Local as well as with representatives of the Landworkers Alliance (LWA). These interviews along with my participation in movement activities informed the empirical data of this research project. I discuss these methods and the cases studied in greater detail in Chapter 4.

The ethnographic methods employed in this research, lend themselves to the study of culture and meaning associated with the movement and its practices. As Brewer (2000) notes, the purpose of ethnography is in capturing the social meaning of activity within a given field, speaking to interpretivist epistemology that derives meaning from action (Schwandt, 1994). I take the movement's practice as the starting point of social analysis to unpack the meaning that informs this action. In doing so I also speak to social practice theory in suggesting that the social world can be understood through observation and the rich description of its practices (see Wenger, 1998 and Chapter 3). Consequently, the approach of this research has been to study culture and meaning through an analysis of the movement's practices.

At this point I wish to highlight that the research focus of this project was not predetermined but emerged and evolved through my position in the movement and ethnographic approach. In fact, I began this project interested in how land is politicised or the extent to which this issue was being considered in debates about food sovereignty in the UK. However, it became clear through my immersion in the movement that this was not a theme readily discussed, nor was it one that emerged from my experience participating and interviewing members of the UKFSM. In leading with the field, the focus of this thesis followed it; consequently, it pays greater attention to the politics inherent in the movement's culture. As is common with an ethnographic method, the themes discussed in this thesis emerged over time. Given this, I did not begin this research with specific research questions. Instead, I was guided by a broad interest in the politics of the movement and how the particulars of the everyday at the grassroots are linked to wider processes of social change. With this in mind, I offer the research questions below to illustrate the themes which emerged through this research project, ultimately informing the conclusions of this thesis.

### *1.3.2 Research questions:*

1. What does food sovereignty mean in the UK and how is it practised?

2. How is food sovereignty as a concept and social movement adapted and applied to the context of the UK?

3. Why is it important that we recognise food sovereignty as a social movement in the UK?

4. What is the potential for realising social transformation for food sovereignty in this context?

## 1.4 Thesis structure:

Before getting into the main body of this research I offer a summary of each chapter, highlighting its central focus and the questions that emerge from discussion within each.

**Chapter 2: Grounding Food Sovereignty in the UK**

I build on themes introduced in Chapter 1 to discuss the nature of food sovereignty in the UK more specifically. I discuss how food sovereignty has been translated from La Via Campesina to the UK to create a unique expression of food sovereignty that builds on traditions of

environmental and radical activism. In doing so I explain how food sovereignty emerged in the context of the UK and draw on empirical data from the field. I also introduce the UKFSM as a social movement, drawing on the conceptual framework of Della Porta and Diani (2006) as a guide to explain the shape and form of the UKFSM. In doing so I emphasise how the UKFSM can be understood as a social movement - despite not fitting within a neat definition of one.

**Chapter 3: Literature Review: Food Sovereignty a movement for social and political change**

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework used in studying the politics of the UKFSM. I reference literature on culture and social movements and introduce social practice theory as a lens for analysing the nature of the movement's practice. In doing so I explain what can be gleaned from an analysis of the movement's culture, reviewing literature which discusses the nature of the movement's politics as prefigurative and interstitial. I introduce the theories of Paulo Freire regarding 'praxis' and 'consciousness' (1970) and their relationship with meaning-making and collective action. I set out the theoretical basis for the empirical discussion that follows in later Chapters (7 and 8), considering the nature of the movement's practice and approach to social transformation.

**Chapter 4: 'Just throw your Dictaphone in with the spring greens': Reflections on scholar-activism and methods in the field.**

I outline my methodological approach to this project, which draws inspiration from critical ethnography and participatory action research methodologies. I discuss how culture can be studied before pointing to the suitability of an interpretive approach and the methods used within this project. I expand on the cases chosen for this research project and explain their suitability. I also reflect on the difficulties of my positionality as a scholar-activist and an 'insider' within the movement, and how I attempted to address these challenges. This chapter also addresses the challenges presented by Covid-19 for this project and for the UKFSM more widely.

**Chapter 5: Food Sovereignty is a Verb: A practice-based movement**.

This chapter is the first of three that draws on ethnographic data from my research. I discuss the nature of practice within the UKFSM, orienting this discussion around the material nature of grassroots and national activity. I explore the nature of food growing with regard to agroecology, the development of alternative markets and strategic organising. I use Arendt's (1958) framework of 'work, labour and action' to discuss the nature of work within the movement and divisions in labour that exist between individuals depending on their roles. In

doing so I introduce critical questions as to the nature of collective identity and how this is linked to both shared practices and divisions of labour within the movement.

**Chapter 6: Informing Practice: The Logics of Action**

I discuss the different logics at work within the UKFSM that informs its practices and approach. These logics include implicit and programmatic values of the movement that influence its practice, as well as the ideas that influence the movement's approach. These ideas include logics of legitimation, emulation and diffusion, as well as experimentation, prefiguration and unionisation. In discussing these logics I build on the premise that both values and ideas influence the actions and approach deemed legitimate by the movement for realising social change. Thus, this chapter presents the 'logics' of the movement as a necessary part of understanding why the UKFSM takes the shape and form it does. In doing so it frames the values and ideas of the movement as 'logics' to overcome instrumental understandings of movement theorising. Though these 'logics' can be employed strategically, they are not exclusively with implicit values emerging organically within the collective culture of the movement. In discussing the values and ideas of the movement as 'logics' I raise critical questions concerning the transformative potential of these logics which I return to in Chapters 7 and 8.

**Chapter 7: Making Sense of Practice: Meaning and Reflection**

Chapter 7 discusses the role of collective identity and political consciousness in the movement, returning to questions raised in earlier chapters. I consider the nature of collective identity within the movement while exploring how necessary it is for the UKFSM to have a strong shared collective identity. In doing so I argue that collective identity is a necessary sense-making process for actors within the movement and is linked to collective action. As such the nature of this process, who participates in it and who is involved in its reflection is considered. I further add that political consciousness is interwoven with processes of collective identity formation. Thus, I also explore the potential for political consciousness raising within the movement, pointing to international examples within LVC and drawing on the radical pedagogy and praxis of Paulo Freire.

**Chapter 8: A socially transformative practice?**

I build on arguments raised in Chapters 5,6 and 7 to discuss the implications of the movement's practice and logics on a process of social transformation. I naturally follow Chapter 7 to assess how the movement is aiming to realise social transformation in this context. I raise questions about the opportunities and tensions that emerge for social transformation, given the

movement's approach. However, I do not assess the movement from a vantage point of success or failure; instead, I argue that social transformation is processual, the outcomes of which are not fixed but still emerging.

**Chapter 9: Conclusion:**

The final chapter of this thesis offers conclusions on the main themes raised throughout and reflects on the nature of UKFSM's politics and why food sovereignty should be treated as a social movement in the UK. Finally, I reflect on the meaning of food sovereignty, while pointing to areas for further research on food sovereignty in the UK.

# Chapter 2: Grounding Food Sovereignty in the UK

The UK food sovereignty movement (UKFSM) is complex. It is a movement made up of a vast array of organisations, projects and individuals who interpret, pursue, and identify with food sovereignty differently. Given this complexity, it is necessary to discuss what the UKFSM is, how it has evolved from legacies of environmental activism in the UK and simultaneously been translated from the international movement, before categorising it as a social movement. As a result, the first section of this chapter (2.1) discusses how food sovereignty has been interpreted and translated in the UK, with a focus on England. In doing so, I unpack the interlinkages between the grassroots and national wings to explain the structure of the movement as a whole and how it relates to a process of translation. Section 2.2 then situates the UKFSM within a history of activism and points to its emergent nature. Finally, Section 2.3 explores the ways in which the UKFSM can be understood as a social movement. I draw on relevant theory to demonstrate the ways in which the movement resists conventional definitions and typologies of a social movement. Finally, despite this nonconformity I conclude this chapter by arguing that the UKFSM should be considered a social movement based on its informal and formal networks, its processual collective identity and its politics which is not vested primarily in contentious protest action.

## 2.1 Translating food sovereignty from La Via Campesina to the Landworkers' Alliance

> *It is a cold and grey weekend in December 2019. Off the beaten track at Castle Head, a field study centre in Cumbria, a mass of over one hundred people from all over the UK, (though largely England and Wales) have come for the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) Annual General Meeting. This is the fourth AGM held by the LWA, in the quieter season when farmers and land workers can spare a weekend to join fellow members of this union committed to agroecological farming.*
>
> *The atmosphere is warm and familiar; for many, this is one of the few annual occasions where the different strands of this movement come together to 'set the work agenda for the following year, organise skill shares and exchanges, elect the coordinating group and strategies around the development of the union' (see Landworkers Alliance, 2019). There is a mix of people from young urban families that have returned 'to the land' or are planning to, seasoned dairy and rural stock farmers, woodland workers, artisan bakers,*

*market gardeners, food activists and researchers. For some, this is their first LWA AGM, while for others this has become a yearly routine. I am struck by the breadth of ages, the large number of women and non-binary folk in the room and the sense of warmth and community that brought these many faces together. This scene is not what people would generally picture when they think of a farming annual general meeting. It features workshops and discussions of racial justice and farming, LGBTQI+ inclusion in agricultural networks and vegan organic growing practices among many other topics.*

*As the opening sessions start with a relaxed and welcoming tone, members of the movement are encouraged to share and reflect on the past year (2019) and their hopes for the future. A dark-haired woman who looks to be in her early thirties, wearing a plaid shirt and overalls that are muddied at the knees, rises from her seat to speak. "I am an arable land worker in the uplands of Lancashire. I love what I do, even though it is difficult. Especially when harsh winds batter the hillside and when you look at all your neighbours who have more land and are farming in a completely different way. It's easy to feel quite alone and different. But it's spaces like this that remind me I am not alone, we're in this together. Though I don't know all the faces in this room today, I feel like I know you all. I guess what I am trying to say is, we might all farm differently, but we are all part of this movement, this community. We all have felt pulled to the land and we are in that together, part of this struggle to protect it and that feels like such a gift".*

*The room gave out a shared hum of appreciation and agreement. Then, as though there was a commonly felt urge -or perhaps it was a coincidence that they rose in unison- a dozen or so men and women, some with a childlike enthusiasm and others with the wisdom of having farmed many seasons, erupted into a chorus of 'Viva!!'.*

*This rallying cry has come to be synonymous with the peasant struggles of La Via Campesina (LVC) across the world. It has been shouted on the streets of Seattle in 1999 against the imposition of neoliberal trade policies of the World Trade Organisation. By the Mayan community and indigenous farmers in Guatemala, protesting the expansion of Monsanto's biotechnologies (Via Campesina, 2014); and in countless other circumstances by farmers, land workers, food activists and peasants across the world over the past 27 years, in the name of Food Sovereignty. It reverberates too off the walls of this Cumbrian Field Study Centre, chanted in solidarity and shared struggle by the members of the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA).*

*Author's fieldnotes from the LWA AGM 2019 – November 23rd, 2019.*

This gathering of farmers and agricultural landworkers from across the UK is not typical of the UK agricultural sector. Not only in the types of landworkers represented in this space, which don't fit the stereotypical idea of a British 'farmer', but also because these landworkers understand themselves as part of a global network of small-scale peasant farmers linked by a commitment to food sovereignty. In this way, the landworkers at this gathering see themselves as part of a movement and identify with shared values and common practices that centre on agroecology and work towards a vision of food sovereignty. The landworkers and organisations present at this meeting are not individual expressions of alternative practices but are interlinked and part of a wider movement for food sovereignty. While not all involved in food sovereignty projects will situate themselves within the movement or share a sense of connection in the same way described above, this vignette demonstrates how the UK movement builds on a shared connection to the international expression of food sovereignty. However, to understand how the movement invokes food sovereignty and how it is pursued as a political project and vision specific to the UK, it is necessary to look at how it has been adapted and translated to this context.

To help in this endeavour it is useful to understand the relationships that exist between the national, international, and grassroots expressions of food sovereignty in the UK. As this chapter will illustrate, the application and translation of food sovereignty is complex. However, we can understand this process more clearly by discussing it through the spatial and scalar categories of grassroots, national and international see Figure 1.0 below. Each section of this diagram, from the grassroots to the national and international represents levels of the movement. This section of this chapter explains how food sovereignty has emerged in the UK and has been translated from the international sphere of La Via Campesina and found expression at the grassroots through the Landworkers' Alliance.

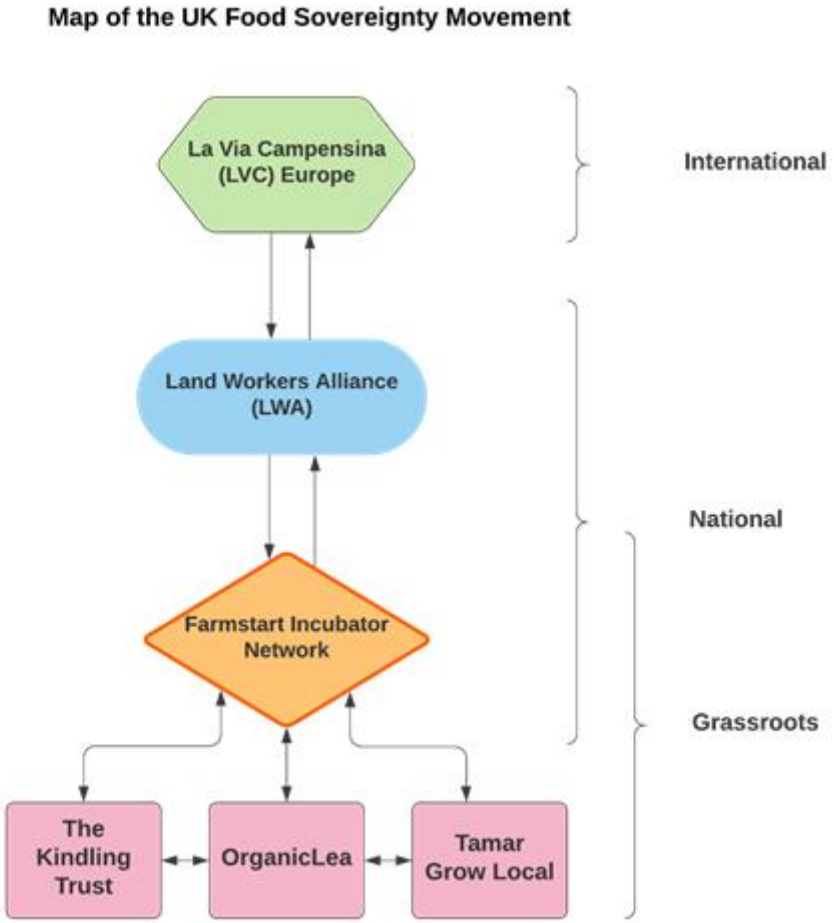


*Figure 1.0 Structure of the UKFSM* (2020).

As discussed in Chapter 1, food sovereignty emerged as a global movement championed by La Via Campesina (LVC) and emanates directly from peasant struggles for land access and control of resources in the Global South. While there is a degree of debate concerning the evolutionary process of food sovereignty (see Edelman *et al.*, 2014), its principles are commonly understood to be rooted in the promotion of peasant farmers' rights in the Global South (see Nyeleni Declaration on Food Sovereignty, Via Campesina, 2007). Yet, since its conception at the 1996 World Food Summit, food sovereignty has grown from a slogan of the international peasant rights organisation La Via Campesina, to a political project, a social movement and an ideological frame that has been adopted by movements, organisations, and individuals across the world (Bernstein, 2014). As a result, LVC as a transnational movement of peasants and land workers has grown to represent over 200 million peasant farmers across 81 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North, South and Central America. This diverse representation is facilitated through

182 regional and national member organisations that are affiliated with LVC worldwide. The LVC, unifies these different strands of the movement under the banner of food sovereignty, with member organisations attached to one of the ten regional branches of the movement. In the case of the UK, the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) is the national affiliated member of the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) alongside the Scottish Crofting Federation, which represents the interests of traditional Crofters in Scotland.

The LWA is a relavtively new member of LVC, established officially in 2013, as a union for agroecological landworkers and foresters. The LWA represents over 2196 landworker members across different regions and nations of the UK. Yet, while the LWA is the official member of ECVC and connected formally to the international movement, food sovereignty resonated with local groups before this formal alliance. Local groups practising agroecological growing and working to create a fair, local, and sustainable food system built on the values of social and ecological justice, preceded the formation of the LWA. In this sense, much of the practice of what now typifies the grassroots of the movement was already taking place among networks of grassroots organisations. Actors at the grassroots of the movement, discuss food sovereignty as providing a framework that aligns with their existing values and provided a language in which to discuss them. Helen W of the Kindling Trust, known as Kindling in Manchester, reflected on this when discussing their involvement in the European gathering of La Via Campesina:

> I think we sort of came across food sovereignty when I went to the food sovereignty meeting in Austria, when I went as part of the Winston Churchill Fellowship […]. So I went and was part of the European Food Sov network and part of developing the Nyeleni statement. So from that we set up the UK food sovereignty network, which happened at OrganicLea […] from that meeting was how the LWA was born. […] It was really interesting because I remember being involved in the Austria stuff and the six pillars, and I remember thinking that this is basically what we believe and all of a sudden it was just really amazing to be around people who use the language that we use (Helen W, 2020).

Helen's reflection on her experience of the food sovereignty movement speaks to a process of direct diffusion from the international sphere of LVC to individuals and groups working on the ground. Helen points to how her involvement and immersion in food sovereignty networks at the European level influenced her ideas and the framing and understanding of Kindling's practices and work as part of a wider movement for food sovereignty. This spread of food sovereignty through networks and engagement with the international sphere either directly or

through activist circles or public discourse speaks to diffusion theories that suggest ideas are transmitted through inter-personal relationships or the mass media (see Rodgers, 1995). However, Helen's reflection demonstrates that the direct participation of movement actors in the international sphere of the movement was essential to the adaptation and translation of FS in the UK, echoing Chabot's discussion of the diffusion of Gandhian ideas to the struggle for civil rights in the US (2000, 2001). This chapter builds on the role of diffusion in the process of translating food sovereignty shortly, but first stresses that the UKFSM did not emerge separately from the international movement but was influenced directly by the engagement of grassroots individuals with it.

This is further illustrated in the reflections of Brian, a cooperative member from OrganicLea, a market garden on the edge of Epping Forest, who explained that the LWA was born from grassroots recognition of the need for further central representation, especially that which would be recognised as part of La Via Campesina.

> Yeah, and that was the thing because we could see lots of need for lobbying and campaigning, and we did a bit at OrganicLea, and got involved in the anti-GM stuff etc and recognised that it is just not enough. There was a need to do more, and we clocked that at Copenhagen climate talks which we went to as London Food Growers, which didn't exist we just made it up and made a banner. But we basically got there and there was a big European presence of Reclaim the Fields as the young groups under La Via Campesina and we just said, "we need to be part of this". So that was 2009 and that prompted us to really think about what actually the national thing is we need to do here. Then we had a meeting down at Monkton Wyld about *This Land is Ours* [1] where it was agreed that it was defunct and needed to close. But the interesting thing that came out of it was recognising that it needs to close to allow another thing to exist and to get to the Food Sovereignty stuff (Brian, 2019).

[1] This Land Is Ours is a campaign established by activists including George Monbiot in the mid-late 1990s for land rights and reform in the UK. Throughout the 1990s the campaign held successful land occupations in areas across the UK to demand change to the land planning system and public access to private land more widely. The organisation still exists and publishes *The Land Magazine,* about land rights and struggle. However, the TLIO is not involved in collective action campaigns as it was in the 1990s and now has a much smaller following, though it still has a presence at national gatherings for food sovereignty.

Brian's reflection demonstrates that the diffusion of FS to the UK was catalysed by experiencing the international movement at protest events like that of the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, where seeing coordinated groups affiliated with LVC provided an example of what a UKFSM could look like. As Brian and Helen explain, connection to international networks played a part in driving collectives as the grassroots to form the Landworkers' Alliance. Groups working in the UK recognised the need and benefit of having a central coordinating body for the movement that could be officially affiliated with LVC. Consequently, the formation of the LWA was directly driven by the roots of the movement, in part to establish a formal association with La Via Campesina and to communicate a collective expression of what food sovereignty means in the UK. Its formation also aimed to provide a degree of ideological cohesion and collaboration around food sovereignty that could unify the diversity and complexity of its membership.

Similarly, the formation of the LWA was part of a transition process within the UK environmental movement, as Brian explained the closing of a chapter in the campaigning work of *This Land is Ours* made room for something new - a national organisation that drew more explicitly on the framework of food sovereignty. Section 2.2 of this chapter builds on discussion of how the translation of food sovereignty in the UK converges with existing traditions of activism to produce a unique expression of food sovereignty. However, this chapter stresses that the move away from *This Land Is Ours*, marked a shift in the national expression of activism centred on land reform, rights and planning. The shift towards the LWA allowed groups working on the ground to orient themselves more explicitly to the language of food sovereignty and broadened the message of the movement to speak to more than land rights issues. The LWA speaks to issues of land justice and access, but primarily orients its approach around agroecology and local food production, while also connecting to issues of consumption such as access to local, agroecological food, diet-related ill-health and the 'right to food' (LWA, 2022a). This demonstrates how food sovereignty has been interpreted and translated by the LWA, building on existing traditions of activism to emphasise values of specific concern for food sovereignty in the UK. I return to the process of translation in greater detail after discussing the structure of the movement which is an important precursor to understanding how food sovereignty has been translated by these organisations. The following section begins with the LWA before going on to discuss the grassroots of the movement.

### *2.1.1 The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA):*

The LWA is a 'democratic member-led union, run by landworkers for landworkers' (LWA, 2022c) and represents a broad agroecological sector working in different regions and nations of the UK. The membership of the LWA is organised into branches that cover England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland according to where members live and work. These regions represent their membership at a regional level, accounting for contextual issues members might face and meeting at annual assemblies like those held across regional winter assemblies in 2022 (LWA, 2022a). Similarly, members of the LWA are grouped according to their sector (i.e. forestry, horticulture, livestock and arable farming) to facilitate organising, training and networking specific to each sector. However, all these branches and sectors come together and are represented in the central organising of the LWA. The co-ordinating group of the LWA is the decision-making body of the union, which consists of up to 12 members that have responsibility for the finances, governance, strategic and political work of the LWA. The co-ordinating group is elected every three years by the union's membership (LWA, 2022c). The members of the co-ordinating group are also members of the union and many of them are agroecological landworkers as well as working for the LWA.

The LWA generates income through events, sales, and membership fees as well as donations (LWA, 2022a). However, most of the union's income is dependent on grant funding to support its work, with its principal funders including Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, LUSH, Network for Social Change, the European Union, National Lottery Community Fund, Gaia Foundation, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Friends Provident, A-Team Foundation, Farming the Future, Oxford Real Farming Conference and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Cymru (LWA, 2022a). Dependence on external funding can create constraints for third-sector organisations in realising radical alternatives to the dominant system because funding opportunities can require organisations to frame themselves to appeal to grant funders and comply with grant funders' financing criteria (see Arvidson and Linde, 2021). Similarly, grant funders are often criticised for funding projects rather than covering organisational core costs, which makes it difficult for third-sector organisations to continue to finance their work. Nevertheless, the LWA has been effective in securing grants that cover its core costs and similarly is working to achieve greater 'financial independence' through self-generated income (LWA, 2020b).

As the national expression of FS in the UK, the LWA fulfils integral functions for the movement that includes national representation, campaign organising and mobilisation, the election of its organising committee as well as seeking material resources to support the work of its

membership. The LWA nurtures and supports grassroots projects that provide access to training and mentoring as well as facilitating its own training and mentoring programmes through its agroecological knowledge exchange network (see LWA, 2022b). Furthermore, the LWA plays a central role in representing the UK movement both in media and communications and through political lobbying and campaigns. In this regard, the LWA gives voice to its membership and fulfils a key strategic role in representing and organising across the movement to influence the political environment the movement seeks to change.

Since its inception the LWA has earned a respected reputation as a national body and has developed relationships with ministers, civil servants, and government departments across the UK. The LWA is engaged in strategic campaigns and policy work to influence the UK Agricultural Bill, the National Food Strategy for England and the Environment Land Management Scheme (ELMS) as well as government policy on trade, climate, aid and food and farming (Landworkers Alliance, 2020c). It has also built strong relationships on principles of mutual interest and shared solidarity with environmental, food and agricultural projects and advocacy groups from across the food movement. This was highlighted in the role the LWA took at the Oxford Real Farming Conference, which has 'become the unofficial gathering of the agroecology farming movement in the UK' attracting over one thousand attendees (Oxford Real Farming Conference, 2020). Here the LWA led a programme of sessions, panels and workshops that featured experts and practitioners from across the UK food movement and also highlighted its connection to La Via Campesina by bringing together speakers from the US and Zimbabwe (Landworkers Alliance, 2020b). This work is often beyond the capacity of what organisations at the grassroots are able to sustain whilst also developing and experimenting with practical alternatives like those described in the cases of Kindling, OrganicLea and Tamar Grow Local in the following section.

### *2.1.2 The Roots of the Movement:*

Translating food sovereignty from its national expression articulated through the LWA to the diversity of the grassroots is not necessarily an automatic process. The base of the UK movement is broad, made up of organisations, projects, community groups and small-scale local businesses that respond to local needs in the food system. Whether that be diet-related ill health; food poverty; lack of affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food; access to land, markets and training for small-scale growers; and many other problems attributed to the industrial food regime (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; McMichael, 2009). Given this diversity, FS is interpreted widely and variably at the base, reflecting the malleable and adaptable nature of FS as a term (see Iles and De Wit, 2015).

Despite the breadth of the movement's base, I use the umbrella term 'grassroots' to refer collectively to the groups and organisations working within local communities to achieve food sovereignty. These organisations are diverse in structure and geography, operating across both urban and rural locations across the UK. For example, Tamar Grow Local of the Tamar Valley in Cornwall operates in a rural environment and attempts to address local challenges of rural unemployment and food poverty. By contrast, OrganicLea, on the edge of Epping Forest in Haringey North London, and the Kindling Trust in Manchester, operate in urban contexts but similarly seek to address issues of food poverty and a land and skills shortage for realising an alternative food system. Across differing contexts, these organisations share common agroecological practices such as vegan organic growing, permaculture, or agroforestry, which are often interwoven within community-based projects. These projects include agroecological training opportunities, veg box schemes, wellbeing workshops, volunteering opportunities and community food hubs that aim to develop a market for local agroecological produce.

As alluded to in the vignette that opened this chapter, the organisations that sit at the grassroots in Figure 1.0 all engage in alternative production practices that seek to create and demonstrate workable alternatives to the existing food system. In doing so, The Kindling Trust, OrganicLea and Tamar Grow Local, among many other grassroots organisations, experiment in developing and implementing local solutions to shared problems, such as a lack of agroecological farmers and in-access to local organic produce. These organisations are unique and respond to specific needs within their given context and as such, are variable in their practices and approaches to realising change within local food systems. Yet, the grassroots of the UKFSM can be characterised by their shared commitment to developing alternatives to the dominant system. These alternatives often centre around the development of alternative food economies or alternative food networks (AFNs) to provide a stable market for local producers and access for consumers to local agroecological produce. Similarly, they also are orientated around agroecological training and volunteering projects and opportunities.

As discussed in explaining the form and structure of the LWA, the grassroots of the UKFSM does not simply refer to the 'ordinary people' that make up the main part of a movement and who are often distinguished from a movement's leadership or organising body. Instead, the grassroots are close to the organising body of the LWA, with many members of the organising body also small-scale agroecological producers engaged in growing practices and activities described above. Similarly, grassroots organisations are interwoven in regional and national networks for FS, which connect the national with the local. For example, the Farmstart Incubator Network, symbolised by the orange triangle in Figure 1.0 brings together grassroots

organisations across the UK that are practicing a version of a Farmstart model. These models are diverse but all aim to reduce the barriers that inhibit new entrants to agroecology; namely, by providing land, training, and access to local markets. I expand on the networks and connections that make up the UKFSM in Section 2.3 of this chapter but emphasise here that the grassroots are not removed from the wider movement but interwoven within it. In this sense, the roots of the movement play an instrumental role in the development of material alternatives, which I discuss at greater length in Chapter 5.

### *2.1.3 A Process of Translation:*

Having explained the nature and structure of the UKFSM in the previous sections of the chapter, I return to how FS has been diffused in this context and translated from the international sphere of LVC. The diffusion of FS as a collective action frame from the transnational movement to the UK is not as simple as transplanting it from the former to the latter. Rather, as noted by Ives (2004) and Kipfer and Hart (2012) political concepts like food sovereignty require translation, both from the original language and into a new one (Ives, 2004). The meaning associated with these concepts is often made and remade through this process of adapting it to different contexts (Shattuck, Schiavoni and VanGelder, 2015). This process of translation is, as Chabot (2000) argues, not necessarily linear or mechanical; this challenges classical theories of diffusion, which often see the process as following a prescribed route of travel: from the *knowledge* of protentional adopters of an innovation, to the *persuasion* stage and their attitude towards it to a *decision* stage on whether they will take it on, and then an *implementation* stage where is trialled, and finally a *confirmation* stage where the innovation is evaluated (Rogers, 1995 in Chabot, 2000, p. 203). Instead, the process of diffusion is messy and does not necessarily move easily from one setting to another. In this regard, translation in processes of adaptation is essential, as this is the space where 'adopters reinvent repertoires of collective action to fit their own situation' (Chabot, 2000, p. 204) and create meaning.

In doing so, the UKFSM draws on the international frame of LVC in its programmatic statements and declarations of FS. For example, the LWA adheres to the six principles of the Nyeleni declaration and has adapted them to apply to the UK. These principles are similar in nature to the international movement in that they advocate for a rights-based framework for food rather than treating it as a commodity and emphasise the value of food producers and the need for local and democratic control over the food system (LWA, 2022b). The emphasis and explicit nature of these principles are changed slightly to reflect the political and social climate of the UK; for example, the emphasis on 'valuing' knowledge and skills arguably reflects the lack of

acknowledgement in UK policy circles of the value of small-scale agroecological production. Much of the work of the LWA and the FSIN has centred around this aim and has sought to increase policy and local authority support of these skills to finance opportunities for agroecological training. Similarly, the UKFSM is constantly evaluating and adapting the frame of food sovereignty to the context of the UK. This was exemplified at the People's Food Summit in 2022, which marked the first gathering of the national movement since 2012. At this Summit, it was decided by 'producers, activists, researchers, allies and eaters' that the UKFSM would be renamed as 'Food in Our Hands' to revitalise the movement (LWA, 2022a, pp.34).

Yet, applying food sovereignty as a term and collective action frame is not a static process. As discussed by Shattuck et al (2015), the meaning of food sovereignty has shifted at the international level, reflecting its emergent nature. For example, food sovereignty has evolved from the 1996 definition discussed in Chapter 1 to encapsulate a broader remit as illustrated in the Nyeleni Declaration of 2007. The Nyeleni declaration recognised the broadening of the movement and its application across wider contexts, particularly in the Global North, and thereby placed greater emphasis on the rights of consumers as well as producers. The precedent of such resignification processes facilitates the application of food sovereignty to different agricultural contexts such as the UK, where there is less of a productive agroecological base and large populations of urban consumers.

Similarly, the organisations that gathered in Mali to agree on the Nyeleni declaration recognised that food sovereignty is a transnational vision based on 'new social relations free of oppression and inequality' (Via Campesina, 2007). Arguably, the shifting of the framework of food sovereignty from the 1990s to the present reflects a shift from sovereignty and power being concentrated at the level of the state and international institutions like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to the increasing influence of financial actors and financialisation processes in food production and distribution (see Clapp, 2020). Similarly, the decline of global justice movements and that of the World Social Forum, which specifically challenged the power and influence of institutions like the WTO, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), has changed the context in which food sovereignty seeks realisation. As critical food scholars like Shattuck et al (2015) and Iles and De Wit (2015) have argued, this moving terrain creates space for different conceptions of sovereignty that are 'more ontologically fertile than nationalist cartography' (Iles and De Wit, 2015, p.483). Thus, the increasing breadth of FS as a frame expands opportunities for realisation. Simultaneously, however, there is also increasing tension, as has been noted by critical food scholarship, centred on the potential dilution of the

initial sentiments of FS and its radical focus on issues of land ownership, control and redistribution (Bernstein, 2014).

As a result, the UKFSM faces a challenge in how it adapts and applies the global frame of FS to the UK context. In doing so, FS is not being transposed onto a blank canvas. Rather, it is being applied to a context with existing activist histories, repertoires and legacies that have influenced the nature of environmental and agricultural struggles in the UK. In this regard, FS is not the only idea, collective action frame and social movement familiar to UK food activists, which is discussed in the following section. Thus, there is a challenge for the movement in how it brings existing traditions and translations of land and agricultural resistance into confluence with the transnational global justice framing of food sovereignty in the UK.

## 2.2 Contemporary struggles meet traditions of resistance – situating food sovereignty in a history of UK activism.

The process of translation discussed in the previous section of this chapter, demonstrates the frame of food sovereignty as both a political vision for social change and a social movement has drawn inspiration from its international expression and is being applied differently across the UK, especially at the grassroots. However, food sovereignty does not exist in isolation as a collective action frame, nor as a political ideal in the context of the UK. Rather, food sovereignty has met other expressions of food activism, political resistance and imaginaries specific to the UK. In this sense, the shape and form of food sovereignty needs to be situated within and among contemporary struggles for social and environmental justice and within the historical legacy of activism that influence the nature of food sovereignty in this context. I build on the argument of Tilly and Tarrow (2007, p.114) in this regard, who suggest that social movements 'consist of movement organisations, networks, participants and accumulated cultural artefacts, memories and traditions that contribute to social movement campaigns'. It is these 'artefacts, memories, and traditions', that this section of this chapter discusses, with the aim of illustrating how activist traditions have influenced -and continue to influence- the form of food sovereignty in the UK. Similarly, this chapter also situates the contemporary expression of food sovereignty within a historical lineage of environmental activism, while pointing to the broader terrain of food activism in the UK of which food soveriegnty is a part.

I join Doherty and Hayes (2012) in arguing that understanding the traditions of activism is essential to an analysis of movement culture, for the past is not divorced from the present, and the values, ideas and tactics of previous iterations of activism often endure and are

reformulated in contemporary expressions. This is true of the food sovereignty movement, where shared histories of land-based environmental activism are invoked by organisations that situate their own work within this historical legacy of activism. For example, Jo, a small-scale market gardener in Manchester who runs Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD), described to me why they chose that name.

> It is activism in a way, which is why we called ourselves Manchester Urban Diggers because of the Diggers movement, because it was about reclaiming land and growing food and that really spoke to what we are trying to do. It's not necessarily about producing the most food possible but taking the land back and stuff, kind of in a physical way like what we have done with this market garden and about reclaiming space to grow food (Jo, 2020).

In this way, the historical legacy of the Diggers movement in the 17th century (see Hill, 1984; Gurney, 2007) provided a framework from which those working to produce alternative imaginaries of an urban foodscape and relationship with the land could draw on today. This was common across the movement - not only at the grassroots, but also at the national level of the movement in the LWA. At the LWA AGM in 2019 there was an emphasis on cultural ancestry, with people offering homage to the Diggers movement through folk songs and stories in the closing ceremony of the meeting. The songs that were sung and poems offered harkened back to a romanticised relationship with the land and were in the spirit of a 'back to the land' ideal. This demonstrates that the food sovereignty movement often situates the agroecological practices of its membership and food activism as part of a legacy of struggle over land and resources. Arguably, the UKFSM draw on the history of the diggers, among other radical English movements, because they see ideas in these movements that reflect their own and understand themselves to be struggling against the same, if not similar, forces in trying to realise food sovereignty.

Drawing on the historical legacy of movements and radical individuals that share similar visions for a changed food system is a theme I observed across the movement, specifically when grounded in the specificity of place. For example, OrganicLea, on the outskirts of Epping Forest and the London borough of Haringey, spoke about John Clare, the English poet of the early 1800s, during an open day because his poetry encapsulated working agricultural life and captured the immediate impact and injustice of enclosure in England. OrganicLea used the struggles captured in John Clare's reflections (Monbiot, 2012) to explain how this is present in the political struggles of OrganicLea today. This was framed mainly in the language of resistance

to industrial agriculture, and the erosion of a particular way of life that makes agroecological small-scale production both hard to sustain and a radical act of resistance. Brian, an Organic Lea co-op member captured the benefit of OrganicLea by situating its work within a history of struggle:

> I think the history of struggle is a history, we are not particularly special but just the present version of that, […] you can't ignore what has gone before, you have to acknowledge that and see ourselves as in line with the history of the movement. I guess there are particular histories of Hawkwood and Epping Forest which are useful to tap into […] like struggles around land linked to Epping Forest, our site is part of that. Given that there is quite a strong land rights narrative anyway for us in terms of changing the food system and we are situated in a space that has a history of that going on it seems like an obvious way to frame it. (Brian, 2019)

In this sense, drawing on the historical legacy of local and national struggles against enclosure through alternative practices speaks to the aims and ambitions of the current food sovereignty movement. This shares a similarity with how Spaargaren et al (2016) discuss the evolution of social practices, which they argue evolve from a historical patchwork of social practices, which groups identify with and reproduce. In this sense, culturally situated and socially conditioned practices inform how individuals perceive themselves and how they subsequently reproduce or subvert these practices. For example, personal and collective experiences as well as place-based histories will produce and determine the nature of a movement's material, cultural and symbolic practice. In this way, a movement's practice is informed not only by present social conditions, but also by the historical resonance of other movements' practices. However, local histories and radical movements are not always directly referenced or necessarily drawn upon when seeking to realise the aim of food sovereignty, for local radical histories do not universally provide a frame that contemporary expressions and alternatives can draw on or situate their work within. As Simon of Tamar Grow Local, an alternative food network in the Tamar Valley explained:

> There was some history of horticultural co-ops in the Tamar Valley and the idea was that that person would grow an array of community food projects but then would transition to running a producer's coop, to aggregate products from across the valley and sell them and that would cover the costs of running it. […] The first co-ops in the Tamar Valley were in the early 20th century […] If you look at the history of the co-ops in the 20th century then they are really successful in those [post WW1 and post WW2]

> periods. But as soon as there is an abundance of produce then those that are producing the top quality of produce within the cooperative started to feel they were carrying those who are producing a greater volume of slightly lower quality produce, and they thought they could make a job of it going alone. Which left a lot of coops with a larger volume but lower quality [unable] to compete effectively in the same markets. This put the co-ops into a death spiral which was compounded by other factors like overseas competition and the rise in supermarkets and all of that came to a head in the Tamar Valley between the 70s-90s […] So this whole idea of Tamar Grow Local as a producer's co-operative wasn't founded on particularly solid ground, it wasn't the best of ideas. In the sense that the idea of a legacy was not particularly realistic. […] So instead of going down a co-op route people wanted control over their business rather than ceding that control to a co-op and so we went for a Food Hub as the best route to doing that. (Simon, 2020)

The local context and specifically local histories and traditions play a significant role in determining the strategic direction of contemporary alternatives, which can seek to emulate or build on the traditions of earlier iterations of activism or distance themselves from it. These local expressions of food sovereignty are subsequently constrained in some ways by the contextual histories of previous activist expressions. However, these local and place-based histories do not exist in a vacuum and often meet historical and contemporary national expressions of popular movements. Therefore, multiple influences from the past and present converge and intersect in local expressions of food sovereignty, bringing traditions of activism that are place-based and national into conversation with contemporary movements, strategies and visions for social change. This shares parallels with Tilly's (1995, p.47) conception of 'repertoires of protest' or action, which he argues are shaped by traditions, resources, and circumstances. It is, therefore, understandable that the product of this intersection is variable, with local experience and expressions of food sovereignty influenced by traditions and legacies whilst also being combined with the agency of collectives and individuals within the movement and the conditions of the current context among a myriad of other factors.

Yet, there are salient features of specific radical movements and their traditions that are commonly invoked across the food sovereignty movement. For example, the UK movement for food sovereignty is attempting to create the conditions for more local small-scale agroecological growers to emerge and have the necessary skills, land base and resources to feed local

communities and run viable businesses. In many ways, this speaks to the 'back to the land movement' of the 1840s that was premised on 'freedom to own and work on land of one's own choice and to enjoy its produce' (Gould, 1988, p.6). This early radical movement is considered by many to have been instructive for the emergence of green politics in the UK (See Gould, 1988). Particularly that of agrarian socialism, which has instilled a sentiment of 'the good life' as one in harmony with nature where 'labourers could be independent of employers and based on a simpler life of domestic contentment away from refined manufacturers' (Ibid, p.7). This strain of thinking, particularly that which sees agroecological, local alternatives as the antithesis of industrial, mechanised and destructive agriculture is evident also in the sentiments expressed in the food sovereignty movement. As those drawn to a life of agroecological production remarked in the LWA's report on t*he Attraction of Agroecological Farming* (2022e, p.6), it is perceived to offer 'peace of mind, a better relationship with food, myself and a sense of purpose' as well as being 'about more people not machines'.

Similarly, the movement builds on and shares affinity with the tradition of green politics to be sceptical of mechanisation. Gould (1988) argues that early green movements like the 'True Levellers' or Diggers developed in response to moving away from traditional processes of production. Thus, this struggle was focused on opposing technological innovations that took people away from their traditional jobs. The movements around this time made arguments against science and regarded science as a tool of repression, based on mechanisation and exploitative views of society, human relationships, and human relationships with nature (Gould, 1988, p. 18). The food sovereignty movement, though not against mechanised processes of production necessarily, expresses great criticism towards the industrial production of agricultural practices. This is evident in small-scale agricultural practices that often endorse 'no-dig' cultivation methods and as a member of Veg Box People, a co-operative in Manchester, shared: 'I think what we are trying to achieve and the change we are trying to bring about is about efficiency with human labour, in that sense it's a bit different to that of the dominant model which is about getting machines involved' (Luke, 2019). Though this is not a homogenous position, there is a felt sense within the culture of the movement that industrial processes are not the most sustainable. This is coupled with abundant evidence and growing consensus in academic, activist and public discourse that industrial methods are unsustainable (Altieri, 1998; Shiva, 2000; Lewis, 2020). Similarly, industrial agriculture can largely be avoided due to the small-scale nature of most landholdings for those in the LWA.

The origins of the Landworkers' Alliance are also shaped by this radical history. The LWA was born out of a convergence of previous waves of activism, as well as a recognition by grassroot actors of the need for a national union officially affiliated with LVC. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, *This Land Is Ours* preceded the LWA and created space for food sovereignty as a movement to be born. Similarly, the anti-GM movement of the 1990s in the UK that engaged in high-profile direct action against the introduction of genetically modified food, shared much of the radical traditions of environmentalism. Traditions of the 'green movement' in the UK share clear suspicion of scientific technologies and viewed all life as 'sacred and worthy of passionate defence' (Taylor, 2008, p.28). Many of the individuals involved in the founding of the LWA were involved in the anti-gm movement or similarly had been involved in other environmental direct-action campaigns in the 1990s. As such, many shared a suspicion of science particularly its relationship with agriculture; arguably, this suspicion influenced the adoption and shared practice of organic and agroecological growing methods among members of the movement. In this way, the values and legacy of the anti-GM movement found resonance within the framework of food sovereignty, which has channelled them into agroecological practices.

A further legacy is that of the early socialist movements in England and conceptions of the 'good life' championed by individuals like William Morris. This movement and political thought went beyond a critique of capitalism to the 'shaking off of a slavish dependence on other people and on artificial systems made to save men manly trouble and responsibility' (Gould, 1988; p.25). This critique of industrial processes and the commodification of society and nature came to inform socialist understandings of environmentalism. More specifically, it signified a move towards an understanding of utopias in the context of the green movement. This is significant because it has influenced green thought around 'the good life', which still has purchase within contemporary environmental movements today. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that the food sovereignty movement speaks directly to a narrative of the 'good life', it often does situate its actions and practice within the context of building 'hoped for future in the present' and demonstrating what is possible. The movement is arguably actualizing everyday utopias (Clarence-Smith, 2022) through the pursuit of alternative agricultural practices and the building of collectives and networks that challenge the monopsony of power present within the industrial model.

While food sovereignty as a framework and movement has been influenced by activist traditions of resistance discussed above, it is necessary to emphasise that expressions of food

activism in the UK, both historical and contemporary, extend beyond food sovereignty. As discussed earlier in this chapter, food soveriegnty as a political framework and vision for systemic transformation is relatively new to the UK. However, political mobilisation and collective action on issues concerning food sustainability, health, genetically modified food, corporate control of the food system, fairtrade, animal rights and consumer choice have been the focus of other environmental and food activist movements. The Organic food and agricultural movement is one such example, beginning in the 1940s but having significant influence on British agricultural and consumer practices from the 1970s onwards (Conford, 2008; Worpole, 2021). Similarly, the Fairtrade movement, which grew from alternative trading relationships between NGOs to provide an alternative market for growers in the global south (see Trentmann, 2007). Beyond these now mainstream food movements, McKay's (1998) exploration of DIY 'Do it yourself' activist culture of the 1980s-90s demonstrates how the counterculture of direct-action environmental movements, like *Earth First!* and the Anti-Roads movement, featured alternative agricultural practices and engaged with, what were 'niche' dietary choices at the time such as vegetarianism and veganism. While these more recent environmental movements are beyond the scope of this thesis, they engage with similar food activist practices to that of the food soveriegnty movement.

There remains little scholarly attention to more recent (1960s-present) 'traditions of resistance' within UK food activism. Blake's (2018) oral history of UK food activism offers unique insight into some activities, which include participation in and organising of community growing projects (Triall, 2021), bulk buying groups (Forno et al, 2015) and the development of 'alternative food networks (AFN's). The building of alternative food networks, which include local food initiatives built around alternative production and distribution of food takes many forms. The establishment of local food co-operatives (Hingley et al, 2012), community supported agriculture (Cone and Myhre, 2000) as well as the proliferation of markets for local affordable food represent a few. These practices have been conceptualised differently within the academy, for example through Lang's 'locavorism' (Lang & Heasman, 2004) and the banner of 'slow food' (Jones et al, 2003). Similarly, other political movements for systemic change in the food system have developed alongside food sovereignty, namely food justice. While food justice as a framework is largely associated with North America and racial justice around the food system (see Alkon and Agyeman, 2011) its focus on systemic constraints to affordable, healthy food and equity in the food system is applicable to the UK (see Coulson & Milbourn, 2021). However, food justice along with other expressions of food activism

mentioned above have largely gone unstudied in the UK context. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight the activities of various food and environment movements in the UK as they demonstrate the rich 'traditions of resistance' surrounding food activism beyond the focus of this thesis.

In pointing to these traditions of resistance, I highlight that the food sovereignty movement has emerged - and is still emerging - from an inherited legacy of resistance in the UK. This legacy is often implicit, though it can have explicit iterations in pointing to specific radical ancestors that engaged in struggles similar to that of the current movement. However, food sovereignty in the UK has also emerged -and continues to emerge- from a radical past that shares much in common with the values, ideals and strategies of the international movement of the LVC. In this way, it is perhaps not surprising that food sovereignty as a collective action frame and social movement found resonance in the UK. Particularly in England, the legacy of landed resistance, utopias and popular struggle resonate with local and national history and activist tradition. Similarly, food sovereignty provides a unifying language and frame for collective struggles that span across borders, which enables those advocating for food sovereignty to share a common foundation. Thus, the malleability and shared struggle of food sovereignty means it is invoked across contexts and is used by peasant farmers in the Amazon and small-scale growers in Devon.

Thus, we can understand the food sovereignty movement in England as being inspired and influenced by the strategic direction and social movement framing of the international sphere, while standing in solidarity with international struggles for land and the right to food. However, this movement is also born of domestic radical traditions of green and socialist activism. While this radical tradition and history are not necessarily consciously understood, as noted by McKay (1998) and Flesher-Fominaya (2015), it continues to influence the nature of food sovereignty in this context. I suggest that the radical traditions and legacies of previous iterations of activism provided a framework for resistance that those working to achieve values of autonomy and control in the food system were able to identify. Predating the language and frame of food sovereignty, which I discuss further in Chapter 6, these activist traditions provided language, values and strategies that were subsequently shared in the ideals and visions of food sovereignty. As a result, I echo McAdam (1995) in suggesting that the similarity with movements of the past has influenced the adoption of food sovereignty as a movement in the present-day UK context.

## 2.3 Food Sovereignty – A practice-based movement?

Exploring food sovereignty in the UK through a social movement lens enables a richer understanding of its form, organisation, and expression. As a result, this section of the chapter illustrates the ways in which the UKFSM is a social movement, despite not conforming to specific definitions of social movements or fitting neatly within popular typologies. I use Della Porta and Diani's (2006) conceptual framework for characterising social movements to explore formal and informal networks that exist within and between groups within the movement, the nature of collective identity, and the extent to which conflictual relations with contention towards an 'other' is necessary for a social movement. I also discuss the extent to which engagement with some form of protest is necessary for food sovereignty to be considered a movement. I use this framework as a guide to explore the shape and form of food sovereignty in the UK, rather than using it to rigidly define the food sovereignty movement. Instead, it provides a vantage point from which to discuss the UKFSM as a social movement. I begin by exploring the formal and informal networks present in the movement before discussing the nature of collective identity.

### *2.3.1 Informal and Formal Networks:*

For Diani and Della Porta (2006, p.21) 'dense informal networks' are part of social movement processes that engage 'both individual and organized actors, while keeping their autonomy and independence […] in sustained exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals'. As such the presence of these networks are integral to social movement organising and mobilisation. These dense networks are present in the UKFSM both formally and informally.

As discussed in Section 2.1 of this chapter, organisations and individuals within the UKFSM are connected and interact through their shared membership of the LWA. Through membership in the national wing of the movement, organisations interact, and share knowledge and best practice based on experience. This is evident at national gatherings of the LWA such as Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and the Land Skills Fair, which bring individuals from across the movement together to share ideas, learn from one another and celebrate being part of the UKFSM (see LWA, 2022a). Similarly, connections between members of the movement are also evident in the continual and enduring relationships of exchange that exist within and between member organisations of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) represented by the orange triangle in Figure 1.0. Helen W, a co-founder of Kindling, explained the 'idea of the network was to create a formal space where people could join, where we could do more than the conversations, we have with people we already know' (2019). In this sense, the FSIN connects

the practice and theory-making work of grassroots organisations across the UK that are offering a version of a Farmstart programme. In doing so, the network acts as both a forum for discussion and reflection on best practice whilst also connecting the grassroots with the national wing of the movement, with the LWA facilitating and FSIN.

As alluded to in the vignette that opened this chapter, connections also exist between individuals and collectives within the movement that share common goals and agroecological practices that seek to change the food system. In this way, it demonstrates a 'bond which extends beyond any specific protest action [or] campaign' (Diani, 2003, p.305) to informal relationships and connections based on shared values and practices. For example, key actors within grassroots organisations often have personal and professional relationships with individuals working in other organisations within the movement. These connections and ties enable and facilitate an exchange of knowledge and expertise between individuals across the movement, with these networks spanning from the local to the national scale as demonstrated in Figure 1.0. The relationships between different levels of the movement are evident in the exchange and movement of people across and between organisations. Brian, an OrganicLea co-op member, captured this when discussing the movement of individuals from grassroots projects like OrganicLea to work within the LWA or other organisations within the movement. 'Yeah, we should capture that, but we don't. It comes up in random conversations where you can look back and go oh yeah, they came from OrganicLea' (Brian, 2019).

These examples point to the connections and interactions that exist between individuals and groups within the movement. They demonstrate that the UKFSM is made up of dense informal connections and held together within the formal membership structure of the LWA.

### *2.3.2 Collective Identity:*

An often-highlighted hallmark of social movements is that of collective identity, a broad concept increasingly applied to explain movement mobilisation and participation over time. Diani and Della Porta (2006) refer to collective identity as bringing 'a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause, which enables single activists and/or organizations to regard themselves as inextricably linked to other actors' (p. 21). Beyond its application to understanding movement building and allegiance, collective identity can be understood as a sense-making process through which members of a movement relate their practice or action to the aims and objectives of the wider movement. Yet, there is little consensus on how to qualify and identify collective identity.

Markers of collective identity are often described as boundaries and distinctiveness of 'us' and 'them' (see Rupp and Taylor, 1999); a public and identifiable identity -i.e., symbols, language etc (Snow, 2001) - and a shared sense of 'we-ness' among those within the movement. Yet debates around the nature of collective identity can largely be grouped into those that see it mostly as a 'process' and those who understand it as a 'product'. For scholars like Snow (2001) collective identity is primarily a product of movement action, something that is 'generative of a sense of agency that can be a powerful impetus to collective action, but it functions as well… as the constructed social object to which the movement's protagonists, adversaries, and audience(s) respond…' (Ibid, p.4). In this way, collective identity is produced within the movement and is visible to those outside of it. Flesher- Fominaya (2010) explains that the products of a movement act as 'shorthand' for identifying 'insiders from outsiders' and are 'encapsulated [in] key movement frames, issues, tactics, identities, ideologies' (p.397).

The Nyeleni Declaration could be considered a product of collective identity produced by the international FSM. The values and definition of food sovereignty articulated by the international movement are shared by the LWA and the UKFSM as discussed in Section 2.1 of this chapter. Similarly, there are visible and public expressions of self-hood within the UKFSM. The LWA's Theory of Change articulates shared values of solidarity, cooperation, mutual aid, grassroots organising and collective solutions to create possibilities for social and political transformation (see Landworkers' Alliance, 2022b). They also stress the value of small-scale agroecological practices and small-scale producers, and community control over food supply and production in the organisations guiding principles. Many of these programmatic values are echoed by grassroots organisations in their own programmatic statements and expressions of beliefs and intent. For example, Kindling emphasises 'food, the land and the people who produce it' in their theory of change (Kindling Trust, 2022). More specifically, they discuss the values of: 'empowering communities to challenge the root causes of social problems'; democratic and cooperative working structures; agroecology; and solidarity with the food sovereignty movement (Kindling Trust, 2020).

While the programmatic statements and values demonstrate the products of collective identity within the UKFSM, these products alone are not sufficient for understanding the nature of collective identity within the movement. Collective identity is not always something you can see or capture in 'a public pronouncement of status' (Friedman and McAdam, 1992) or a symbol of collective identity and belonging. In this sense, collective identity is more than its explicit manifestation; it also exists implicitly in shared values, beliefs, and culture within a movement. Similarly, focusing on the products of the FSM doesn't necessarily tell us much about the

meaning that is attached to them. For example, the Nyeleni Declaration and the famous slogan of '*Viva Campesina*!' may act as a visible expression of selfhood, but individuals and groups within the UK movement will associate with them to varying degrees. As a result, it is necessary to look beyond the products of collective identity to understand the degree of association and identification with a movement's identity. This is where a processual understanding of collective identity is useful.

The 'process' of collective identity takes identities to be produced by and through a relational process in which actors negotiate, understand, and construct their actions (Melucci, 1995). In this sense, a processual view of collective identity does not view these identities as static, but in motion, constantly produced and evaluated through interaction by individuals within a movement to formulate a 'shared definition' (Melucci, 1989, p.34). This process incorporates three dimensions: 1) the formation of 'cognitive frameworks concerning the goals, means and environment of action'; 2) 'activating relationships among actors; and, 3) making 'emotional investments, which enable individuals to recognise themselves in each other' (Ibid, p.35). Viewing collective identity through this lens allows for nuance and variability in the degree to which different elements are satisfied in the movement processes of collective identity formation. In this sense, it is not a question of whether a movement has or hasn't got a collective identity, but the nature of its process. This allows for discussion on how collective identities are formed and held at both a collective and individual level within the movement, a task that later chapters (Chapter 7) of this thesis take on.

In tackling this discussion, I ask questions about how collective identities are held within the UKFSM, and why there is variation in association and how this impacts the movement. In considering these questions, I borrow from Flesher-Fominaya (2019) to argue that collective identity can still exist without a shared articulation or definition. In this sense, a lack of consistency in the meaning or definition of a movement is not indicative of an absence of collective identity; instead, it points to its fluid and emergent nature. Focusing on the fluidity of collective identity is not to dismiss its more tangible characteristics, or the 'product' of movement action (see Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2015). Rather, a processual analysis helps to account for a richer understanding of the relationship between collective identity and collective action. Recognising cultural practices, shared experiences and shared 'logics of action' (see Chapter 6) over 'given' identities helps to clarify what keeps activists 'working together' and feeling a 'reciprocal recognition with others as having a shared belonging to a movement or movement community' (Flesher-Fominaya, 2019).

This chapter builds on Flesher-Fominaya (2010, 2019) to argue that collective identity is an active relationship between individual feelings of connection and belonging and the collective expression of this in the form of movement action, which in turn reinforces or reconfigures individual feelings of connection. Without both, collective identity can, as Flesher-Fominaya (Ibid) argues, remain an individual's own privately held beliefs and feelings of association, which cannot be subsequently described as 'collective'. As such, later Chapters of this thesis discuss the processual nature of collective identity in the UKFSM and the ways it is associated with and its variability.

### *2.3.3 Conflictual Collective Action and Protest:*

Della-Porta and Diani (2006) stress the importance of political and/or cultural conflict in social movements that seek to oppose or promote social change. For these authors, conflict refers to the 'oppositional relationships between actors who seek control of the same stake' (ibid, pp.21). This position speaks to the centrality of contentious politics as a paradigm for explaining social movement mobilisations and activity. However, engagement in direct political or even cultural 'conflict' does not necessarily account for the activity and approach of all social movements. As Staggenborg & Taylor (2004, p.38) have argued, contentious politics can be 'too narrowly focused on political action and protest events'.

Within the UKFSM there is engagement with a degree of contentious action and public protest. As illustrated in Section 2.1 of this chapter, the LWA takes on a more visible and outwardly contentious role that seeks to lobby, influence, and campaign for policy change from the state and local authorities. Simultaneously, the LWA also seeks to influence the broader context in which agroecology operates, changing narratives and raising public awareness around 'organic', 'local' and agroecological food production. Furthermore, the role of protest within the movement is not irrelevant, for the movement annually holds the Good Food, Good Farming march through London that attracts members from all over the country (LWA, 2022d). Similarly, at COP26 hosted in Glasgow, the LWA led the Farmers, Foresters, and Landworkers Block in the protest march through the streets of Glasgow on the Global Day of Action (LWA, 2021b), while also holding the Agroecology Hub on the edge of the city facilitating events and discussion about food sovereignty throughout the COP summit (ibid).

However, the examples above are not the primary form of activity within the movement. Much of its collective action centres on 'prefigurative' practices that seek to demonstrate alternative material structures and social relations for a changed food system. This is especially true of the daily practices at the grassroots of the movement, which I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 5.

As such most of the movement's activity does not manifest in a flashy display of outwardly contentious action, as is the case for social movements whose 'repertoire of action' is concentrated more heavily around the tool of protest. In some ways, this has parallels with lifestyle movement action that is sustained and ongoing rather than episodic, as is the case with action centred on contentious politics. Haenfler, Johnson and Jones (2012) describe lifestyle movement action as being 'private, ongoing action that is interweaved into everyday life'. Yet, in the case of the UKFSM this action is not necessarily 'private' but mostly local and collective in nature, in that it often engages communities in building agroecological alternatives.

Given that most of the movement's activity is centred around agroecological practice, using a marker of conflictual-based collective action to demarcate social movement activity is not necessarily the most useful indicator for the UKFSM. However, this does not mean that the movement's practice is apolitical or only an expression of 'lifestyle activism' centred on an alternative means of consumption. Nor does it mean those engaging in these practices are necessarily apolitical or understand their action as removed from the political sphere, as de Moor et al (2019) argue in their study of political participation in environmental alternatives. This is arguably because the UKFSM has a clear oppositional stance towards the existing food system, standing against industrial agriculture and major food corporations. In doing so, the movement positions itself as offering solutions to these problems through promoting, supporting, and engaging in a collective practice of agroecological alternatives.

These daily growing and training practices of agroecology are not separate from work that is more expressly political, like acts of protest or the campaigns of the LWA. Rather, these practices are the foundation of the movement and provide a platform on which the movement can demonstrate alternative practices. In doing so, the UKFSM exemplifies an embedded logic of social change that is built on legitimating the movement's action through 'best-practices' and encouraging diffusion and emulation by others. I discuss this logic in greater detail in Chapter 6, but it is important to stress that this approach is akin to Holloway's (2010) *Crack Capitalism* that is built on the proliferation and expansion of cracks within the existing system to achieve social change. As a result, these practices and the logics that inform them demonstrate that, to a certain extent, the 'political' is understood and pursued through a material practice. This, I argue, speaks to the nature of food sovereignty as a movement that is distinct from other social movements that make claims on social or expressly political goals. In this regard, food sovereignty is firmly grounded in place and ultimately rests on sustainable relations with the land, as the movement is predicated on achieving social and ecological justice for both producers and consumers (Timmermann, Félix and Tittonell, 2018). As such, the practice of

agroecology and the rootedness of collective alternatives reflects the tangible and material nature of food production. Thus, these alternative practices, both in terms of their material focus and the social relations that they engender, can be understood as political expressions of an alternative food system.

As a result, we can think of the UKFSM as being engaged in socially transformative processes that attempt to offer alternatives to the status quo. Arguably, movements that are engaged in projects of social transformation offer possibilities for a different imaginary to the dominant system and are actively involved in building material and relational conditions for a 'new order of life' (Blumer, 1951 in Edwards, 2014, p.4). The socially transformative practices of movements like the UKFSM offer a perspective on social movement categories that rests less rigidly on the need for active contention through protest. Instead, the movement can be understood to engage in what Edwards (ibid) terms 'collective, organized efforts at social change' in actively engaging in alternative growing practices and seeking to proliferate and develop alternative relationships with food and nature. In doing so the movement cannot be dismissed as 'apolitical', nor can it be typologized into binaries used to distinguish between contentious political expressions or 'consensus movements' that lack 'a conflictual element' (Della-Porta and Diani, 2006, pp. 23). Instead, engagement in processes of social transformation is a marker of social movement activity that doesn't necessarily require visible expressions of contention to qualify the UKFSM as a social movement. Thus, I argue it is more useful to understand the political nature of movements like the UKFSM through a lens of social transformation, which creates space to question how these processes are unfolding and the extent to which they can be considered transformative. I pick up on these questions in the final chapter of this thesis.

## 2.4 Conclusions

This chapter has explained the structure and the nature of the UKFSM and demonstrated how it has been translated from the international context and applied to the UK. It has also shown that food sovereignty has converged with other forms of environmental and activist legacies, to produce a specific expression of food sovereignty activism in the UK. The last section of this chapter has also discussed the ways in which the UKFSM can be considered a social movement, drawing on the conceptual framework of Della-Porta and Diani (2006).

It has demonstrated that the UKFSM is made up of dense informal and formal networks that connect the local and national levels of the movement with groups connected through interpersonal relationships and shared membership of the LWA. The UKFSM also produces products of its collective identity as exemplified by the public statements of the LWA and

grassroots organisations. However, the movement's collective identity extends beyond this to collective values, beliefs and culture which are part of a continually evolving process. As such, collective identity can be understood as present in visible expressions of self-hood and as an emergent process that is variable and resonates with collectives and individuals in the movement differently. I discuss associations with collective identity in greater detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis, however, I stress along with Felsher-Fominaya (2019) that variability in collective identity is not indicative of an absence of collective identity but points to its fluid nature.

Similarly, this chapter has discussed contentious action and protest in relation to the movement and argued that while the movement is not primarily engaged in contentious action and forms of protest, these strategies are not absent, as demonstrated by the acts of protest at the level of the LWA. Furthermore, it has shown that the movement is engaged in the building of socially transformative alternatives, which are necessary and useful markers for delineating social movement activity instead of resting this on the visible presentation of contention and protest. Given this discussion, this chapter argues that the UKFSM should be understood as a social movement: a movement that can be identified by its networks and interconnections, its emergent process of developing collective identity, and its politics that are expressed in moments of protest and in the continual building of alternatives. In arguing that the UKFSM be treated as a social movement, this chapter does not suggest that it satisfies the above categories perfectly, for there is nuance and variability in the degree to which connections exist between levels of the movement and similarly, the extent to which a collective identity is shared.

Nevertheless, this thesis argues that the UKFSM is an emergent social movement, that differs in strategy from movements primarily centred on active contention and protest. Yet, it is engaged in a political project of social transformation and is connected under the banner of the LWA. It is the task of later chapters of this thesis to discuss the opportunities and tensions that emerge within the UKFSM.

# Chapter 3: Literature Review – Discussing Food Sovereignty as a movement for social and political change.

This chapter introduces the theoretical approach of this thesis which is grounded in an analysis of the movement's culture as a means of understanding its politics. It argues that through an analysis of the culture of the UKFSM, we can explore the meaning associated with collective movement action and understand how food sovereignty is translated and adapted to this context.

The first section reviews relevant literature concerning food sovereignty as a concept and movement, while pointing to the need for a cultural approach to understand processes of translation and the nature of the movement's politics in the UK. Section 3.2 explains the theoretical basis for a cultural analysis of the UKFSM, while drawing on discussions of culture among social movement scholarship. It argues that culture is a process of meaning-making and provides a lens through which the process of movement formation can be unpacked. In doing so it moves away from deterministic discussions of culture to argue that culture can be employed strategically but not exclusively, with aspects of it emerging organically. In discussing culture, identity-making and consciousness-raising are introduced as fundamental processes that inform the creation of selfhood within the movement. These themes are returned to in later chapters, with this chapter emphasising that the construction of collective identities and consciousness-raising are active and not innately given. This section argues that the nature of collective identity formation within the movement's culture can influence its action and the degree to which it is shared.

Section 3.3 moves from theoretical discussions of cultural formation to an analysis of the practices of the movement. It highlights the value and position of social practice theory in analysing movement practice, from the point of view that the social world can be understood through the description and observation of its practices. Borrowing from the Freirean position of praxis (1970), this chapter argues that ideas and action exist in a dialectic and thus we can understand the movement's action as indicative of its ideas. In doing so it introduces the prefigurative logics of the movement and explores debates within this literature on the nature of the political approaches to social transformation. However, this chapter begins by turning attention to discussions of food sovereignty as a concept and movement within existing literature.

## 3.1 The Politics of Food Sovereignty and Challenges in Translation:

A wealth of literature now exists in urban geography and critical food studies that chart the development of food sovereignty (FS) as a concept and framework (see Patel, 2009; Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe, 2010; Schiavoni, 2017). As explained in Chapter 1, food sovereignty has expanded beyond mere alterity to become a rallying cry, a political project, a social movement and a theoretical framework for collective action that has resonance across the globe (see Brent, Schiavoni and Alonso-Fradejas, 2015). In its expansion and development as an international movement and framework it is considered to offer diverse solutions to the dominant food system, centred on international solidarity, mobilisation around family, indigenous and agroecological agriculture, rural livelihoods and working in harmony with the environment (Wittman, 2009). Yet, as noted by Borras (2004) how these solutions are pursued and interpreted is broad among the membership of LVC. This reflects the breadth of the principles of food sovereignty set out in the Nyeleni Declaration, which are not prescriptive in nature but malleable. This malleability has enabled spatial and scalar processes of diffusion, with FS invoked and enacted in contexts across the world. Much scholarly attention has attempted to capture this diversity in interpretation, placing emphasis on the challenges and potential tensions of applying the concept and collective action frame across a wide terrain.

Such debates have drawn on examples of FS movements and practices in the Global South, with significant attention given to Latin America and the example of the Movement for Landless Workers in Brazil (MST). Much of this discussion has centred on redistributive land reform (Akram-Lodhi, 2007; Rosset, 2009), critical education for food sovereignty (Meek, 2015; Meek and Tarlau, 2016) and how to institutionalise food sovereignty to influence public policy (Araujo, 2010; Wittman and Blesh, 2017). A growing body of literature has also focused on the suitability and influence of FS activism in the Global North. Scholars have raised questions about translating and applying food sovereignty to this context, focusing particularly on the experience of the US and Canada. Themes emerging from this research centre on: contextual constraints of industrialised countries in realising food sovereignty (Fairbairn, 2012; Cox and Nisen, 2014; Navin and Dieterle, 2018); how food sovereignty might be applied to the Global North without undermining struggles in the Global South (Bernstein, 2014; Navin and Dieterle, 2018) and tensions between consumptive and productive approaches, with examples from North America emphasising consumptively driven strategies (Block *et al.*, 2012; Timmermann, Félix and Tittonell, 2018). These themes illustrate an interest within existing literature in understanding how food sovereignty can be operationalised in contexts beyond their original expression, and

what this might look like in practice. Yet, to understand this process, I argue there is a need for greater place-based analysis of food sovereignty, in how it is applied and its potential within a given context.

Within existing literature very little academic research has focused on the application of food sovereignty in the UK. Shawki (2015) offers one of the few exceptions in drawing a comparison between the experience of the UK and Canada. However, explorations of food sovereignty in North America have demonstrated the importance of case study analysis in understanding the strategic approach for FS movements within a given context, and how it is operationalised across scale and constrained by contextual limitations. Clendenning et al (2016) and Fairbairn (2012) find that FS in the United States is not invoked explicitly at the grassroots by those practising food sovereignty through 'community supported agriculture, urban gardens and farmers markets', and is instead promoted at the national level. Similarly, there has been repeated emphasis on FS failing to prioritise the goals of disadvantaged participants and emancipatory movements in this context (see Alkon and Mares, 2012; Clendenning, Dressler and Richards, 2016; Navin and Dieterle, 2018); and FS discourse not resonating with urban communities that mobilise around issues of racial justice (Holt-Giménez and Wang, 2011). Consequently, the suitability of food sovereignty and whether it can operate meaningfully within this context is the subject of considerable debate.

The discussions above centred in North America have purchase for the UK, given the commonality in political and economic structures at a macro level. However, as analysis of the US show, there is a need for in-depth contextual discussion of food sovereignty to understand how it is applied in context and what processes of translation might look like. This is supported by the discussion in Chapter 2, that illustrates food sovereignty in the UK met existing activist cultures and environmental histories to produce a unique expression of food sovereignty. This is coupled with the unique history of land rights in the UK and struggles for land access, which continues to influence the UKFSM in its efforts to gain access to land (see Shrubsole, 2019). Similarly, the dominance of the UK retail sector in the UK food system has created a particularly imbalanced market, with supermarkets having a monopoly and exerting significant power to set low purchase prices for farm produce impacting opportunities for farmers getting a 'fair' price for their produce (Hawkes, 2008; Clapp, 2020). I highlight this context as it influences the nature of food sovereignty in the UK, which is not transposed onto a blank canvas, but one with its own embedded legacies of activism and particular constraints. As such, how food sovereignty is translated to this context and what those processes might consist of requires further attention.

However, beyond Shawki's (2015) discussion of the transnational diffusion of food sovereignty to the UK, there has been no scholarly attention given to the emergence of food sovereignty in this context or the nature of its politics. More literary attention has centred on the nature of agroecological practices in the UK (see Tornaghi, 2017, 2019) and its transformative potential (see Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2019). As highlighted in the literature on agroecology, expressions of alternative practices like local food production, agroecological methods and the development of alternative food networks are not necessarily discussed as 'political' in the UK, or the Global North more widely. Tornaghi (2019, p.5) speaks to this in her research on urban agroecological practices, which are rarely considered in themselves to be 'political'. In this regard, food production, especially that which is small-scale, on the urban fringes or in the countryside is not commonly discussed as a political act. However, as McKay (2011) and Pottinger (2017) have argued alternative production strategies represent a 'quiet activism' that transgresses expected norms, and enables material connection and transformation of land and 'urban space' (Tornaghi, 2019, p.6). Nevertheless, the overall lack of political recognition of this form of activism, reflects the lack of political framing in popular discourse around food, farming and agriculture in the UK.

Given this, much discussion, until now of the practices of food sovereignty in the UK has engaged urban geographers rather than social movement scholars. This is largely due to the lack of politicisation of the practices of food sovereignty discussed above, but also reflects the political nature of the UKFSM. Resistance to situating these practices within a movement framework, relates to the complexity of categorising the movement discussed in Chapter 2. For the UKFSM is relatively new and doesn't conform to conventional categories of social movements, particularly with regards to its collective mobilisation which is not primarily organised around contentious action or protest (see Section 2.3 of Chapter 2). This does not disregard the contributions of social movement and agroecological scholarship that has discussed transformative practices like those of the UKFSM as prefigurative (see de Moor, Catney and Doherty, 2019; Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2019). However, this literature hasn't analysed these expressions through the lens of a social movement framework or sought to understand the internal dynamics of its culture. This thesis enriches discussion on the expressions of the UKFSM by treating it as a social movement and understanding its politics as part of the movement's cultural formation.

Similarly, the alternative practices of the movement are often framed within 'lifestyle activist' literature, where everyday practices are taken as the point of contestation and reimagining (see (Haenfler, Johnson and Jones, 2012). Thus, slow food, local food, alternative diets such as

veganism and alternative food networks (AFNs) are framed as examples of an embodied politics that it attempting to prefigure a desired future in the here-and-now (Portwood-Stacer, 2013; de Moor, 2017). Lifestyle activism is useful to an extent in understanding the practice of the UKFSM, however, it does not account for the range of activity within the movement, that extends beyond individual, consumptive practices. It has also been criticised by Kenis (2016) for locating 'the political' in the individual as a consumer rather than an 'ecological citizen'. Similarly, its focus on individual action over collectively organised action as a means for achieving change has been questioned in its effectiveness for realising transformation to the food system (Schlosberg and Coles, 2016). As such existing literature on alternative agricultural practices has grappled with understanding the practices of food sovereignty as political and transformative.

In highlighting debates in the existing literature on food sovereignty challenges emerge for how we can understand the politics of the UKFSM. The movement's politics is not immediately apparent as evident in discussion on the nature of its practices which are not expressly political in nature. Similarly, the collective action of the movement is not primarily centred on contentious action, thus the practices associated with food sovereignty in the UK are often discussed within the literature on lifestyle activism. Questions also centre on the application of food sovereignty as a master frame of the international movement to the UK. For the application of this concept and collective action frame requires adaptation and translation to fit the UK's unique contextual history and specific constraints and opportunities that determine its form. I argue that these challenges are processes of political sense-making inherent in the movement, that can be understood through an analysis of cultural formation. The subsequent sections of this chapter argue cultural formation in movements is how meaning is constructed which informs and shapes the nature of its practices. Thus, studying the culture of the movement can capture the processes of meaning-making inherent in the movement, which the challenges above are part of. How does the movement understand itself and how does it act as a consequence are questions about the political. As such the following sections of this chapter discuss the suitability of a cultural lens to an understanding of the politics of the UKFSM.

## 3.2 The meaning of Food Sovereignty as a culture and practice:

Having discussed concepts and debates surrounding the suitability of FS in the Global North, it is necessary to turn attention to understanding how FS is adapted and translated in practice. These processes can be understood as part of the construction of culture, as Klandermans & Johnson (1995, pg.5) explain, in analysing the culture of social movements. Processes of

adaptation and translation are part of a search for, or rather the construction of, meaning. In this regard, how movements like the UKFSM make sense of themselves and bring meaning to their practice and theories of social change is through a process of cultural formation. Thus, it is necessary to study cultural processes to understand what meaning is produced and how meaning-making processes influence action. I first discuss culture and cultural formation in relation to social movements before moving on to debates on the nature and role of meaning-making in cultural formation.

While there is a wealth of debate among scholars as to the nature of culture and how to conceptualise it (see Klandermans & Johnson, 1995; Polletta, 2008), this thesis builds on the premise of Geertz that 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it […] an interpretive one in search of meaning' (1973, p.5). Yet, in applying this to collective processes of cultural formation, I depart from Geertz's description to emphasise that culture is not solely the product of individual or collective agency. The existing cultural context, as Klandermans and Johnson (1995) argue, influences social movement formation, while these movements simultaneously make and remake culture. It is the construction of meaning through the process of cultural formation that this thesis speaks to, focusing on the 'webs' that the UKFSM has spun, reconfigured and inherited.

Swidler (1986) argues that this sense-making process of cultural formation can be thought of as an assemblage of cultural 'tools' that people use to construct strategies of action. From this perspective, the idea, values, symbols, stories, and world views of a movement, create possibilities for different outcomes depending on how these 'tools' are employed (see Swidler, 1986, pg.277). In pointing to this process of cultural formation, I distance myself from instrumental understandings of cultural processes such as frame theory (see Snow and Benford, 1988), which tends to discuss culture through a strategic lens. As highlighted by Baumgarten et al (2014), frame theory points to cognitive decision-making in the formation of frames, which can lead frame theory towards questions of efficiency in the use of frames. This arguably speaks to traditional approaches in studying social movements, which have long been dominated by resource mobilisation theories and political process analysis and which take a more deterministic and positivist approach to questions of movement mobilisation (Baumgarten, Daphi and Ullrich, 2014, p.4). However, this is not to dismiss the value of frame theory to the study of culture, as Benford and Snow's (2000) 'collective action framework' is helpful in drawing connections between meaning and action in movements. As Snow and Benford (2000, p.64) explain, framing 'renders events or occurrences meaningful, and thereby function to

organise experience and guide action'. Building on this framework can enlighten discussion of the relationship between shared meaning and shared action within the movement, following the argument that the movement's approach and strategy are influenced by how it frames problems and positions itself in response.

Nevertheless, this approach to the study of cultural formation is not sufficient for exploring the cultural dimension of movements that are not explicit nor strategically organised. Swidler (1986, p.277) refers to this in explaining that 'people know more culture than they *use'* (emphasis Baumgarten et al, 2014). A movement can have a culture without strategically applying it to achieve objectives. Thus, a cultural analysis not vested solely in collective action framing can turn attention towards the implicit aspects of culture, which are not necessarily operationalised in the pursuit of predetermined goals but emerge and evolve within the movement's culture. This is particularly true of cultural values and emotions within movements, which I discuss empirically within the UKFSM in Chapter 6.

Understanding the role and emergence of cultural values and beliefs within a movement necessitates a broader view of meaning-making in relation to cultural formation. Gillan (2008) argues frame theory has tended to focus on processes of strategic framing in generating meaning through the development of individual and collective action frames. In this regard, meaning is largely located in the generation of ideas, which are communicated and disseminated through prognostic, diagnostic and collective frames (see Benford & Snow, 2000). This focus on idea generation is helpful for understanding social movement practice, in that ideas are linked to collective-action mobilisation, pointing to the often-implicit understanding that collective ideas and beliefs motivate action. Similarly, Jamison & Eyerman's (1991, p.48) 'cognitive practice' suggests that movements are knowledge producers, generating 'science and ideology' through the development and enaction of ideas. However, capturing meaning from ideas is largely centred on the study of language, arguably reflecting the linguistic turn in methodologies that focuses on the construction and dissemination of language as the medium of social analysis (see Glock and Kalhat, 2018). Yet, meaning cannot necessarily be reduced to cognitive processes that are communicated, nor does an analysis of the ideas present within a movement tell us very much about the extent to which they are shared. As noted by Gillan (2008, p.252) it is 'unclear how a collective construct' like collective action frames 'can influence behaviour without also operating at the individual, cognitive level'. Thus, understanding the meaning produced through the culture of movements requires going beyond the dissemination of ideas to the meaning held in shared values and beliefs and their relationship with action.

In this vein, identity-making and consciousness raising inform the creation of selfhood within a movement, for these processes seek to establish *who we are* within a movement and are subsequently linked to discussions of movement mobilisation and commitment (see Gamson, 1991). Melucci (1995, p.44) explains that collective identity formation is the creation of 'we' among collective actors that not only distinguishes them from others but instils a sense of meaning through 'the orientation of action, field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place'. In this regard, collective identity is a process of shared meaning construction that builds affective ties among members of the movement that share this identity and similarly shape it. From this position, collective identity stimulates collective action, the meaning of which is constantly being constructed through 'social relationships within resources and limits' (ibid, p.58). This is not to suggest that these identities are singular, as this process produces multiple identities that are related differently within the expanse of a social movement. However, this process generates meaning, that is as Taylor and Whittier (1992) argue constantly being negotiated and constructed through shared interaction. In this sense, cultural meanings are linked to collective action, how people understand themselves, influences their practices and the meaning they attach to what they do. As such a cultural analysis helps in understanding the relationship between meaning and how this is generated or reinforced through action. Yet, I stress along with Gamson (1991) that collective identities and the meanings these identities evoke are not given but need to be actively constructed. Thus, it is the task of later chapters of this thesis to explore the extent to which there is active construction of collective identities and political consciousness raising in the movement. I argue that the extent to which these processes are collective, as a core task of movement-making work, can influence the action or shared practices carried out by participants.

Furthermore, the process of meaning-making is not linear, with meaning not always 'prefatory to action', as Benford (1997, p.410) claims, for meaning is generated through collective action. In this way engagement can act as catalyst for consciousness-raising through the 'quiet activism' of Pottinger (2017), instilling meaning through action. This position has much in common with the ideas of critical consciousness developed by Freire (1970), which suggest that political consciousness is formed through engagement with the 'limits' of the existing system. I expand on the Freirean position on consciousness as it relates to a transformative praxis and critical pedagogy in the final section of this chapter. However, I stress here that for Freire (1970), critical engagement with the 'limit situations' of the dominant system is what creates opportunities for social transformation. Such engagement is not necessarily created through participation in movement practice that is not critically reflexive. Morris (1992) takes a similar position in

arguing that political consciousness is created through a dialectical response to processes of human domination. Processes of oppression will create opposing interests that are capable of oppositional consciousness. However, as Taylor and Whittier (1992, p.114) argue, there is no guarantee that political consciousness generated through this activity, will correctly identify structures of oppression and domination. As such, I build on the position of Freire (1970) later in this thesis to argue that the development of collective identity and critical consciousness are essential processes in social transformation. In doing so, I treat collective identity-making and consciousness-raising as self-reinforcing and essential processes in meaning-making, in their influence and effect on connection to the movement and collective action within it.

The discussion of meaning-making above mirrors the processual evolution of food sovereignty as a concept and movement, as Schiavoni (2017, p.13) explains in her analysis of food sovereignty in Venezuela 'there is no predetermined path for food sovereignty, it must be defined and articulated as it is being constructed, through processes that are open-ended, iterative, creative and contentious'. Given this, scholars like Schiavoni (2017); Shattuck, Schiavoni and VanGelder (2015) and Iles & De Wit (2015) advocate for studying food sovereignty through a relational lens, with its meaning both conceptually and in practice subject to processes of ongoing contestation and negotiation (Schiavoni, 2017, p.3). Thus, a relational approach does not treat food sovereignty as static but as a 'living breathing process' (see Shattuck et al, 2015, p.429) that cannot be understood purely through its outcomes. Instead, its emergent nature requires, as Schiavoni (2017) argues, further study to understand the opportunities and challenges that emerge through a relational process of interaction of FS with pre-existing 'objects, events, places or identities' (Hart, 2006 in Schiavoni, 2017; p. 20). A relational approach which views meaning as constantly constructed is helpful for understanding food sovereignty as an emergent process that engages with existing cultures and meanings in ways that seek to create opportunities for social change.

This thesis treats FS as a process and argues that we can understand the opportunities of FS as a concept and movement by treating it as iterative and relational, constructed through a constant engagement with 'entrenched power structures' (Schiavoni, 2017, p.21) to create possibilities for change. At the same time, this provides a vantage point to understand tensions that emerge conceptually and in practice within this process. Having discussed how meaning is constructed through a process of translation, the following section moves on to discuss the relationship between meaning and the practices of the movement.

## 3.3 A movement for cultural and material change:

The final section of this chapter focuses on the practice of the movement. I argue that to understand processes of translation in FS it is necessary to explore the reality of these processes in the movement's practice, borrowing from the logics of social practice theory (SPT). In doing so, I focus on the material nature of the movement's efforts to effect change and relate this to the cultural formation and debates in prefigurative literature surrounding material and cultural transformation. I discuss divisions of labour within these practices drawing on Hannah Arendt's theory of human action (1958), while also pointing to Paulo Freire (1970) in the transformative potential of praxis in prefiguring an alternative food system.

As discussed in the previous section, practice plays a critical role in meaning-making, both as an expression of ideas, beliefs, and values and as a means through which affective ties, identities and consciousness are created. Thus, studying the collective practices of FS movements can inform an understanding of their culture and logics for achieving social change. Given this relationship, and the fact that the UKFSM is primarily engaged in everyday practices and the construction of material alternatives, it is helpful to draw on social practice theory (SPT) as a frame for understanding the role of practice in movement culture.

### *3.3.1 Social Practice Theory:*

Practices are complex and not easily reduced to a single definition or categorisation. As Nicolini (2012) suggests defining practice contradicts its 'open-ended' nature, subsequently locking it in to a determined and rigid framework. It is perhaps helpful to understand practices as made up of bundles of connections and material arrangements that come together to form the social (see Schatzki, 2016). In this way, practice is not distinguished from the social, but rather the social world is given meaning and order through doing. As Wenger (1998; p.47) argues practice is doing, 'but not just doing in and of itself… it is doing in historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what people do […] in this sense, practice is always social practice'. From this perspective, the social world can be understood through the observation and rich description of these practices. Thus, social practice theory has relevance for Nicolini (2012) - as well as other social practice theorists - in its ability offer a new vantage point for understanding social organisation, capturing how it manifests in everyday life and is reproduced. Or perhaps more accurately, for the purpose of understanding food system transformation: how these practices are transgressive and part of a process of reimagining.

In privileging action over ideas, strategy and motivations, practice theory builds on an ontological position that suggests we can best understand the social world through interpretation of what is being created or practised. This follows the methodological impetus of Goffman (1959, 1963) to focus on analysing the relationship between situations and human behaviour, shifting focus from the individual as the social unit to the situations in which those individuals act. Practice theory moves from the point of view of 'practices and their participants' (Spaargaren et al, 2016) and consequently lends itself to immersive research methods that seek to observe and understand group practices, such as those employed in this project. However, in emphasising practice I do not neglect the significance of the ideas, strategies and motivations that inform them. Rather I focus on the expression of practice to unpack the political theorising that gives rise to it, which I expand on in Chapters 5 & 6. This position draws on the theoretical underpinnings of praxis theory (see Paulo Freire, 1970), in suggesting that ideas and action are intertwined in a dialectic relationship. Therefore, ideas inform action but equally these actions inform ideas, through a constant reflexive praxis between the two (see Freire, 1970, p.108-110). This understanding of the relationship between action and ideation moves away from a bifurcation between theory and practice, understanding them as intimately connected. I return to Freire's theory of praxis in the final section of this chapter.

This is illustrated by the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) and the various Farmstart training models that sit within it, encompassing a range of movement practices that combine materials (i.e., physical resources), competencies (i.e., skills and techniques), and meanings (i.e., ideas and motivations - see Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). Though the varied practices of the movement are not limited to these categories, by drawing on the materiality, competencies and meanings of the FSIN we are able to analyse the facets of practice that take both a physical and symbolic form and see these manifestations as an indicator of movement theorising. This points to the meaning held and generated within collective practices, or as Shove and Pantzar (2005) point out the material and symbolic nature of practice that is constituted through shared meaning and interaction with existing cultures and conventions. Thus, we can learn about the ideas and motivations that influence practice, from studying practices themselves. However, symbolic meaning and material practice are not always congruent as alluded to in the previous section's discussion of meaning-making. In this regard, practices do not necessarily follow directly from ideas and logics, nor do they necessarily hold the same symbolic meaning for all practitioners.

Furthermore, SPT provides a useful vantage point for situating material and cultural practices like those of the UKFSM in context, while also acknowledging the influence of historical legacies

and social practice in cultural formation. As Spaargaren et al (2016) argue, situated groups of people derive their identity and existence as social actors from the historically evolving patchwork of social practices that they are part of and help reproduce. This has resonance with the discussion of histories of UK activism in Chapter 2, demonstrating how existing symbolic and historical traditions meet within the evolving contemporary practices of food sovereignty. Nevertheless, SPT's emphasis on social context and history is not to overshadow the role of individual and collective agency in the formation and reproduction of practices. Nor to suggest that the food sovereignty movement is locked in a deterministic sense to the spatially defined constellations of social practices it inherits. Instead, movements, including individual agents, create themselves and their own movement spaces, while also combining or connecting knowledge produced by iterations of other social movements (see Jamison and Eyerman, 1991). Thus, rather than reinscribe old debates of structure vs agency in questions of social change, the value of practice theory is to treat practice as contingent on both agency and present societal and historical practices. Ultimately, this reconceptualizes the relationship between practices and their material condition of structure and process as two-way traffic (Nicolini, 2012), allowing for a fluid and 'open-ended' discussion of practice as an emergent process rather than one which is rigidly fixed or defined.

Despite the advantages of practice theory as an analytical tool, questions have been raised by transition theorists (see Smith *et al.*, 2016) as to its suitability for studying societal transformation, particularly extending beyond individual and micro phenomena (see Brand, 2010). Given that social practice theory has traditionally focused on continuity and the reproduction of practice through everyday actions (i.e. showering, cooking etc.), one could question its ability to account for practices that are novel or seek to subvert the everyday (Shove and Walker, 2010). Similarly, with practice theory often focusing on the social organisation of individual practice, one might ask how it can account for collective expressions of practice and have resonance for wider processes of societal change at varying scales. In response, Schatzki (2016) suggests that these questions stem from a misunderstanding of the ontological position of practice theory, which, unlike theories of social organisation that distinguish between levels of social change, exists on a flat plane. It views practice as a relational process, composed of and through bundles of practices that inter-relate and connect across temporal and spatial dimensions. In this way, for social practice theorists such as Schatzki 'social affairs display a certain high-level ontological sameness: with every social phenomenon consisting of slices or aspects of practice-arrangement bundles' (Schatzki, 2011, p.4). As a result, many social practice theorists share a view of the world that is not divided into levels and factors, or where the micro

and macro are fundamentally distinct (Reckwitz, 2004; Latour, 2005). Rather, practice is present in every sphere of social life, leading practice theorists to see the processes of social practice present at the micro level applicable to understanding social organisation across all spheres of the social world.

This thesis argues that this relational position of scale within social practice theory is helpful for understanding social organisation, particularly around individual practices. However, it departs from traditional social practice theory to argue that scalar distinctions are useful particularly in the relationship between grassroots innovations and alternative practices and systemic levels of social change. Hargreaves et al (2012) point to the value of multi-level theories of social change in this regard, focusing on the relationship between alternative practice or 'niche innovation' and wider processes of social transformation. For multi-level theories like Hargreaves, Longhurst and Seyfang (2013, 2012) and Geels and Schot (2008), possibilities of social transformation play out across vertical levels of niche, dominant regime, and external landscape. Smith (2006) demonstrates this in his examination of the evolution of the organic movement from a socio-technical niche to its integration into the dominant food regime. Thus, while the rich ontological base of practice theory is helpful for conceptualising the relationality of practice, there is value in drawing on theories that speak to scalar distinctions between practices. Yet, I do not employ multi-level theories in a deterministic or technical sense within this thesis to evaluate the practice of the UKFSM as either successful or unsuccessful based on its ability to expand out of its 'niche'. Instead, I draw on the work of Marxist theorist John Holloway (2010) in discussing the practices of the movement as attempts to form 'cracks' within the existing system or status quo that are expanded or proliferated to affect social change.

Holloway's *Crack Capitalism* builds on a theory of interstitial social change that sees creative alternatives to the dominant system of capital as *cracks* offering a pathway to transformation. These cracks demonstrate and prefigure alternative material and social relations 'of a world that does not yet exist' (Holloway, 2010, p. 38) and in so doing enrich opportunities for a post-capitalist politics. For Holloway the method of 'the crack' is the means by which social change can be realised- in constructing spatial, temporal and material alternatives that transgress dominant capitalist logics. These cracks are not singular in nature or structure, nor do they exist beyond the current regime. Instead, these 'cracks' are in a dialectic relationship with the existing system, attempting to create alternatives to the dominant model while simultaneously being influenced by them. Yet, for Holloway it is the expansion, proliferation and multiplying of these cracks within the confines and constraints of the dominant paradigm that create opportunities for transformation beyond the social conditions of the world as it is.

Holloway writes:

> The opening of cracks is the opening of a world that presents itself as closed. It is the opening of categories that on the surface negate the power of human doing, in order to discover at their core the doing that they deny and incarcerate. In Marx's terms, it is critique *ad hominem*, the attempt to break through the appearances of a world of things and uncontrollable forces and to understand the world in terms of the power of human doing. The method of the crack is dialectical, not in the sense of presenting a neat flow of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, but in the sense of a negative dialectics, a dialectic of misfitting. Quite simply, we think the world from our misfitting (2010, p.9).

In this way, I borrow from the logics of Holloway to understand the practices of the movement as 'cracks' in the dominant systems of agriculture and social order. Exploring processes of diffusion and expansion through this framework helps in overcoming the focus on technical innovation present in multi-level theories and focuses on social and relational processes. In doing so I bring together the premise of practice theory discussed above to understand what can be learned from these assemblages of collective practices about the UKFSM's politics. In seeing these collective practices as 'cracks' I am not assuming that they are *absolute* ruptures in the existing fabric of capital or industrial agriculture. Rather, in taking a relational approach to understanding the nature of these cracks, I argue we can better understand the contradictions and tensions in these approaches and particular expressions while analysing the opportunities they offer for material and cultural change.

### *3.3.2 A Politics of Practice and Prefiguration:*

This section focuses on the political nature of the movement's practice, drawing on debates in prefiguration literature and interstitial change. I highlight discussion on the nature of the political in movement practice, while pointing to tensions that exist in realising a prefigurative politics. In doing so I introduce Paulo Freire's 'praxis' (1970) which highlights the importance of reflection in action for it to be socially transformative. I argue that 'praxis' as a framework and critical approach provides a means of reconciling tensions of both 'doing' and 'being' the change within a prefigurative politics.

In treating the alternative collective practices of the movement as 'cracks', I speak to the literature on the interstitial process of change, which views social change as occurring through processes of building new forms of 'social empowerment in the niches and margins of capitalist society' (Wright, 2010, p.303). Eric Wright's framework for *Envisioning Real Utopias*

differentiates this from 'ruptural' and 'symbiotic' political processes, with the former involving direct confrontation with the state and a sharp break from the existing institutions and social structures. While the latter involves 'extending and deepening institutional forms of popular social empowerment in a manner that is consistent with the interests of dominant classes and elites' (Aitchison, 2011, p.433). As discussed in Chapter 2, the practices and strategies employed by the movement are not occurring entirely 'outside' of existing political structures, for the movement engages in protest and seeks to influence local and national policy. However, the everyday nature of its practices that centre on developing alternative food systems and agroecological growing speak to interstitial political processes that encapsulate 'actually existing urban struggles' as MacGregor (2021, p.342) argues in her research with grassroots environmental activists in Moss Side, Manchester. MacGregor (2021) takes this further to suggest that 'interstitial environmental politics' can be used as a framework for understanding the nature of this kind of politics, that recognises the 'interventionist and strategic nature of this activism' (ibid). Similarly, locating the political in 'everyday' practices is all too often conflated with 'lifestyle' analyses of activism as MacGregor (2021) argues, which does not account for the 'political significance' of collective everyday practices which can act as a site of political reclamation.

This has much in common with literature on prefigurative politics, which locates the political in the pursuit of material and social alternative practices. Gordon describes (2001, p.37) prefigurative politics as 'present-tense experimentation' of alternatives that, for Chatterton & Pickerill (2010, p.476), seek to 'build a hoped-for future in the present' or as Yates (2015, p.3-4) adds engage in modes of organization that prefigure how they 'might normally be performed in the future'. In this sense, prefigurative practices, whether they be material and/or social, represent an effort to subvert inequalities and dominant power structures through alternative practices. Much of the practice of the UKFSM can be thought of in this way as I explain in Chapter 6, as they involve practical experimentation with alternative growing practices, training, and local food economies. There is, however, significant debate among social movement scholars surrounding the suitability of prefigurative practice for challenging existing power structures and offering tangible alternatives (see May,1994; Smucker, 2014; Maeckelbergh 2011). It is not the purpose of this thesis to resolve this debate on the viability of a prefigurative approach, which as Maeckelbergh (2011) argues is not a particularly useful critique, given that it is hard to judge when, or indeed how, to measure success. It is, however, necessary to set out how a prefigurative approach is considered political in nature to understand the cultural and material opportunities for social change within the UKFSM.

As alluded to by MacGregor (2021) in distinguishing lifestyle activism from expressions of interstitial politics, prefigurative logics have been criticised for not providing a political strategy for change (see May,1994 and Smucker, 2014) with some understanding it as an extension of lifestyle activism (see Engler & Engler, 2014). This points to divisions among scholars who position activist strategies that locate the political at the level of the state and strategies to achieve an end goal or 'telos' (Gordon, 2020) in contrast to prefigurative politics that are not orientated around a 'final endpoint but on the relationships, practices and methods of organisation' (Gordon, 2020). Differentiating between these approaches has meant some scholars do not recognise prefigurative politics and practice as 'political' (see May, 1994; Engler& Engler, 2014). Brisette (2016, p.112) argues that this speaks to a traditional old left understanding of social change that suggests only 'fully legible movement demands […] that concern specific politics that might be reformed or introduced' is deemed to be appropriate forms of activism. Yet, such an understanding of the political sphere, which only sees it as concentrated at the level of the state, denies the reality of power, which is made, subverted and reimagined 'with the people' according to Holloway (2010). This is not to dismiss the power of the state, for it arguably will tolerate 'cracks' only up to the point when they threaten its power, as noted by Faber (2017). Yet, understanding power as not limited to the state, but instead constituted with people and communities, provides a different vantage point to understand processes and possibilities of political change.

It is from this position that authors have suggested we understand prefigurative politics not in contrast to strategy (see Swain, 2019), but as a form of strategic theorising in and of itself. Maeckelbergh (2011, p.125) treats prefigurative politics as a 'strategic movement practice' that offers a means to 'set about developing new sets of social, political and economic relations required to successfully create new political and economic systems'. The expressions of these alternative relations are played out through an ongoing process of experimental action, a politics of 'doing', that trials and tests new political, economic and social relations as noted in discussions of the alter-globalisation movement (see Maeckelbergh, 2011). Thus, prefigurative action can be understood as strategic in that it is experimental and developmental in nature, which allows for new social relations and possibilities to emerge. Yet, this prefigurative action requires more than material practice to be transformative, as Maeckelbergh (2011) and Raekstad and Gradin (2020) emphasise, prefiguration bridges the materiality of social change in the creation of lived alternatives with the need for new social relations and ways of 'being' that 'challenge and confront hierarchical and centralized power' (Maeckelbergh, 2011). This speaks

to the ways in which the 'means and ends' of prefigurative politics are connected, as Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p.57) explain:

> Prefigurative politics means being committed to the idea that if we want to replace certain structures with other very different ones, then we need to reflect some aspects of that future structure in the movements and organisations we develop to bring it about.

Consequently, what values, beliefs, organisational structures and approaches are adopted in the pursuit of alternative practices are a key part of experimentation and enacting a prefigurative approach. However, as has been discussed by Gordon (2020), it can be difficult to marry the means and ends of prefigurative practice, for 'in conceiving of and locking in a future in the present, there is potential to push out other currently unknowable claims for justice' (Gordon, 2020; p. 14). This speaks to what Gordon (2020) terms the 'temporal paradox' of prefiguration. Similarly, in practice movements struggle to both work towards a vision of an 'end-guided' model of prefigurative politics (Swain, 2019) and bring to fruition both the material foundations and social relations for this changed society in the present. I argue that the relationship between material experimentation and a politics of 'doing' with a politics of 'being' requires further attention, particularly in how these elements interact in and through the experimental practice of prefigurative politics. This is especially true for movements like the UKFSM that concentrate largely on material practices, for as noted by Raekstad and Gradin (2020) a politics cannot be truly prefigurative without also developing social and relational elements necessary to overcome embedded injustice and hierarchies.

### *3.3.3 Praxis and Reflection:*

There is a need to question the role of reflection in prefigurative political practices like those of the UKFSM, which often do not extend beyond reflection of efficacy in material alternatives. Without collective critical reflection, adaptation and reimagining prefigurative practices are at risk of reproducing the injustices they seek to replace, or they defer questions of relational and social change to 'after the revolution' reflecting a vanguardist position of social change (Franks, 2006). As such, the nature of the movement's reflection, collective learning and subsequent action are integral to an experimental politics that is socially transformative, discussed in Chapter 7. This is a sentiment echoed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), where he puts forward the concept of praxis, which is the dialectic between 'reflection and action which truly transforms reality' (p. 81). Freire argues that it is through critical reflection on action that a new way of 'being' -or as Freire (1970) describes, 'consciousness'- emerges.

This shares parallels with earlier discussions of meaning construction and action; however, it is particularly useful for understandings of social change that move beyond action or 'activism' to 'praxis' that Freire argues is transformative in nature (ibid, p. 70). In this sense, Freire's framework provides a means from which to unpack the composite parts of prefigurative politics, its material action and relational 'ways of being', connecting the 'means and ends' of a prefigurative approach. Thus, from a Freirean position social transformation comes about through collective action and reflection. Freire writes:

> People, as being 'in a situation' find themselves rooted in temporal spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. They will tend to reflect on their own 'situationality' to the extent that they are challenged to act upon it. Human beings are because they are in a situation. And they will be more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it (Freire, 1970, p.107).

Thus, applying the framework of praxis to understanding the action of the UKFSM bridges discussion of material and relational processes of change to argue that they are both integral and intertwined in social transformation. As noted by Da Vita and Vittori (2022), the critical pedagogic approach of Freire's 'praxis' has much in common with the experimentation of prefiguration, but crucially emphasises the role of critical reflection and action upon this to transform society. This reflection is part of a critical pedagogic understanding of social transformation that views critical engagement with the 'limits' of the existing system through a process of consciousness-raising, as necessary in forming action to overcome these limits (see Freire, 1970). I apply this logic of praxis in later chapters of this thesis to argue that praxis subsequently plays a critical role in the creation of political subjects for a changed food system. In this regard, I speak to the role of critical consciousness inherent in praxis and its application for developing a radical subjectivity for a transformed food system. In discussing the role of critical consciousness, I borrow from Hannah Arendt's (1958) theory of human action, to assess divisions in the labour of the movement and the subsequent effect of this in engendering political subjects (see Chapter 5), drawing comparison between Arendt's theory of 'action' and Freire's 'consciousness'.

Arendt's theory of human action builds on the premise that political action is a distinct social category, separate from the activities of work and labour. These three forms of human activity: 'labour', 'work' and 'action', make up what Arendt terms the *vita activa*, the foundation of the human condition. Yet, Arendt argues that 'action' creates meaning and is inherent in identity formation, determining *who we are* by *what we do*. This 'action' has significance for Arendt in a

way that labour and work do not, due to its influence on broader society, collective memory, and its transcendence beyond human necessity (Voice, 2014, p.45). This 'action' for Arendt speaks to the activity necessary for a lived politic. As such, it is helpful to draw on Arendt's theory of human action when considering the relationship between the practices of the UKFSM and its politics. In this sense, Arendt's framework of human action provides a lens to consider how daily activity within the movement relates to the political and consider how or if political consciousness is engendered through daily practices that might not be considered inherently political.

Later chapters build on existing discussion of critical pedagogy and the relationship with critical consciousness raising, particularly in relation to agroecology and food sovereignty as applied by Dale (2021) in the Canadian context where he reiterates the importance of pedagogical approaches starting with 'where people are'. Similarly, I draw on Anderson *et al's* (2019) discussion of how to build capacity for food sovereignty in Europe through critical pedagogy and speak to the lessons from Meek, (2015); Meek *et al.* (2019) and Meek and Tarlau (2020) in learning from the critical pedagogic experiences of Latin American movements for food sovereignty.

In doing so the following chapters of this thesis outline prefigurative logics and processes of interstitial change, drawing on Holloway's theory of 'cracks' (2010). I also build on the discussion of meaning-making and its relationship with practice by speaking to processes of collective identity construction within the movement's culture. I draw on Freire's (1970) 'praxis' theory to argue that critical reflection and political consciousness are intimately connected to movement action and the collective meaning that it holds for those within the UKFSM.

## 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, work on food sovereignty has been reviewed, highlighting the lack of attention in critical food scholarship and social movement literature on exploring food sovereignty as a movement and practice in the UK. Similarly, I discussed debates in social movement literature around the nature of the political within the UKFSM and argued that the movement's politics should be understood as part of a process of interstitial social transformation, drawing on Holloway's (2010) theory of 'cracks'. In doing so, I argue that the translation of food sovereignty to the UK is a process of cultural formation that involves the active construction of collective identities and consciousness. I further argue that the process of meaning-making, and practice are intimately connected, drawing on prefigurative literature and Paulo Freire's (1970) praxis theory. I have shown that the lens of social practice theory is useful for understanding the nature

of practice in the UKFSM, pointing to its ability to account for material and cultural approaches to social change, while accounting for historical influences in practice and questions of scale. At the same time, I have discussed the value of critical consciousness and pedagogy as a frame for understanding the relationship between meaning and action within the movement. The subsequent chapters of this thesis speak to debates and concepts raised in this chapter concerning meaning-making and collective action in the UKFSM.

# Chapter 4: 'Just throw your Dictaphone in with the spring greens': Reflections on scholar-activism and methods in the field.

This chapter focuses on the methodological approach and research design of this project. In doing so, it seeks to answer central questions that relate to the nature of my approach. Firstly, how can we study political culture in social movements? What are the challenges of this research approach? And, how have I navigated my positionality as both an activist and researcher within this project? I begin by discussing cultural analysis, which builds on the discussion in Chapter 3 on the nature of culture, while pointing to the advantages of interpretive epistemology. I then move on to discuss ethnography as a methodology suited to the study of cultural formation and practice, speaking more specifically to the foundations of critical ethnography. In doing so, I draw on the principles of participatory action research (PAR) that overlap with the foundations of critical ethnography. I demonstrate that this approach, which takes inspiration from both methodologies, suits my position as an activist researcher and is useful for moving knowledge production beyond the interests of the academy. The final two sections of this chapter speak to the challenges of this research, drawing on my position as a scholar-activist in the field and how I sought to overcome challenges related to my 'inside' position. I then elaborate on the cases chosen for this project before reflecting on the impact of Covid-19 on the process of research.

## 4.1 Studying Political Culture

When I explain to those interested in my PhD that it is looking at the political culture of the food sovereignty movement, one of the immediate questions that follow (aside from "What is food sovereignty"?), is: "What is political culture"? This is a question I have often found myself grappling with: how do I understand movement culture and, perhaps more significantly, how I have I tried to capture it? As discussed in Chapter 3, culture is a broad and sprawling term that is emergent and often evades conceptualisation. As such, how we understand culture within social movements is a challenge, particularly when trying to study it. Johnston and Klandermans (1995) point out that the breadth of culture as a concept makes analysis of it complex, as there is not a singular or systematic approach. Given this breadth, it is useful to follow the impetus of Lofland (1996), who suggests that we pay greater attention to how culture plays out in social movements rather than focusing on what it is, especially if we can't quite explain what *it* is. As such, this section builds on the discussion of cultural analysis in Chapter 3 to explain how the

political culture of social movements can be studied before discussing the methodological approach of this project, which draws on critical ethnography and participatory action research.

Chapter 3 explains that culture is the search for meaning; or rather, it is through processes of cultural formation that meaning is 'adapted, framed and reframed' (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; p.5). To reiterate Geertz (1973), culture is the 'webs of meaning' that individuals and collectives make to understand themselves and the world around them. Yet, the nature of this culture has implications for movement action, for meaning inspires and determines action and simultaneously is produced through it. Taking such a view draws attention to the internal processes within a movement's culture, rather than the outcomes of the movement, placing attention on practices, collective identities, and the obstacles of cooperation between various actors' worldviews (Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Polletta, 2008). Doing so does not neglect the influence of dominant cultural formations on the nature of social movement culture and practice, but stresses that movements themselves produce culture that is not always strategic. As touched on in Chapter 3, the study of internal cultural dynamics extends beyond that which is expressly communicated to consider the more implicit and emergent elements such as values, symbols and beliefs. Flesher-Fominaya (2014) points to the importance of these implicit elements of culture in instilling movement and group cohesion and similarly conflict. Yet, how we capture these elements of culture alongside those that are more explictly expressed or identified requires further attention.

Studying the culture of the UKFSM, I draw on Flesher-Fominaya's (2014, p.186) view of culture through a wide len, capturing how culture is 'performed, produced, and reproduced, particularly in the everyday'. This accounts for elements of culture that are typically referred to in the study of social movement culture such as collective identities, consciousness and ideologies of social change while also speaking to those more implicit elements such as collective values, beliefs and symbols. Treating culture in this way draws attention to the nuances in movement culture, and the ways in which these elements interact, reinforce each other, and diverge. In doing so, this research responds to calls by Johnson and Klandermans (1995, p.23) for cultural analysis to speak to the extent that these elements of culture 'foster or hinder mobilization'. Equally, studying these elements of movement culture, contributes to the debate on how culture emerges, is configured, and plays out in social movements through description and explanation of its cultural processes in later chapters of this thesis.

The social practices of the UKFSM are expressions of meaning-making, as discussed in Chapter 3, embodying collective and individual logics that inform the nature of these practices. Drawing

on Social Practice Theory, this chapter shows studying culture from the point of human action helps build an understanding of cultural formation that draws in part on the Weberian tradition that understands culture as 'shaping action' (Swidler, 1995, p.26). However, this is not to a one-way street, for while composite cultural processes will influence the nature of action, these practices also produce meaning in and of themselves. I discuss this empirically through processes of experimental practice in Chapter 6 & 7 of this thesis. Yet understanding the nature of these practices and the meaning associated with them across the movement, necessitates a methodological and epistemological approach that is sensitive and attuned to the process of meaning-making.

### *4.1.1 Leading with the field: Interpretive epistemology, critical ethnography and participatory action research.*

The ethnographic tradition is useful in understanding meaning-making and has long been employed in the study of culture and cultural processes. As Erve Chambers (2000), Barbara Tedlock (2000), and McCall (2006) explain ethnography is focused on laying bare and illustrating experiences and practices within a culture or community that aid in the co-construction of meaning. Similarly, Brewer (2000, p.11) explains that ethnography is distinguished by its 'objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting' and its 'approach which involves close association with and participation in this setting'. Thus, ethnography is useful for understanding processes of meaning-making, which necessitates researchers being immersed in day-to-day culture to observe and interpret that meaning.

It is through this interpretation that that meaning is derived and understood (Schwandt, 2003, p.222), speaking to an interpretive epistemology that derives meaning from action through interpretation of it. This also is emphasised in Freire's (1970) advocacy of critical reflection inherent in praxis, with meaning derived through reflection on action to transform the world. Borrowing from Schwandt (2003):

> To claim that human action is meaningful is to claim either that it has a certain intentional content that indicates what kind of action it is and/or what an action means can be grasped only in terms of the systems of meanings to which it belongs. (Schwandt, 2003 p.296).

The interpretive approach to understanding the UKFSM's culture in large part grew from my unique position in starting this research as an employee and activist with The Kindling Trust in

Manchester, an organisation that much of this research has been conducted with. My time spent as an employee with Kindling spurred my curiosity for understanding the relationship between grassroots practices and processes of social change, and similarly, informed my understanding of the UKFSM and organisations within it. I speak more to my positionality in the movement later in this chapter but emphasise that I was drawn to an interpretive, exploratory methodological approach, like that afforded by ethnography, in part because of my immersion within Kindling. This position gave me unique access to the 'field' given my pre-existing relationships with individuals in Kindling and my familiarity with the organisation's structure and work. Thus, I sought a methodological approach that played to the strength of this unique position, while simultaneously allowing me to question and more deeply explore the meaning of its practices.

An interpretive approach that speaks to the relational nature of meaning construction was well suited to this exploration. It provided a vantage point to delve into the associations with shared meaning within the movement while capturing 'detail, nuance and deeper appreciation of social reality' as Plows (2008) demonstrates in studying environmental direct action in the UK. Similarly, an interpretivist framework seeks to understand meaning-making from 'the point of view of participants' (Weber, 1947), thereby suiting my position as a researcher heavily embedded in Kindling and the wider UKFSM. This complemented my research approach, which as discussed in Chapter 3, takes inspiration from social practice theory in moving from the point of shared practices outwards to its 'participants' (Spaargaren et al, 2016).

The nature of this research project evolved through this methodology, drawing on the immersive nature of an ethnographic method, which requires 'intimate familiarity with day-to-day practice' (Brewer, 2000,p.11) on the part of the researcher. I spent a considerable amount of time participating in organisational activities at Kindling as well as other cases used within this research (see Section 4.4 on case selection). In 'hanging out' in these spaces, to use Geertz' (1973) terminology for deep immersion in the field, themes emerged along with significant questions for this research (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999). In this way, I did not set out knowing what this research would speak to, but rather I lead with the field, allowing themes to emerge overtime. To a certain extent, this speaks to the premise of grounded theory (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001) which constantly retests ideas against observations (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999) and sits between inductive and deductive reasoning. I drew inspiration from this method in interpreting emergent themes throughout this research process. However, this research is not an example of grounded theory *per se*, but 'grounded' in the sense of its emergent nature; firmly rooted and guided by the field. For example, I began this project

interested in questions around land in food sovereignty and alternative food systems, spending time participating in land occupations with the Land Justice Network while scoping out this research. However, the reflexivity and emergent nature of an interpretive lens quickly illustrated that 'land' as an explicit theme was not one regularly discussed among research participants at the grassroots of the UKFSM. Given that my research approach is sympathetic to the methodological foundations of ethnography and participatory action research, which I will discuss shortly, 'forcing' the theme of land in relation to food sovereignty was not in keeping with my approach, which sought to lead with the field.

While my research approach drew inspiration from the methodological foundations of ethnography and employed interviews and participant observation as methods of investigation, my approach was not a 'pure' ethnography. As discussed in ethnographic literature, there is a wealth of debate surrounding what *is* and *is not*, ethnography, (see O'Reilly, 2012; Atkinson, 2017). It is not the purpose of this research to challenge existing conceptions of ethnographic research or contribute a new methodological approach. Instead, this research has drawn from the rich foundation of ethnography to capture meaning-making within the cultural practices of the movement to understand its political culture. However, in doing so, I distance myself from the troubled and contested history of the ethnographic method, which has faced criticisms for fetishizing the 'other' through immersive cultural research, inscribing paternalistic relationships in its interpretation of researched subjects and reinforcing colonial and imperialist powers of domination (see Said, 1978; Alonso Bejarano *et al.*, 2019; Yarbrough, 2020; Argyrou, 2022).

Instead, I found inspiration in the work of critical ethnographers who have sought to align an ethnographic approach with the 'ethical responsibilities' of researchers to 'address processes of unfairness and injustice' while exposing 'underlying and obscure operations of power and control' (Madison, 2012, p.5). In this sense, a critical ethnographic approach is political in nature and seeks, as Thomas argues, to 'apply a subversive worldview to the study of cultural enquiry' (Thomas in Fitzpatrick and May 2022, p.15). In doing so, critical ethnography does not stand in contrast to conventional ethnography, as Fitzpatrick and May (2022) argue, with many ethnographies attending to power relations. As such, the lines of demarcation for critical ethnographies are not rigidly defined, but rest on a commitment by researchers to 'questions of power and relationalities' (ibid) particularly in their own position.

Within my own research, a critical ethnographic approach provided a means to actively contribute to the movement while critically unpacking my own position as a researcher and activist. In doing so, I was conscious of power dynamics and my own privilege in carrying out

this research, which at times was difficult to navigate while seeking to explore questions surrounding the movement's cultural formation. I discuss this further in Section 4.3. However, I stress here that this research was guided by the methodological principles of critical ethnography in being critically reflexive of my own position while also questioning the value of my research to the communities I was working in. Here, I built on Andersons' (1989) proposition that critical ethnography is emancipatory, reflexive and dialectic. Emancipatory in that it is critical theory in action (Fitzpatrick and May, 2022); reflexive in terms of the position as a researcher, both in how this influences the nature of interpretation and the power imbalances between the researcher and researched; and finally, dialectic in that it moves between macro structures (i.e., political economy, culture, tradition) and the micro (i.e. daily lived experience and action) (Anderson, 1989).

The vantage point of critical ethnography to draw nodal connections between macro structures and micro particularities is particularly useful in the study of the UKFSM. As Tsing (2005) demonstrates in her study of globalisation processes, this approach often takes a relational view of space, drawing attention to the relationships between structure and collective agency and between national and local scales. Chapter 2 highlights that there is a great deal of interconnection between various strands of the UKFSM, from the international movement to the national level of the LWA and grassroots. Employing a critical ethnographic approach creates opportunity to unpack the interrelationships and connections between them, drawing on the areas of tension or 'friction' in the processes of translation of food sovereignty (Tsing, 2005). In highlighting these relationships, we can, as Tsing (2005) argues, go beyond broad criticisms of dominant structures to more specific understandings of how micro and macro responses have been made and remade in relation to these structures. This has parallels with Holloway's (2010) notion of 'cracks' in the dominant system, which he argues necessitates greater attention to understand if and how they offer potential for alternatives to the dominant system.

Similarly, a critical ethnographic approach speaks to the Freirean (1970, p.67) position of 'praxis', bringing together action and reflection. In doing so critical ethnography can present avenues for political subjectivity and 'conscientization' to emerge through a process of making humans 'subjects' rather than 'objects' of social history, with their active participation in its making. Yet, doing so does not necessarily suggest collaborative participation in research design, which as Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) note is not necessarily beneficial for either researcher or participant, but can have value when the researcher's active engagement with participants is done in ways that best suit the needs of both parties. I speak more to this in discussing the methods employed and my positionality in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. However, I emphasise that

engagement in emancipatory and reflexive research practices create opportunities to extend the value of ethnographic research beyond its use within the academy.

This shares resonance with participatory action research (PAR) methodologies which seek to embody a 'democratic commitment to break the monopoly on who holds knowledge and for whom social research should be undertaken' (Fine in Kindon et al, 2007, p.11). For PAR moves from an emancipatory research approach that attempts to 'challenge traditional hierarchical relationships between research and action and between researchers and the 'researched' (Wadsworth in Kindon et al, 2007, p.1). In doing so, PAR challenges traditional ideas of knowledge production within the academy, giving agency to research subjects while seeking to replace 'extractive' methodologies by producing knowledge that is useful to communities involved (Kindon et al, 2007). This research approach draws on the principles of PAR in seeking to conduct research that is critically reflexive and undertaken in a manner that supports the work of the UKFSM. Chatterton, Fuller and Routledge (2007, p.217) emphasise that in many examples of PAR, 'researchers are more interested in 'R' than 'A' - focusing on research outputs at the expense of supporting and fostering social transformation. I have been keen in this research process to ensure that 'action' has been supportive of and in solidarity with the aims of organisations within this study. As such, throughout this research I have engaged in work to support the movement, which has not necessarily been to further my own research. For example, I regularly worked with Veg Box People in Manchester packing veg bags (see Section 4.2.2) and was employed intermittently throughout this research project by The Kindling Trust in Manchester to help with their work directly. I spent three months working to support the development of Kindling's new website and similarly five months through 2022 working to support the expansion of Veg Box People in partnership with Kindling.

In this way, I have taken a scholar-activist approach to the practice of PAR, prioritising the interests of the communities I have worked with in this research process. Doing so contributed to the sustained grassroots efforts to realise food sovereignty, while allowing me to gain a better understanding of the movement's politics and culture. It was not appropriate, or indeed possible, to align the focus of this project explicitly with the aims and interests of the organisations I worked with. As I discuss in Section 4.4, I worked with three grassroots cases and with representatives of the LWA; aligning my research to satisfy the mutual interest of these cases along with my own curiosity was a challenge. As a result, I built on the model of scholar-activism in PAR to channel my time, labour and skill-set to advancing the day to day work of the movement building on Derickson and Routledge's (2015) 'politics of resourcefulness' principle. Similarly, I found taking the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) as the point of confluence

between these cases as a means of uniting my interests with the collaborative efforts of the movement to achieve change. In doing so, I worked on a collaborative research project with OrganicLea,, see Section 4.3, that united my own research interests with those of the organisation.

Overall, the approach of this project has drawn inspiration from critical ethnography and participatory action research (PAR) methodologies, both suited to exploring the questions of this thesis. Similarly, the commitment of these approaches to ethical representation and their suitability for scholar-activism, lends them to this project. The remaining sections of this chapter explore the specific methods used, the challenges of positionality, the cases selected and the impact of Covid-19 on this research.

## 4.2 Getting My Hands Dirty – Methods in the Field

In carrying out this research, a range of qualitative methods were employed to ascertain meaning and understand experience of collectives involved in the daily practices of the movement. I drew on the ethnographic tradition in conducting interviews and carrying out participatory observation, which I discuss below. These methods enable a level of analysis close to research participants, to capture, as O'Reilly, (2012p.55) argues, life from the participants' point of view.

### *4.2.1 Interviews:*

I conducted 27 interviews with individuals from The Kindling Trust, OrganicLea, Tamar Grow Local and the Landworkers' Alliance between the summer of 2019 and autumn of 2020. The individuals I interviewed had various levels of involvement in the organisations mentioned above, some were founders of these organisations or staff running and coordinating projects at the grassroots. Others were involved in national organising of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) and held key roles in the organising committee of the LWA. I also carried out interviews with individuals who had been through the Farmstart projects from 2011- to present, that are run by the three grassroots cases studied. These interviews were semi-structured and, where possible, were conducted quite literally in 'the field', with afternoons spent talking with participants while volunteering at market-gardens and urban-growing projects. This approach to interviewing was instinctive and in keeping with the project's holistic approach and investigation. It allowed me to get a felt sense of the livelihoods and day to day activities of members within the movement and helped establish a deeper understanding of organisational

culture. This hands-on style of interview was not always possible or appropriate, and others were conducted in a more formal setting.

Qualitative interviews are particularly useful for studying agency and ideational factors within movements (Rathbun, 2008; Della Porta, 2014) as they seek to expose the meaning that individuals attribute to the external world and their participation in it (Della Porta, 2014, p.230). Consequently, in-depth interviews with participants across the organisations I have studied have enriched my understanding of how participants in the food sovereignty movement 'see the world' (McCracken, 1988) and how their practices seek to influence or change it. These interviews gave participants the opportunity to share their experiences of food growing and reflect on what food sovereignty means to them and how they link this to processes of social change. These interviews, coupled with my own reflections and observations, make up the main data of this research. This data could only have been captured through in-depth interviews that sought meaning in participant responses rather than factual or descriptive information, though this was at times also useful in understanding specific practices or contexts. It was helpful to draw on Brinkmann and Kvale's (2009) analogy of the miner and traveller when considering the purpose of these interviews and my role within them. The miner digs for information while the traveller is on a journey with the participant allowing both the researcher and participant to explore meaning and lived experiences. I found myself at times a miner and at others, a traveller, often during a single interview. Yet, the overarching approach of these interviews was grounded in the ontological and epistemological views of interpretivism, which emphasise the co-production of meaning and interpretation between researcher and interviewee (Atkinson, 2017).

By asking open-ended questions that encouraged participants to reflect on concepts like food sovereignty and their involvement with organisational projects and practices, I aimed to create a space where interviewees could freely voice their opinion. I then used the detailed narratives that were woven by participants to guide the direction of questioning, leaning-in to areas of interest and reflecting on the themes that came out of these discussions. This process helped me establish clear themes by collating the narratives and experiences of different individuals within the movement to construct 'meaningful structures' that emerged through the patterned linking of interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003). For example, by accumulating narratives from individuals who had experienced the various expressions of the Farmstart model, I was able to build a holistic picture and collective narrative of experience that exposed areas of difference as well as similarity. The nature of these interviews also evolved with the project, testing and questioning emergent themes in interviews as they played out rather than coming

to the field with a specific interest or objective. I subsequently made it a habit to write or record my own reflections after each interview that drew attention to areas of interest that I returned to in later conversations or asked other participants questions about. For example, after conducting several interviews I reflected on the fact that there appeared to be differences in how some people spoke of the purpose of grassroots organisations depending on the work they carried out within them. I subsequently became more attuned to this and began to ask individuals directly about their experience within their respective organisations and whether they felt connected to the political aims of the organisation or wider movement.

In carrying out these interviews I gained either verbal or written consent from participants to use material from these interviews for this research as well as making participants aware of the focus of the project. For interviews that were conducted in a more formal style and setting often with participants I did not know well or indeed at all, I gained informed consent via a consent form to build trust and legitimise my interesting is talking to them. However, the ways in which I ensured informed consent did not always align with the rigid and formal process of completing an ethical consent form. As discussed by ethnographers in the field (see Bell, 2014, p. 20) obtaining informed consent for an ethnographic project is no easy task, given the emergent nature of ethnographic research it is extremely difficult to inform participants fully of the purpose and intent of a research project which is by its nature unfolding. Similarly, introducing a formal consent form into communities and inter-personal relationships developed between the researcher and participants can create barriers, as well as be perceived as a breach of trust (Wynn, 2011). My own experience was that for some the formality of the consent form created awkwardness and often changed the freeness with which they were willing to speak. As a result, I adapted how I obtained informed consent from participants, favouring a relaxed verbal approach, where I outlined my research focus and explained how the interview data would be used before asking if participants were happy to be involved. This created an opportunity for relaxed conversation around the research process and invited curious questioning rather than an introducing the consent form as a blunt, rigid implement ill-suited to this research project.

I also had access to interview data gathered by de Moor, Doherty and Catney (2019) which included members of the Kindling Trust. I drew on these interviews in informing background research to this project and developing themes from my own interview data which shared similarity with the narratives captured in de Moor et al's interviews. Similarly, I contributed to de Moor et al's (2019) research as an interviewee while working with Kindling before I began this PhD. As such, I occupied a unique position in having worked for Kindling and participated in academic research of its practices as a participant before taking on my own research. I return

to discussion of the challenges of my unique positionality as an 'insider' researcher in Section 4.3 of this chapter.

### *4.2.2 Participant-observation:*

Alongside interviews, I was active as a participant-observer in the cases that I studied. By immersing myself in activist practices and organisations I learned not only from what participants expressed in interviews but also from observing public events, groups discussion and getting a felt sense of being in food growing and activist spaces. By combining interviews and participant observation, I developed a 'thick descriptive' (Geertz, 1973) account of the social reality of the food sovereignty movement. As Blee (2012) noted in her research on democratic practices in social movements, 'people don't generally talk about what they take for granted…to correct this, lengthy semi-structured interviews probe activist's experiences and interpretations' (Blee, 2012, p12). In this way, these methods used in unison attempted to account for the observed reality and the taken-for-granted practices and assumptions within the movement while also drawing on participants' direct interpretation. Though it is impossible to fully capture the richness of reality or to fully know events (Law, 2004) with no method capable of grasping the complexity of life (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.21), these methods have added greater depth to understanding the internal dynamics of the movement.

Participant observation is characterised by a commitment to 'getting out of the armchair' (Park, 1915; Whyte, 1943) and 'putting you where the action is' (Bernard, 2006) to experience the group that a researcher wishes to study. This builds on a methodological position that takes being close to the research subject as the best way to understand what people do, mean, think or believe (Balsinger and Lambelet, 2014, p.146). Consequently, participant observation is particularly well suited to studying internal dynamics in social movements, and more specifically when there is a desire to understand meaning-making in social movement practice. By studying day-to-day interactions and dynamics of movement culture, researchers are able to shed light on the 'implicit meaning' (Lichterman, 1998) that is embedded and often taken for granted within these movements. This is particularly true when we consider the nature of social activism, where 'visible protest activity is often the tip of the iceberg' (Plows, 2008) and much movement activity, theorising and practice takes place out of public view. This is evident in the food sovereignty movement, with much of its alternative practice taking place in market gardens, community growing projects and activist spaces. Thus, immersion in these food activist spaces is necessary to understand the movement's culture and gain in-depth insight into practices within the movement.

Nevertheless, there is little consensus in the literature on participant observation as a method (see DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010) or what immersion might look like. Ethnographers and anthropological studies have often referred to it as 'deep hanging out' (see Madison, 2012) in that the researcher endeavours to assimilate with her research subjects and both take part in and observe everyday life. Yet, how to put this into practice, establish where and how to participate, and what to observe was a daunting task at the beginning of this project, when my web of thematic interests within the movement was cast wide. Navigating the balance between observation and determining what was useful to observe and how and when to participate was a constant challenge in this project that required adaptability and a willingness to be led by the field and my research subjects. As a result, my participation in the movement has been varied, moving from what Adler and Adler (1987) term 'passive observation' at events and meetings to 'active participation' in the groups I studied. As a passive observer, I attended events and meetings of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) and the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA), such as the LWA's residential AGMs in 2019 and online in 2020, 2021 and 2022. I also attended regional meetings of the LWA North-West and the unofficial national gathering of the food sovereignty movement at the Oxford Real Farming Conference in 2019. This 'passive' observation was fruitful in situations unfamiliar, as I was able to get a sense of the character of these spaces and organisations while minimising disturbance of the field. From these observational encounters, I made detailed and descriptive fieldnotes that reflected on the felt sense of these spaces and captured observed practice while noting how activists framed themselves to a public audience. Some of these fieldnotes have been used to illustrate key themes as demonstrated in the vignettes that feature in Chapters 2, 5 and below in the following section.

As an 'active participant' in the food sovereignty movement, my involvement went further than just observation to participating in a myriad of activities with the grassroots organisations in this research. Most of my time was spent with Kindling in Manchester and Organic Lea in London; however, the majority of my active involvement was with Kindling, as I am also based in Manchester making regular and consistent participation possible. My involvement with both organisations was as a volunteer and at times as a paid employee with Kindling. I spent many days volunteering my labour at Kindling's growing site in Stockport and at Organic Lea's Hawkwood Nursery. I assisted new organic growers who had been through the Farmstart programmes of OrganicLea and Kindling with practical daily tasks such as weeding and harvesting crops. I also helped with packing and preparing Veg Boxes for local customers (see Figure 2.0) with Veg Box People in Manchester covering shifts when staff were ill or on holiday. Additionally, I helped Kindling raise awareness of their projects by hosting workshops on food sovereignty at Envirolution Festival in Manchester, and at a Land Justice Network event in Yorkshire. I also attended events and national meetings on behalf of Kindling when key members of the organisation were unable to attend. I would take detailed notes and raise points or ask questions in these spaces that felt relevant to Kindling's work. I attended a regional meeting of the Landworkers' Alliance in this capacity as well as a meeting of similar food-growing projects hosted by Shared Assets, a think and do tank, in London. My time spent as an active participant was intermittent from the summer of 2019 through to the early Spring of 2020.


*Figure 2.0 Image of author packing organic mushrooms for Veg Box People customers, 2019.*

*Figure 3.0 Image of members Farmstart Incubator Network Meeting at Woodbank Park, Stockport 2019.*

This active participation was essential to this research process, as these small-scale organisations and the movement more broadly are practically focused with much of the day-to-day involving running projects and increasing resource capacity. Beyond my own research interests, I was conscious of using interviews and participant observation to not mine food activists or market gardeners of their time and resources, as individuals engaged in food growing or activism are often stretched for time. In many ways, the exchange of my labour in return for informal interviews often over lunch or while working, endeared me to members of these organisations and allowed me to build rapport and demonstrate that I understood the constraints on their time and was keen to be useful. It was important for me that this research was reciprocal and not extractive, a criticism often aimed at academic research (see Gaudry, 2011; Menon and Sharland, 2011) where the interests of the academy can trump what is beneficial for the research participants. Thus, the reciprocal nature of volunteering with these organisations and working alongside them assisting with practical tasks such as shifting compost, digging over planting areas, weeding, and planting garlic broke down barriers between my position as a researcher and participant. In this way, my active involvement meant that I was treated as an 'insider' by many of the participants involved in these projects which enriched my understanding and added greater depth to my fieldnotes.

For example, my immersion in Kindling's work and projects meant that staff and individuals involved in Kindling treated me as an employee or at least a trusted and familiar long-term volunteer. This in part speaks to my unique circumstance, as I was an employee of Kindling before starting this PhD, so many of the relationships I cultivated with key members involved in Kindling have endured. I return to the challenges of this position in Section 4.5, but I raise this here to demonstrate the advantage of my immersive participation. As an 'insider' I was often privy to conversations that members of Kindling were unlikely to have had with me if I had not built relationships of trust and been familiar with Kindling's organisational culture. I found this was particularly apparent when individuals shared reflections of other encounters with academics that were not always useful. This is not dissimilar from the findings of other 'insider' participant research see Johnson, Avenarius and Weatherford (2006). As Chris from Kindling explained 'we get more emails from students doing their undergrads that want to talk to us than we could possibly respond to, most of them are asking things you could learn from our website and it's just not valuable for us' (Chris, 2019). Similarly, Helen D (2019), Kindling's Farmstart co-ordinator, further raised questions as to the value of academic research for the organisation directly, with researchers 'telling me what we already do'. This points to the challenges of conducting participatory research and generating knowledge that is useful and constructive for the movement. Doing so requires an analysis that centres on furthering the interests of the movement and research subjects, whilst satisfying the interests of the academy in the knowledge that is created.

There were also ethical challenges that came with carrying out participant observation particularly around informed consent. This research was carried out as an 'overt' project, making it known in relevant spaces my presence as a researcher. However, as noted in other ethnographic work (Wynn, 2011; Plankey-Videla, 2012) ensuring informed consent from all participants when observing and participating is not always possible, nor appropriate. This was particularly true when participating in national events and large gatherings of the movement such as the LWA Annual General Meeting. At such events with large numbers of people it was not possible to inform all participants of my presence as a researcher, though I always sought permission from event organisers to attend in a research capacity. In such spaces I was mindful in conversations with individual participants or small groups to always inform them of my research interests and reasons for being there. In doing so, I was often met with curious questions from participants about 'what I wanted to know' and the nature of the project. Yet, I often found myself unable to satisfy these questions fully given the emergent nature of the research process, which evolved over-time. As such, achieving *truly* 'informed consent' in

ethnographic research as noted by McKenzie (2009) is arguably more difficult to achieve. However, I sought throughout this project to ensure participants, especially those I spoke with directly, were informed of my interests as a researcher and were given the opportunity to ask questions as well as concerns about being included in this project.

While my use of participant-observation was overt, the challenges of my positionality as both an 'insider' of the movement and 'outside' researcher blurred the boundaries of my research. The multiple relationships I held with participants involved in this project, that were often former colleagues, friends and fellow food activists meant that I was not always perceived exclusively as a researcher. As a result, some interactions with participants at times fell into a grey area, where it was not always clear where our encounters and discussions that were part of this research ended and our relationships, mutual interests and shared practices began. As such, early on in this research project it became clear that an ongoing process of informed consent, that was relational in nature would best suit this research project. In borrowing from a processual understanding of consent (see Bell, 2014) I maintained an open and ongoing relationship around informed consent with participants I engaged with. Checking regularly what they were comfortable with me reflecting on and including in observation. This processual approach continued into the write up of this project, where I shared reflections and direct quotations with relevant participants that requested to see how they had been perceived and interpreted.

## 4.3 One Foot in and One Foot Out – Reflections on Positionality

Given the challenges surrounding my positionality in this research project, my role as both a researcher and activist was a critical site of reflection and contemplation throughout. This position combined with the pursuit of an activist research methodology and the use of participatory action research (PAR) has presented me with unique opportunities to enrich my understanding and contribute to the movement. However, this also brought challenges and necessitated critical reflection and adaptability to navigate my position as an activist-researcher and employ a research approach that is truly reciprocal and adds value. I reflect on both my position in the movement and my use of an action research approach, in drawing on a reflection from my research journal and time spent at the Farmstart site at Woodbank Park in Stockport.

> *It's Autumn now on the edge of Manchester, leaves are curling and falling to cover the floor of the plant nursery in Woodbank Park. This year's (2020) Farmstart trainees are busy pulling up the last of the Kale crop and applying fresh compost to carefully prepared beds. I take a walk around the growing site with Helen Dodd the Farmstart co-ordinator,*

*the space has doubled in the last two years with the backfield now being cultivated with the help of volunteers. Helen and I heave long stretches of netting out of a storage container and start to cover the ¼-acre long strips of carefully prepared beds that hold young seedlings of Purple Sprouting Broccoli. "How is your research going?" Helen asks as we struggle to untangle reams of netting. Helen and I have known each other since I joined the Kindling Trust as an employee in 2016. We have spent many hours together working on shared projects, sitting in team meetings, chatting at social events and working on the land at Woodbank. So, in responding to this question I found myself considering who would answer. Which hat would I wear? That of a friend, a former colleague, a fellow food activist and grower or a researcher?*

*I got the impression that Helen could sense my indecision in the length of my pause, as Helen added in a light-hearted and reassuring tone, "You must be nearly there now? I hope the time you spent with us down here been useful... not just lots of everyday chat about seeds and compost". I laughed politely and assured Helen that it had all been valuable especially discussions of seeds and compost. This was true, I had so enjoyed the past year where I would drop-in at Woodbank and talk with the Farmstarters while we prepared seed beds, cleaned pots and helped to maintain the site. This experience had been immersive spending long days in hazy sunshine and crisp winter mornings 'hanging out' while my Dictaphone (often resting in a flower bed) captured our conversations. Though in trying to explain the value of this deep and intermittent immersion in the field whether with Kindling Farmstarters or other new growers in London or Manchester I found myself traversing multiple identities. For I was a researcher, a volunteer a former colleague and friend to many of the people I have interviewed and an advocate for the work that they are committed to. This made explaining the value of my experience hard to boil down into a simple, 'Yes it has been really useful', for I was often trying to satisfy the interest of these multiple identities. As a result, the distinctions between activist and researcher were for me rather blurred, I was never only a researcher nor an activist or a volunteer I was all of these things at once.*

As the vignette above indicates, I began this research project from an unusual position and often found myself walking a thin line between 'insider' and 'outsider' within the movement. In many ways it was my unique position and familiarity with the movement's grassroots that informed my research approach and methodology. As a former employee of the Kindling Trust and an active member of the alternative food scene in Manchester, I already had insight into the practices and projects run by the grassroots of the movement. The prior connections I had with

individuals and networks in Manchester were invaluable to accessing other organisations in the wider movement such as OrganicLea, Tamar Grow Local and the LWA. For example, I was able to reach out to OrganicLea in London through Helen W at Kindling, who kindly put me in touch with key members of the cooperative who were unlikely to have responded to an unsolicited research request. Similarly, the connections and relationships I had already made with the Kindling team meant that I was able to access the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN), sitting in on meetings and visiting member organisations. It was made clear by members of Kindling, that they 'wouldn't have let just anyone sit in on meetings' and be privy to internal networks.

However, my familiarity with Kindling and its organisational culture meant that the field at least in Manchester was not 'strange' or new to me, but rather a space in which its norms and practices were comfortable. This differs from the more traditional ethnographic theory that has sought to understand 'strangeness' entering fields and cultures unknown that differ from our own (see De Jong, Kamsteeg and Ybema, 2013). Comparing this experience to that of working with the LWA and OrganicLea, which I had little prior involvement with before this project highlighted the ways in which the field in Manchester was acutely familiar. This provided a vantage point from which I could reflect on how my 'inside' position and familiarity with Kindling influenced my perception of 'the field' and how I carried out my research. In this way, I was less perceptive to asking questions about how things were done and accepting an assumed rationale for the organisation's actions because of my prior involvement with Kindling. But as Rowe (2005) argues part of the role of the ethnographer is to 'make the familiar strange' and to attempt to experience the field with fresh eyes in order to tease out taken-for-granted assumptions and practices. This was perhaps one of the greatest challenges of my positionality, occupying 'inside' space while trying to maintain an 'outside' perspective. I navigated this difficulty by reflecting on interactions regularly and journaling on my experience, while working with new organisations and individuals provided welcomed perspective on what I was perhaps neglecting to ask and observe in familiar spaces with people I know well.

However, I did not always get this balance right. For example, in trying to glean an 'outside' perspective of Kindling's aims and objectives for the Kindling Farm, I asked a question at the Farm Annual General Meeting that with hindsight was ill-timed. In asking for clarification of why certain aims were prioritised, my question was interpreted critically by Kindling organisers, who felt I was questioning the strategy and work of the organisation. This was a difficult but necessary learning curve as it exposed me to the challenges of being a trusted and committed 'insider' seeking at times the clarity of an 'outside' perspective. As noted by De Jong et al (2013, p.170) ethnographic research requires this dual stance of being both 'immersed and estranged',

however, the reality of finding this balance was a constant learning process and negotiation. At times this balance meant I prioritised one perspective over the other or judged an explicit 'outsider' approach, particularly in interviews or group settings to be inappropriate.

Nevertheless, it was my unique position and prior relationships with the grassroots of the movement as well as the knowledge I had of the internal dynamics, that made studying the culture of the movement possible. As has been discussed by various ethnographers (see Brewer, 2000; Russell Hochschild, 2016; Atkinson, 2017), cultural analysis takes time and can be enhanced by a researcher's integration into a community. This is particularly true when pursuing an activist ethnography. Consequently, I tried to make the most of the duality of my position in the movement, drawing inspiration from Reddy and King (2019) in embracing the multiplicity of my identity rather than privileging either activist or academic. Rather, I tried to find harmony between these two positions, which was intrinsic to being an activist researcher committed to a PAR approach. However, this was not without difficulty and required adaptability and a willingness to critically reflect on my own position, particularly asking whose interest this research was serving. This was a regular part of my reflexive process in journaling after field visits and interviews, drawing inspiration from critical ethnographers such as Ana Tsing (Tsing, 2005, 2021) and Julian Hart (2002, 2004, 2006) in asking how I am representing the movement and individuals I have worked with and the effect of this.

This critical reflexivity, intrinsic to a critical ethnography, and inherent in a critical pedagogic approach to studying the movement (see Freire, 1970) meant that I was mindful of how studying and representing the food sovereignty movement are acts of domination themselves (see Madison, 2012). Even when my research has sought to identify how power structures are reproduced within the movement (Noblit et al, 2004). A particular area of conflict for me was the academic impetus towards critique for the benefit of scholarly research. However, my research has tried to subvert an expectation of critique as academic knowledge that often can be at the expense of a movement's development and conscious reflection. Instead, this research has sought to offer a conscious and compassionate explanation of the movement while discussing how it theorises social change and tries to enact it. As a scholar-activist I have benefited from the generosity of individuals in the movement as well as having a personal interest in seeing the aims and vision of food sovereignty realised. Consequently, this research approach has endeavoured not to undermine the grassroots driving this movement. Instead contributing to it, while being mindful that even movements committed to positive social change can reproduce contradictions and inequalities, as Holloway (2010, p.20) cautions to not 'romanticise the cracks or give them a force they do not possess'.

Yet, part of my reflexive process has been in considering how I represent these areas of tension and complexity in the movement's theory and practice, while honouring the tireless efforts of those within the movement to bring about positive change to the food system. This points to a frustration expressed by others in academia (see Bratton, 2021, p.87) of the expectation of research within the neoliberal academy to 'precisely critique and dismantle', while possessing an 'incredibly feeble capacity to construct and compose and imagine what might come next'. This research offers an interpretation of the UKFSM and highlights the nature of its theory and practice while emphasising the essential role of this movement in imagining and constructing an alternative for social change.

### *4.3.1 Activist vs Academy the Use and Value of Knowledge:*

Being committed to a research approach that recognises the extractive potential of academic research, meant that I had activist reflections on academia in mind throughout this project, often asking myself who is benefiting from this research and how I could be of use to the movement. Consequently, I was drawn to scholar-activist approaches such as Routledge (2002), Routledge and Derickson (2015) and Chatterton et al (2010) in attempting to 'bring together my academic work with [my] political ideals to further social change and work directly with marginal groups or those in struggle' (Chatterton et al, 2010). Such an approach treats the creation of academic knowledge as inherently political, challenging the neoliberal standards of apolitical purity within the academy and asking researchers to critically reflect on what knowledge they are creating, who it is for and who it has been created with. In this sense, this approach is committed to asking, 'how knowledge produced might be of use to multiple others without reinscribing the interests of the privileged'(Nagar and Geiger, 2007, p.269).

This is not to suggest that academics and researchers are the only people that analyse the field and ask critical questions or have 'reflexive exclusivity' (Chauvin and Jounin, 2012). This is certainly not the case in the food sovereignty movement, with the LWA having a working group committed to exploring beneficial research opportunities as well as a willingness of many grassroots organisations to accommodate mutually beneficial knowledge production. Nevertheless, engaging consciously and critically as an activist in the food sovereignty movement opened the possibility of contributing to existing critical discussion and contributing to this movement in ways that are more practical and have meaning beyond the value of scholarly research. As a result, I endeavoured to conduct this research in a manner that was mutually beneficial and generated knowledge that was useful for the organisations involved and the movement generally. Part of this was evident in the activities associated with participant

observation as described above. I took this further by uniting my research interest with the interests of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN).

Over the course of 2020, I collated feedback on participant experience of different Farmstart models. This was useful for member organisations to hear how their projects had been experienced. OrganicLea were keen to make this a collective endeavour, drawing on my 'outside' position to act as an independent and impartial surveyor of their former Farmstart participants. This provided an opportunity for OL to carry out an internal review without using their own resources and staff. As a result, we collaboratively designed a survey which met both of our interests, and OrganicLea gave me access to former Farmstarters. After completing the research, I produced a short report highlighting the most interesting findings and reflections from the survey responses and participant interviews.

This experience highlights -along with other encounters with organisations in the movement- the tensions that exist in generating shared knowledge that is useful for both researcher and activist while also meeting the demands of the academy. As Chatterton et al (2010) note scholar-activists must contend with and learn to negotiate their positions as both activist and researcher, moving between two worlds with different priorities and interests. As a doctoral student and activist-researcher, I found myself grappling with how to manage these demands, which at times felt in opposition to eachother. I began this research wandering within Kindling, my previous involvement with the organisation meant that I had a good understanding of the different projects, their aims and objectives, and a sense of the organisational culture. Spending time in the field allowed me to be led by the organisations I was studying, being encouraged to participate in different projects and noticing themes that were brought up in discussion while keeping in mind broader political questions.

However, I struggled for a while to marry my interest in the broader political objectives of the movement with the day-to-day practice of the grassroots. I found the academic expectation to contribute to theoretical debates of social change and engage in a critique of such practices to be at odds with knowledge I might produce for the movement that had more tangible, practical and immediate use. For example, measuring the social impact of projects, helping with funding bids and general day-to-day activities. Similarly, when asked about my research, particularly by land-based workers, I often felt they were expecting or hoping I would say I was a plant scientist or agronomist looking at the benefits of agroecological farming. Often when I explained that my research was trying to understand the political nature of the movement and the culture it has created, people would politely reply or enquire what the use of looking at this would be. This

was a tension I found myself grappling with frequently as I engaged with members of the Kindling team, taking up their time in answering my questions while the question rang in my ears, 'how will this be useful for you'? This points to different understandings of knowledge production, for activists, this is about tangible knowledge that tells them more than what they already know and often is linked to increasing movement capacity and mobilisation. As Chatterton et al (2010, p.247) note the most 'valuable contributions a researcher can make to [social movements] are often non-academic and practical'.

However, the value of knowledge for the academy can be more nuanced and implicit and can serve to increase distinctions between activists and scholars. This points to tensions that exist between the use of academic knowledge to activists, with the time and contribution of activists often influencing understandings of social movement scholarship. This, of course, has merit, but often is detached from the day-to day reality of those engaged in the food sovereignty movement in the UK. As a result, it has been a part of my reflexive process to learn how to balance two hats in carrying out this project.

Similarly, there is often an assumption in action research literature that time spent within activist communities is always in the pursuit of mutually beneficial knowledge. It is more complex than this and often involves engagement that might not have direct relevance to a researcher's interest. This I found to be especially true working with agroecological land workers. The nature of this type of food growing is highly practical; consequently, physical labour and getting your hands dirty with other volunteers can be of more use to research subjects than discussing mutually beneficial research opportunities. As a result, pursuing scholar-activism can be time intensive and will not necessarily yield meaningful data from every interaction. Instead, my role as a scholar-activist often bent more towards activism than scholarship, which is arguably necessary when pursuing a research approach that at its core is committed to tackling hierarchy and extraction in knowledge production.

## 4.4 Case Selection:

Chapter 2 of this thesis touched on the cases used in this research project. These include the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) which sits as the national representation of the UKFSM and three grassroots organisations, The Kindling Trust in Manchester, OrganicLea in London and Tamar Grow Local in Cornwall. I expand here on why these cases were chosen, my involvement within them as an activist researcher and the challenges that emerged in researching these cases. I begin by giving a brief overview of the cases studied at the grassroots of the UKFSM, I direct

towards my discussion in Chapter 2 (1.1) for an overview of the Landworkers' Alliance, rather than repeat it here.

### *4.4.1 Overview of cases:*

*The Kindling Trust:*

The Kindling Trust, or Kindling, as it is known in the sustainable food sector, was co-founded in 2007 in Manchester with the aim of creating a just and ecologically sustainable society through a transformation in the food system (Kindling, 2020b). Kindling runs projects that are highly practical in nature and seek to address problems at different stages of the supply chain. Kindling seeks to enable new entrants into sustainable agriculture through yearly training courses and their Farmstart scheme, which acts as an incubator farm for trainees to access land and markets and gains skills to establish a commercial growing business. They also established a local veg box scheme, Veg Box People, which works with small-scale producers to supply customers across Greater Manchester. Similarly Kindling runs volunteering opportunities on its two-acre growing site Woodbank Park in Stockport. They also seek to engage people in local food through the Woodbank Community Food Hub that runs social prescribing courses as well as public events. Since completing this research Kindling has also secured a farm, known as Kindling Farm. The farm seeks to act as a means of 'scaling up' Kindling's Manchester-based projects and providing an example of agroforestry production. Kindling Farm and the efforts to realise it have not been the central focus of this research, however it is necessary to point out that striving for the farm has informed Kindling's strategy. Chris from Kindling emphasises 'the farm is a test bed and an example of what we need todo with food and farming in the future to feed cities like Manchester' (Chris, Kindling, 2020).

*OrganicLea:*

OrganicLea based in Haringey North London, is as a community food growing cooperative, that began in 2001 when it took over derelict allotment land on the edge of Epping Forest. Since, then OrganicLea has developed a 12-acre growing site, once owned by Waltham Council, known as Hawkwood. From this site OrganicLea runs a market garden that aims to increase the supply of local food in the city and offer training and support to individuals interested in horticulture and aspiring agroecological growers. OrganicLea runs accredited horticultural training opportunities and a Farmstart programme, it is also one of the founding members of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) alongside Kindling and Tamar Grow Local. OrganicLea runs a veg box scheme from their market garden which feeds 700 customers every week as well as

regularly supplying 20 London restaurants. Similarly, OrganicLea has worked with community-based organisations in North London to help in establishing Wolves Lane in Haringey as a growing site. In doing so it has worked in partnership with The Ubele Initiative, Land in Our Names and Black Rootz to establish paths to horticultural training for people of colour (Wolves Lane, 2022). Similarly, OrganicLea plays an advocacy role in London-based struggles for food and land. For example, it is a member of the Community Food Growers Network and has been involved in campaigns and efforts to make more land available for food growing in the city.

*Tamar Grow Local:*

Tamar Grow Local, based in the Tamar Valley in Cornwall in a small not-for-profit that runs a community food hub, Farmstart programme and provides access to local food markets. By creating a local food hub and thriving local market that supports small-scale producers and innovative food businesses, Tamar Grow Local seek to invigorate the local food system. 'We came up with a ten-year plan that created as many different community food growing projects as possible, to engage people in local food production and consumption' (Simon, 2020). Their Farmstart training programme began in 2015 with the aim of 'de-risking the experience of getting into horticulture' (Simon, 2020) and increasing local horticultural production, whilst also meeting the demand of a growing local market.

### *4.4.2 Rationale for case selection:*

These cases were chosen for a variety of reasons, the first being that they offered a 'window' into the activities of the UKSM. Secondly, despite the breadth and diversity of the UKFSM discussed in Chapter 2, the cases chosen for this research reflect this diversity and provide valuable insight into the activities and culture at the grassroots. Similarly, the inductive approach of this research design, led me to these cases through a process of immersion, rather than starting out with a clear idea of the cases I would use, except in the case of Kindling. In this way, it is difficult to discuss the selection of these cases without reiterating the role that my positionality and prior connections to Kindling in Manchester played in determining these cases. My knowledge and experience of working within Kindling gave me unique insight and access to the organisation and the ability to draw on established relationships with former colleagues. As such it is through Kindling that I was able to access OrganicLea and reach out to Tamar Grow Local, both founding members alongside Kindling of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN).

I drew on these cases, including the LWA, not with the aim of comparison but to form a more complete picture of the nature of social action in the UKFSM. As the descriptions of the cases

above illustrate, these projects share similar goals and identify as part of the UKFSM in their membership of the LWA. Equally, the productive focus of these grassroots cases spoke to a trend I was familiar with in the wider movement that centres on developing agroecological local alternatives that emphasise food production, training and distribution. Thus, I was driven to explore these trends and understand the logics that informs them, which led me to the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN). This provided a unifying point between grassroots practice and the national level of the movement, given that the FSIN is coordinated by the LWA. However, I reiterate that coming to these cases along with the focus of my research was an emergent process that was not pre-determined. As such, my interest in these cases was always unfolding through curious enquiry. Therefore, it is easier to look back with greater clarity on why these cases were chosen, their similarities and differences shaping the frame of this research than it was at the time.

Given the deep and immersive nature of my research methodology, much of my research was conducted with Kindling and its associated projects as my primary case study. This was both a practical and methodological decision. Being that Kindling is based in Manchester, it was far easier for me to engage in consistent episodic research and regularly volunteer my time. Similarly, given my experience and knowledge of Kindling's work as well as having established relationships I could draw on in carrying out research it was practical to base my enquiry here. Doing so enhanced my research and played to the strength of my unique positionality in studying the culture of Kindling, something that Plows (2008) notes takes time. Particularly in building relationships of trust and rapport and allowing implicit cultural expressions to emerge. Thus, this research project drew largely on my experience of Kindling.

However, I also volunteered and conducted research with OrganicLea intermittently from August 2019 to February 2020. My involvement with Tamar Grow Local involved interviewing Simon, a director of the organisation, and visiting the site alongside analysis of the organisation's public documents. My time spent with Tamar was particularly short due to the restrictions of Covid 19. Similarly, my experience of the LWA drew mostly on my attendance as an affiliated supporter of the organisation at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2019 and attending the Oxford Real Farming Conference in January 2020 and virtually in 2021 and 2022. Through these interactions, I was able to develop an understanding of how the LWA is structured, and the nature of its membership, particularly the dense informal relationships that exist. I also engaged with the LWA through the FSIN, where I participated in and observed network meetings and conducted interviews with both coordinators of the network.

As such I did not spend an equal amount of time with these cases, but I was able to develop clear themes from my experience among them that influenced the outcomes of this thesis. My experience of working across multiple organisations helped expose the degree to which my positionality and 'closeness' to Kindling influenced my research practice. In this sense the relative 'strangeness' of OrganicLea, Tamar Grow Local and the LWA provided a useful contrast to the familiarity of my 'inside' position within Kindling. For, how I approached these 'new' organisations, particularly in interviews and observation, was to unpack and question the seemingly 'obvious' from a newcomer's position of 'wonderment' (De Jong, Kamsteeg and Ybema, 2013). This subsequently influenced my research with Kindling, for the iteration in moving between 'familiar' and 'strange' environments allowed me to oscillate more easily between these two positions within a single organisation. However, as discussed in Section 4.3 navigating my position as an 'insider' and 'outsider' was a constant challenge and point of reflection throughout this research process.

## 4.5 Covid-19 and the Challenges of Research:

Doing an immersive ethnographic research project and having a commitment to scholar activism was always going to bring challenges in gathering data and balancing my time in the field. However, I could not have foreseen (nor could anyone) how difficult fieldwork would become from March 2020. By the first lockdown of April 2020, it was clear that any plans I had to spend time with agroecological growers and projects in person in the coming months would have to be cancelled. This was frustrating and disappointing as I had started to gather insightful empirical data from the fieldwork carried out prior to Covid and had promising farm visits planned in the early half of 2020. However, the sudden stop to 'normal' life and the pace of my research also provided some clarity and time to take stock of the data I had already gathered and consider what to do next. As a result, I decided to take a six-month break from the project from April 2020, while the pandemic played out and I could assess what would be possible going forward in terms of further research in the field. I was fortunate that during this period I was able to stay connected with growers in Manchester, volunteering where I could and helping with the spring harvest at Woodbank Park. Similarly, I was fortunate to find work with Kindling during this period, helping with the development and editing of a new website as well as assisting with a charity audit. This provided an opportunity for me to engage with Kindling and its projects in Manchester without the pressure of research and give my full attention to assisting the movement. It was also very easy for me to fall back into an employee relationship with Kindling

as an organisation, where the connections and relationships I had with staff, particularly Helen and Chris the founders of Kindling have endured.

Nevertheless, my engagement with the movement in this period was largely remote and restricted to online interactions, which meant that I was disconnected in many ways from the 'action' associated with Kindling and the wider movement. Similarly, many participants working in grassroots organisations did not have the time to engage in online interviews, nor was I willing to pester them, given the challenges of trying to sustain small-food businesses in a precarious and volatile climate. Yet the 'action' of the whole movement shifted in this period, with many projects paused or adapting to meet changing needs during the pandemic. This was in part advantageous with the shift to online communication making it possible to attend events, workshops and training sessions that would otherwise have been logistically difficult to attend. This period provided a space for critical reflection not only for my own research but for the movement more generally with the challenges of Covid also bringing new opportunities for adaption and strategic reflection.

This was particularly apparent in the increased demand for locally sourced food in early 2020 when supermarkets and the mainstream food system were struggling to meet demand. As a result, alternative food markets and local veg box schemes saw a huge increase in demand, with the Food Foundation (Wheeler, 2020) finding that sales of veg box schemes increased by 111% between February and mid-April 2020. This surge in demand stimulated more conversation in the press around the value and resilience of local food to respond to shocks in the industrial food system. This window in mainstream discourse provided a narrative with which the movement could frame itself and advocate for increased localised agroecological production. As Jyoti of the LWA reflected in a *Guardian* article about food insecurity in the pandemic, 'this crisis highlights the vulnerability of our globalised food system, which in coming years will only get worse if we don't invest in building a resilient, diverse, local food system. We demand immediate and significant government action to ensure everyone can access healthy affordable food.' (Harvey, 2020). In this sense, Covid created space for the movement to galvanise an increasingly popular narrative of questioning where our food is coming from and the fragility of the dominant food system. While the focus of this research has not been on exploring how the movement adapted to Covid nor assessed its lasting impact, pausing my research to let the immediate effect of Covid play out created space to capture in part the movement's response to the crisis.

The fallout of the Covid pandemic is still being felt and its lasting impact is yet to be fully understood. However, the fragility of the dominant food system was highlighted early in this crisis exposing our reliance on imported food and migrant labour to keep the UK agricultural sector afloat. Despite the biggest UK supermarkets trying to capitalise on a narrative of 'feeding the nation' (Jolly & Smithers, 2020) through crisis and meeting consumer demands there has been more attention given to the lack of UK food production and the subsequent vulnerabilities this creates. Living through this pandemic, observing and being part of the response of the alternative food movement, has further spurred my advocacy of the work of the food sovereignty movement and the need to build an alternative food system.

## 4.6 Conclusion:

This chapter has set out the design and research approach of this thesis, which is rooted in critical ethnography and participatory action research. I have shown that this methodology grew from my positionality in the movement and commitment to scholar-activism. Similarly, I have argued that an interpretive and inductive approach is best suited to the study of emergent cultural processes, for this lens allows for a relational understanding of meaning construction and provides a way to delve into nuance and divergence in meaning and collective action of the movement. I have also spoken to the challenges of this approach, reflecting on the methods employed i.e. interviews and participant observation, while questioning my positionality in the movement and the difficulty of traversing multiple identities within the UKFSM. Overall, this approach has argued that paying attention to the formation of cultural processes provides insight into the construction of meaning within the movement and its expression through action. I carry this forward in the remaining chapters which provide empirical insight and reflection on the nature of the movement's practices and attempts to interpret meaning from this. This approach not only contributes to literature on cultural formation and meaning-making in social movements but enriches a particular understanding of cultural processes and action within the UKFSM. Beyond this, I have also highlighted the necessity for research approaches like this one, to be of value for activist communities. Therefore, the outputs of this research project are more than this thesis alone, for this research process has sought to assist the work of the grassroots and equally represent the work of the movement in a way that subverts the impetus for academic critique. Consequently, this research has attempted to represent the movement in a light that is true to a scholar-activist approach while producing knowledge that is of use for the academy and communities of activists.

# Chapter 5 - Food Sovereignty is a Verb: A Practice-Based Movement

This chapter centres on the practices of the movement, or more specifically what the movement does. In doing so it offers an ethnographic description of the everyday practices at the grassroots of the movement. This chapter explores how practice is an integral part of the food sovereignty movement's culture and approach to realising social change. The aim is to address what the nature of the movement's practice is, and what these practices tell us about its approach to social change. This chapter should be seen as the first in a series of three, which introduces the themes of divisions of labour in the 'work' of the movement, collective identity, and political consciousness in the everyday. The reader should see this chapter as introducing these themes and raising questions about their significance which are addressed in Chapters 6 and 7.

In exploring these themes, I focus on understanding the nature of the movement's practice, building on the foundation of social practice theory discussed in Chapter 3. I reiterate the sentiment of Shove (2010) and Schatzki (2016) that the social world can be understood through rich description of the movement's practices, and how they are carried out, reproduced and reformulated. As such, this chapter delves into the nature of everyday practice within the movement to understand these practices themselves and how they are linked to a vision of social and political transformation. This builds on the premise that practice is a process of meaning-making. As such, focusing on the nature of the movement's practice informs an understanding of the meanings associated with and produced through these practices. Taking collective practice as the point of social analysis is not to suggest uniformity in practice or shared meaning, as this chapter will demonstrate. But it provides a means to understand how cultural meanings and materiality converge and diverge, in a movement that is organised primarily around the *practice* of agroecology.

Similarly, it is necessary to understand the specific nature of these 'practices and their participants' (Spaargaren, et al 2016) to understand how they are carried out and by whom. In doing so, I discuss the nature of the movement's everyday agroecological practice, the development of alternative local markets and the strategic work of the grassroots. I frame these practices in the context of the 'work' and labour that the movement does, borrowing from Arendt's (1958) theory of human action. Using this framework, I discuss divisions of labour

within the movement and the potential implications of this for fostering collective identity, while also pointing to the different labour relations present in the movement. In doing so, I question how useful Arendt's (1958) framework of divisions of work and labour is for understanding the practices of the movement, pointing to its limitations and the scope for thinking about the 'action' of the movement.

This chapter is structured in two sections. The first section describes the nature of the practices of the UK food sovereignty movement, focusing on agroecological growing, the development of alternative markets and strategic organising at the base of the movement. Here I draw on empirical data and fieldnotes. Section 5.2 discusses these practices through Arendt's (1958) framework of labour, 'work' and 'action' pointing to the shared nature of these practices and similarly divisions in labour. I raise questions that later chapters of this thesis explore concerning the implications of divisions of labour within the movement and the nature of everyday practice.

## 5.1 A Growing Practice

As discussed in Chapter 2, the diversity of organisations and practices at the grassroots of the UKFSM can make it difficult to generalise their practices and activities. Grassroots organisations are fundamentally autonomous, meaning that their practices are determined by local needs, specificities of place, access to resources, and are driven by key actors within organisations themselves. However, despite the differences in the specificities of daily practice and organisational structure between grassroots organisations, there are similar character traits in the focus of daily activity.

Organisations like Kindling, OrganicLea and Tamar Grow share a daily practice that centres around building local alternative food networks that grow and distribute agroecological food while training new entrants in agroecological growing practices. The creation of these alternatives often takes a physical and tangible form, offering practised and 'lived' solutions to the problems of the dominant agro-industrial regime. These practical solutions at the grassroots often form a tri-pronged approach of growing, selling, and training, which is perhaps best understood and given greater depth by drawing on my experience at the grassroots of the movement. The reflection below deals with daily growing practices at OrganicLea's market garden on the edge of Epping Forest in Haringey North London.

> *I pull up on a bright and sunny day at Hawkwood Nursery, where there is a chill in the air and the surrounding trees are showing the first signs that their leaves will soon fall. I am here to join in at Organic Lea's Induction Day, a requirement for all new volunteers.*

*I meet Clare, a co-op member along with several other members of Organic Lea who are hosting the 15 or so volunteers at the nursery garden. We are given a tour of the 12-acre growing site, complete with Victorian glass houses that are buzzing with activity. Regular volunteers and trainees alongside co-op members tend to the produce in compost beds and pick cucumbers that are scaling the walls, while we are shown the ropes on how to plant out garlic for the coming Spring. The site is teaming with people barrowing woodchips and compost, while others are hoeing and clearing away the last of the squash crop.*

*I join a team of volunteers and measure out a rough 30cm between each hole as I place each garlic bulb into fresh compost that is still warm to the touch. We do this in a melodic and rhythmic fashion for over two hours until a large patch of growing space to the West of the glass houses is raked and watered over. Once finished I chat with Rod a co-op member who is working with the volunteers about what OrganicLea does. He tells me that Hawkwood is a cooperative and organic growing site, but it is built around an ethic of care for earth, people and planet. 'We engage loads of different people as volunteers, like yourself, and people that want to become trainees and growers, we are a way into it, if growing in harmony with nature is what people want to do'. I got the impression that for many with their hands in the soil, this was also an escape or perhaps a coming back to nature. For the lush greenery and rich biodiversity of the site, calls to listening ears and fills many faces here with joy, even with sweat dripping from their brow.*

*After lunch Clare takes us on a tour of the lusciously green growing site which is arranged like a patchwork quilt. We stroll down blackberry row and cherry walk, while Clare talks us through what each of the pockets produces to supply OrganicLea's Veg Box customers. OrganicLea's Veg Box scheme feeds 700 (as of March 2020) and supplies 20 London restaurants regularly, Tsouni the schemes co-ordinator tells me. I was struck by the richness and diversity of the market garden, which OrganicLea talk proudly of with volunteers, telling us how the web of interconnection in how they grow makes Hawkwood a model of sustainable organic horticulture.*

As I left Hawkwood later that day with a satisfied feeling of having done a hard day's work, I reflected on the highly practical nature of the activities described above, which involved a wealth of different people engaging in a variety of manual tasks. This is, in many ways, the nature of food growing: it is highly labour-intensive, repetitive and organised around growing efficiently and productively. In drawing attention to the daily reality of these practices as

described in this vignette, I found myself questioning how these practices connect with the political aims and objectives of the movement for social transformation. These everyday practices in and of themselves are seemingly apolitical. Yet, there is a depth evoked in the vignette that points to the fulfilment that individuals engaged in this work gain, which is embedded within natural ecosystems. As such, there is a need to understand the relationship between the everyday practice of the movement and processes of social transformation. Similarly, much of the labour captured in this reflection, whether it is done by volunteers, trainees, co-op members or employees, is work. It takes graft, determination, physical strength and endurance to consistently commit to a practice of food growing, especially one that is reliant on minimal mechanisation, like that of OrganicLea and Kindling in Manchester. As such we might ask what the nature of this practice is, who engages in it and the extent to which this work is shared. As this chapter will exemplify, the nature of the labour and work carried out at the grassroots can affect how those involved in these practices engage or associate with the wider movement for food sovereignty.

### *5.1.1 Working the Land: Agroecology*

Grassroots organisations like OrganicLea are embedded and built around a 'rooted' practice of agroecological food growing. OrganicLea, for example, is a growers' and workers' co-operative, that is built on a foundation of growing organically to supply a small local market. Similarly, Kindling has projects that intervene at different stages of consumption to production of an alternative supply chain. However, the focus of its practical activity is organised around creating and supporting new agroecological growers to supply a local organic market. In this way, agroecological food growing provides the foundation from which the work they do stems i.e. training, selling and engaging people with alternative food systems.

The growing that takes place in these spaces is often at a small scale (i.e., around 12 acres), on market gardens at the urban fringes of cities like London and Manchester. These growing sites often perform multiple functions. For example, Woodbank Park Nursery acts as a commercial growing site, a Farmstart training and incubator farm for trainees, a volunteer space, and a community garden while also hosting wellbeing programmes working with community and refugee groups. The diversity of functionality and practice at these sites means that a wealth of people engage with the food grown in these spaces and the process of food growing, which as Rod from OrganicLea indicated can be an entry point for people to engage with alternative food. Nevertheless, the daily practices of these sites are primarily orientated around producing agroecologically grown food for a local, alternative commercial market.

This food is grown through agroecological methods that are deeply interconnected with local ecosystems and offer a regenerative approach that works in harmony with nature. As Clare explained, OrganicLea along with Kindling subscribe to the principles of Vegan Organic Permaculture, a form of agroecological growing that removes animal inputs in growing vegan organic food (Schmutz and Foresi, 2017). Other examples of agroecological practices used at the grassroots I encountered are companion planting, planting green manures as cover crops to store nutrients in the soil and no-dig methods of cultivation along with minimal mechanisation in carrying out these growing practices. While the methods used at the grassroots are not limited to these and are defined and differ across organisations, agroecological production captures the breadth and foundation of daily growing practices.

Growing agroecologically at commercial market gardens like that of Hawkwood and Woodbank requires significant labour power and continued input to carry out daily tasks that are necessary to make these growing sites productive. This is particularly true when considering the methods employed rely heavily on labour rather than mechanical interventions. As Luke of Veg Box People told me, 'we are trying to bring about efficiency with human labour, in that sense it's a bit different to that of the dominant model which is about getting machines involved' (Luke, 2020). Consequently, human labour is a necessity in making these models of agroecological production viable, requiring labour to plant, pick, harvest and carry out a range of manual tasks at these small-scale market gardens. This is visually represented in Figure 4.0 below.

*Figure 4.0: Volunteers weeding and planting out garlic at OrganicLea's growing site, Hawkwood Nursey, August 2019.*

As evidenced at OrganicLea much of this labour is carried out by volunteers alongside co-op members and trainees who maintain and manage Hawkwood as a growing site. Similarly, at Kindling, volunteers that attend volunteer days and Farmstart trainees carry out integral daily tasks. Having spent time with Kindling's Farmstart trainees working the land at Woodbank, it was clear that they played a crucial role in maintaining the site and increasing productivity. Barrowing compost from one field to another, planting out seedlings, broad forking the soil to encourage air and nutrient flow and avoid compaction when planting the new season's crops. This work is often physically strenuous, repetitive and mundane in nature and is essential to sustaining the work at the grassroots, hence we might understand these practices as the labour or work of the grassroots. Nic, one of the Farmstarters, described these practices: 'I mean it is working, isn't it? We are working for the business and supplying them while learning. A training course I guess you see as more stand-alone and without the business element to it necessarily' (Nic, 2020). In this sense, the growing of agroecological produce at the grassroots is often reliant on volunteer and trainee labour as pointed to in the reflection above. This, in many ways, is emblematic of the nature of agricultural work more broadly, which often involves unpaid voluntary labour to gain skills and experience in the industry. I consider the use of unpaid labour in the movement and its relationship to social transformation in greater depth in Chapter 8.

Much of the growing work at the grassroots attempts to integrate agroecological training and education with commercial growing practices. In some cases, this is done concurrently. At OrganicLea new trainees attend their Level 1 & 2 City and Guilds Horticultural training course and are introduced to vegan organic methods of horticulture within the commercial growing context of Hawkwood Nursery. Brian explained that OrganicLea uses this training as a precursor for identifying individuals who might be interested in progressing through to the Farmstart programme.

> Through our training programme, we try to identify one or two Farmstarters that come out of the training opportunity, and we give them some mentoring and try to find some land for them, but it tends to be small bits of urban land and growing salads. In that sense what we say we do is 'Salad Start' it's not farms, it's market gardening, it's very small but it gets people a bit of a living. It is about people learning, making mistakes, and giving it a go (Brian, 2019).

As Brian explains, Farmstart as a training model is designed to give trainees hands-on commercial growing experience, without having to take on the personal risk of setting up their own enterprises or getting access to land. In the case of some models like that of Kindling's, they

also provide invaluable labour to the running of these commercial projects on the ground. The Farmstart programme transported from a model developed in the US and first practised by Kindling in Manchester is designed to give participants access to land, training and markets to sell to, while they figure out if commercial growing is something they want to pursue. Helen D of Kindling explained that 'it isn't really my job to teach them [Farmstarters] horticulture, it is more about teaching them how to work effectively and get them familiar with the demands of growing for a living – if they are serious about doing it, this programme gives them a serious understanding of the reality' (Helen D, 2019). Consequently, emphasis at the grassroots on 'working' the land is in part aimed at giving volunteers and trainees an immersion into the reality of what it takes to run a successful and productive agroecological small holding. As Helen D explained Farmstart is about more than training people how to grow:

> It's not about just those specific growing based decisions, it is also about harvesting and standards of what buyers expect, and showing this is how you negotiate with them, and this is how it gets delivered. I think all of that is part of the experience and knowledge that they need to leave with (Helen D, 2019).

It is also necessary to point out that each Farmstart model differs in their specific expression, with some offering integrated training, like Kindling's model, while others emphasise different elements of the programme i.e. access to markets or land, based on the needs and demands of local context. However, what should be emphasised about Farmstart as a model for enabling new entrants into growing is that this programme is not fixed and is constantly being adapted to suit the local context and capacity of hosting organisations. For example, Simon from Tamar Grow Local in the Tamar Valley told me they had found that there was not much appetite among trainees for formal accredited training. As such, Tamar Grow Local offers mentoring opportunities to trainees that want it but largely concentrates on developing a local market that gives Farmstarters a consistent demand for their produce, while also ensuring a consistent supply for a local market. In this regard, much of Tamar Grow Local's energy is in developing the local food hub, which acts as a bridge between consumers and producers. 'The hub does the marketing and distribution side of things and still is able to pay 85p in the £1 for their produce which is pretty good', Simon (2020) tells me.

Additionally, the impression I got from Hawkwood, and similarly Woodbank, as agroecological growing sites, is that while these daily practices are about growing commercially and making these models viable, the activity at the growing hubs extends beyond commercial growing directly. The efforts to grow agroecological produce and share it with the local community

through its Veg Box scheme is a way that OrganicLea engages a myriad of people in alternative ways of growing. Tsouni, who co-ordinates OrganicLea's Veg Box scheme, told me, 'The box scheme is a tool for promoting the other work that we do, we get a lot of people coming and doing courses and wanting to learn about local growing.... the box scheme is a way into that' (2019). In this way the focus on the activity of food growing is innately interconnected with other practices and aims of grassroots projects like OrganicLea to provide agroecological training and build a local market for this produce. The practices are interdependent and reinforcing – part of an alternative model of changing the food system.

I pick up on the experimental and evolutionary nature of the Farmstart model as a training pathway for agroecological growing in the following chapter. However, I emphasise that these training opportunities are not homogenous, just like the specific methods that the grassroots employ in agroecological growing. Yet, these practices often overlap and integrate growing, training and selling into a holistic model of local food system change. This is evident in how commercial growing is interwoven with agroecological training and in how both practices seek to increase the number of new entrants into farming and the supply of agroecological produce.

### *5.1.2 Local Alternative Markets:*

Beyond the daily activities that surround food growing there is an emphasis on developing alternative local markets at the grassroots to support an increase in agroecological growers. The expression of these alternative markets is variable, from local food hubs like that of Tamar Grow Local to market stalls and veg box schemes, such as Organic Lea's veg box scheme or Veg Box People in Manchester, which sits under the umbrella of the Kindling Trust.

Veg Box People in Manchester is an example of an alternative market that the grassroots organise, maintain, and attempt to grow to support small-scale organic growers and make this produce available to others. Veg Box People is organised as a cooperative and relates to other alternative schemes like it across the UK through the Better Food Traders Network. Those that organise and carry out the daily tasks of Veg Box People are its cooperative members who work closely with small-scale organic growers across Greater Manchester to crop plan and organise direct grower-buyer relationships. The day-to-day reality of making this happen, means that Veg Box People is filled with logistics, ordering, packing fruit and veg and delivering veg bags to collection points across the city. The scheme supplies an average of 300 customers and their families every week in the Greater Manchester area (accurate as of June 2023). The nature of this activity is captured in my own reflection of working with Veg Box People.

*"Blimey its cold this morning, isn't it?!" Alexx said as he greeted me outside Veg Box People's lock-up in New Smithfield Market on a cold November morning. We were preparing to pick the fruit and veg for this week's order, which meant a long day in a human-sized fridge with stacks of crates full of beets, curly kale, and spring greens. Alexx and I have worked together on many morning veg packs, along with Luke, Chess and Amy, who move hurriedly between the office, the lock-up and taking veg bags out for deliveries. I have covered many holiday and sickness shifts at the lockup and am familiar with the natural order of weighing potatoes and mushrooms and portioning them into over 300 (sometimes 400) separate customer orders. The produce come in from Glebelands Organics in Sale on the edge of Manchester as well as seasonal produce from Woodbank Park where this year's Farmstarters are in training, while the difference is made up through the wholesaler Organic North. There is a harmonious dance to this routinised exchange of produce between people, as we move across the warehouse floor.*

*I reflect in that icy lock-up on how this routinised hustle and bustle of moving fruit and veg from market to customer is the daily reality for the staff at Veg Box People. Their days are filled with logistics, ordering and deliveries. I can't help but think this doesn't leave much room for reflecting on the purpose of Veg Box People, and its relationship with the wider food sovereignty movement and Kindling's projects more directly. I raise this with Alexx, in a brief moment of reprieve from stock adjusting and stuffing potatoes into paper bags. "I guess day to day I don't feel like what we are doing is part of a bigger movement, there is so much in front of me to get on with to just keep things going" Alexx said. After a pause and returning to stuffing veg bags he added, "but then again, we are connected to others doing similar things through the Better Food Traders Network, and Kindling is a lot more connected to the system change stuff than we are and maybe that's okay. We are doing the graft and grind of making that change possible, this is what that changed system would look like.*

The hustle and bustle of daily routine captured in this reflection of working with Veg Box People, is indicative of grassroots activity in the movement, where the day-to-day is filled with logistics, operations, and project delivery. Out of the context of the wider movement, the description of the activities in the warehouse at New Smithfield Market doesn't sound particularly transgressive or different to any other wholesale vegetable supplier or box scheme. Indeed, one might argue that there is nothing inherently political in stuffing bags with potatoes or growing potatoes as a Farmstarter. For the reality of developing alternative markets to support agroecological growers, often involves practical and repetitive activities not dissimilar in nature to the labour involved in agroecological food production.

There is a felt sense among individuals in the movement that their daily social practice does not feel particularly political. This sentiment was echoed by Farmstart trainees across OrganicLea and Kindling's projects, who shared a feeling of disconnect from the wider political objectives of the UKFSM in the everyday of their actions. I explore this further in the next section of this chapter. However, it prompts the question of whether it is necessary that everyday practice and routine share a sense of political connection to the wider movement. Alexx, a Veg Box People employee, points to this question in referring to VBP's connection to wider networks that are more focused on movement strategy such as Better Food Traders and the LWA through Kindling. As Alexx says, 'maybe it is okay', that not all movement practice is political or experimental in nature. For as Alexx points out, these acts of building an alternative food system and the infrastructure to support it are not taking place in a vacuum – they are connected through networks to a shared practice of others who are also carrying out similar everyday practices.

Similarly, it is arguably unrealistic to expect that the daily practice of a movement like that of food sovereignty, which is firmly embedded in growing, building, and demonstrating practical alternatives, is always explicitly political in the everyday. This movement takes the consumption and production of agroecological food as the site of reimagining, or, to use the language of Holloway (2010), trying to 'crack' the existing agro-industrial complex through agroecological practices and alternative infrastructure that supports it. In this sense, the 'political' in an explicit and overt sense is not evident in the daily practices like those described in distribution and food growing.

As Alexx explains, the daily grind of running a Veg Box co-operative or being a Farmstart trainee means your energy is spent with the reality of day-to-day routine. The reality is practical acts of 'doing' to sustain projects and social enterprises like Veg Box People and Farmstart. Michelle, one of Kindling's 2020 Farmstarter's, explained that the everyday 'is more about the growing and the day-to-day stuff than the overarching reason that we are all here, at least it feels that way because we are really focused on the learning part' (Michelle, 2020). The long game of prefigurative practice and the continued act of building involves the mundane and day-to-day routine described above. This daily practice requires sustained energy and doesn't leave much time to reflect on the political significance of this action, as Helen from Kindling commented, 'we are trying to get these things up and running and show that these models work' (Helen, 2019). I consider the implications of this division in labour in the following section of this chapter (5.2) - is it necessary for the movement to share a political understanding of its practices in the everyday, and what does it mean if the work individuals perform doesn't provide space for reflection?

### *5.1.3 Strategic Organising:*

Whilst much of the work at the grassroots concentrates on the daily grind and manual labour of building an alternative food system, some activities within the movement extend beyond this to those that involve organisational strategic decision-making, as well as those that are more typically associated with movement practices i.e., movement building and campaigning. I have experienced first-hand this day-to-day reality, working with Helen and Chris, the co-founders of Kindling, alongside other staff involved in Kindling's office and project delivery. This work can involve writing funding bids, project evaluation reports for funders, designing and delivering community growing projects, staff recruitment along with managing core organisational and administrative tasks. The nature of this 'work' has much in common with the labour of food growing, in that it is essential and necessary for the rest of grassroots activities.

However, this strategic work at the grassroots also includes participation in movement and agroecological networking events, attending regional and national conferences, organisational outreach and giving presentations about the work at the grassroots in local council meetings and policy discussions. For example, attendance at the annual Oxford Real Farming Conference (ORFC) and engagement in collaborative research projects, such as Shared Asset's focus on land for the common good, which brings grassroots actors together (see Shared Assets, 2019). Similarly, grassroots organisations engage with local authorities to gain access to resources and garner support for work within local communities while also seeking to influence local policy. For example, Kindling, in consultation with other organisations working on sustainable food, developed the Greater Manchester Sustainable Food Strategy in 2017. This was used as a platform to petition the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, to become a signatory of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which Greater Manchester signed in 2019 (see Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, ND). The pact commits the city of Manchester to 'develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people' (see Kindling Trust, 2017). However, the degree to which grassroots organisations can focus on strategic and policy work is in part determined by access to resources.

de Moor et al (2019) echo this, suggesting that the focus in the everyday on keeping projects going is in part a reflection of the funding constraints in which organisations like Kindling operate. In this sense organisations at the grassroots, are often reliant on a degree of funding from charitable trusts, such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation or Esmee Fairburn. These funders often invest in grassroots projects that offer 'positive solutions' to environmental and social issues, such as Kindling's Wellbeing Hub at Woodbank, which engages members of the

community in projects that address social isolation, food poverty and foster a sense of community. The project-driven nature of this funding environment, which is often time-limited and project specific, leaves organisations like Kindling spending significant amounts of their time trying to cover the core costs of organisational activity. Similarly, the time-bound nature of this funding means that even when there are resources to invest in advocacy and strategic work at the grassroots, it is often short-lived and struggles to be sustained. This was the case with my role as Kindling's Strategy worker with time bound funding of 18-months, an experience echoed by OrganicLea, who were able to fund a Food Sovereignty Worker for a limited period. As a result, it can be difficult for members of grassroots organisations to participate actively, sustain and prioritise movement-based work and strategizing, when the day- to-day is often filled with the labour and work essential for an organisation's survival. With this in mind, we might question the extent to which work at the grassroots concerns sustaining its practice and carrying out the daily activities necessary in building an alternative food system, rather than engaging in movement building and strategizing.

The potential difficulties for key actors in grassroots organisations to engage in wider movement-based work was recognised in establishing the Farmstart Incubator Network. Steph the FSIN coordinator explained that 'part of what the FSIN is doing is funding those networks to be part of these conversations. Like if I said can Helen, Roo, Brian come to this meeting they would be too busy, but I think that is part of the network that is helpful in providing a resource for those organisations to engage in it' (Steph, 2019). In this sense, networks like the FSIN seek to increase the capacity of key actors at the grassroots to engage in knowledge-sharing, learning and strategizing opportunities. However, the impetus to developing these spaces was created by the grassroots themselves, as Helen W from Kindling explained:

> We went on a trip to France to see the French network of incubator farms, me and Oli from Ecological Land Cooperative and someone from Organic Lea had been part of a Shared Assets Project about access to land and then we all went together to France, and it was totally inspiring […]. I was like there is no reason why we can't do this in the UK, so then we all sat there and came up with a plan for how we were going to do it in the UK, […] and then came home and realised we had no resources to do it yet again! So then at some point, we said let's put in a bid to make it happen, in the end, Organic Lea wrote a bid which they put into Joseph Rowntree, because they were out of money to run their Farmstart programme […]and then we asked the Landworkers' Alliance to hold the network and then we got the funding (Helen W, 2019).

Helen's reflection on the emergence of the FSIN demonstrates how funding environments and constraints limit the resource capacity and ability of the grassroots to mobilise strategically in movement-building work. In many ways, this confirms Gibson-Graham's argument that innovations and solutions to the problems of the existing world order are limited by 'the politics of the possible' (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Consequently, the extent to which individuals at the grassroots can engage with strategic movement building work is in part reliant on access to resources. Similarly, national networks like the FSIN and LWA fulfil a critical role in providing space for movement-building and strategizing work, while also carrying out this work directly. I return to the role of the LWA and the national branch of the movement in carrying out strategic policy-making and campaigning 'work' in Chapter 6, considering the logics that inform a holistic theory of change. However, the extent to which strategizing, and movement organising are integrated and can take place in the everyday of the grassroots is necessary to consider. Similarly, the extent to which individuals at the grassroots are integrated and involved in this strategic and movement-organising work is varied. As I explain in the following section of this chapter, there is a division of labour at the grassroots, which can influence the degree to which individuals participate in movement-building and strategizing work.

## 5.2 A Shared Practice

Following the previous section that explored the nature of the practices at the grassroots, this section discusses two fundamental elements relating to this practice: 1) who carries out these practices; and 2) the extent to which these practices are shared or collectively experienced. In doing so, I point to the different roles at the grassroots of the movement and discuss the variance in association with wider movement processes. I expand on the work of the grassroots as labour while pointing to the ways in which this labour is shared and how it can differ. This leads me to discuss the implications of differences in the labour carried out at the grassroots.

The highly practical nature of daily activities discussed in the previous section is fundamental to the building of an alternative food system, which is predicated on cultivating different relationships with the land and food growing. As my reflection from Hawkwood and subsequent discussion illustrates this daily practice involves a great deal of labour in the growing, training and distributing of agroecological food. This is innate to the nature of agroecological growing and horticulture generally, which is labour-intensive and involves repetitive, physical tasks that could be considered mundane. Hannah Arendt (1958), in her discussion of human action, would class the nature of this daily activity as labour in that it is physically demanding and essential for the sustaining of human life i.e. growing food. For Arendt, 'labour' is distinguished from 'work

and ‘action’ in its essential nature, in that what we labour for are the necessities of life, which themselves ‘never produce anything but life’ (Arendt, 1958; p.88). This lack of permanence means that for Arendt, these acts of ‘labour leave no properly human mark’ (Voice, 2014, p.38). By contrast, ‘work leaves behind something that extends beyond satisfying the biological needs of its maker’ and similarly elevates ‘humanity beyond the repetitive cycles of nature’ (Ibid, p.39-40). In doing so, ‘work’ for Arendt is undertaken to ‘achieve something rather than for its own sake’ (Ibid, 41) and driven by a means and ends mentality that sees work as instrumental in achieving an endpoint or objective. Arendt’s theory of ‘action’ distinguishes itself from both, ‘work’ and ‘labour’ to argue that action is ‘a moment of origination that discloses an individual actor within a plurality of others’ (Voice, 2014; p.47). In this sense, ‘action’ gives meaning to *who people are*, through the actions they perform, that for Arendt has longevity in a way that ‘labouring’ does not because of the consequences of this action or in how it is remembered (Ibid, pp.44-47). ‘Action’, for Arendt, is closely associated with freedom and a lived politic, with freedom through action offering possibilities to transcend ‘the limitation of our embodied selves and the mechanical thinking of instrumentality’ (Ibid, p.47).

To class this work as ‘labour’ is not to belittle it or suggest it is menial or not as valuable as other ‘work’ and ‘action’, to use Arendt’s terminology, within the movement. For this labour is essential to the building of an alternative food system, with food production at the core of reimagining and reinventing social and economic relationships with the land and food. This labour is highly skilled and necessitates valuable and insightful knowledge of agroecological food growing, with much of this knowledge embedded in place and diverse ways of knowing and connecting with the land and its agroecosystem (see Berkes et al., 2000). Instead, we might see this labour as the foundation of grassroots daily practice, around which other work of the movement is built. This has similarities with how the LWA describes the work of the grassroots of the movement, which is not separate but fundamental to the structure of the UKFSM. I speak more to this in Section 6.2 of the following chapter, but stress here that this labour is not restricted to the grassroots; it is instead a common practice among the movement’s membership.

Similarly, those who engage in the grassroots activities of food growing make an active choice to do so, with many wanting to retrain and pursue a livelihood or interest in food growing that is ‘rooted’ in nature, working practically and outdoors. Many trainees and volunteers I spoke with found joy, pleasure and satisfaction in this daily labour, which could be a connective and immersive experience with nature and community. Helen a Farmstart trainee expressed:

> I love coming here and working in this environment, as part of a team and spending all day with my hands in the soil […] it can be exhausting, and I am sometimes surprised by how exhausted I am, but the work is really rewarding. It is great to feel like I am getting faster and more efficient with things, I am now doing at my allotment things we do here like broad forking to aerate the soil (Helen, 2020).

Picking up on Helen's reflection on her experience, the fact that much of this labour is tiring, intensive and repetitive doesn't mean that it isn't rewarding and useful for trainees interested in becoming commercial growers. In this sense, this labour is not 'slavish' (Arendt, 1958, p.83) in its repetitive or essential nature. Rather, the practices involved in the labouring of agroecological food growing in and of themselves can be valuable for those carrying out this labour. Arendt acknowledges that 'blessings' and 'pleasures' (1958, p105-106) can be found in consumptive and essential practices associated with labour. However, Arendt distinguishes this from human fulfilment and freedom gained through 'action'. I argue that the practice of agroecology in and of itself has great value and transformative potential in transforming human relationships with nature and provides purpose and fulfilment for those who engage in it, as Helen describes above. Similarly, the relations fostered between human and non-human nature through these growing practices have resonance with the sustainable materialisms of Schlosberg & Coles (2016). In this regard, the intimate relationships with the land and soil, natural ecosystems and working within seasonal rhythms of nature can connect humans to the non-human. Doing so arguably creates space for individuals to see themselves as embedded in material relationships with ecosystems, which can instil a connection to the natural world and provide meaning for those who carry out these practices. Thus, I diverge from Arendt in understanding the value of these practices as more than individual 'pleasure' but a practice that has the potential to instil meaning and fulfilment akin to Arend's description of 'action'.

Similarly, the value of these practices, as Helen describes, extends to the collective aspects of agroecological growing that often involve working collaboratively. Those carrying out the labour at the grassroots, like Helen, have expressed a sense of connection in these daily practices that are performed in collective ways, and can draw on cooperative working structures and models of organisation. Georgie, in reflecting on her experience as a Farmstarter, added that exposure to collaborative ways of working isn't necessarily explicit or consciously discussed but is innate in the practices and approach to agroecological food growing at the grassroots.

> Even though there is nothing geared up to suggesting that we work collaboratively or think about doing that afterwards, I think the nature of what we are doing and working

> as a team and seeing how hard it is even with five of us to farm these 2 acres, we would be screwed without the help of volunteers. So how a lot of market gardeners take on a couple of acres alone I have no idea! I feel for me it has definitely confirmed the need to be working in a team on the land or commercially in the future (Georgie, 2020).

Georgie's sentiments were echoed by others involved in Kindling's Farmstart programme and suggest that there is an implicit encouragement of collaborative and cooperative working within the training model. In this way, some individuals at the grassroots have been influenced by the values of collaborative and cooperative working at the grassroots. I return to discuss the programmatic and implicit values of the movement in greater detail in the following chapter. However, the collaborative nature of these working practices means that there are possibilities for reimaging and relating labour to wider systems of capital and a transformed food system. For example, immersing trainees in cooperative and collaborative working environments, could instil a collective or cooperative sensibility and working outlook in new growers that moves away from individualist capitalist pursuits of organic growing to those built on principles of cooperation. In this way, immersion in different working environments offers possibilities for reimagining the nature of 'work' in agroecology that reflects the cooperative and collaborative processes inherent in this approach to food growing. I return to the possibilities of raising political consciousness through labour in Chapter 7.

### *5.2.1 A Division of Labour*

Beyond the shared practices described above, it is important to discuss how the labour at the grassroots is distributed and the degree to which it is shared. I discuss distinctions in practice between the base of the movement and the national level of the LWA in Chapter 6. However, this section highlights divisions in labour in and among the grassroots of the movement. As one might expect, not everyone at the grassroots performs the same role or is engaged in the same everyday practices. For example, trainees and volunteers along with training staff and co-op members are more involved in the day-to-day reality of food production at sites like Hawkwood and Woodbank. Similarly, members of food distribution initiatives like Veg Box People are largely focused on the daily reality of logistics and project delivery, as Alexx remarked in his reflection in the previous Section (5.1). Divisions of labour and the degree to which this occurs at the grassroots is necessary to discuss, as the roles individuals perform can determine the extent to which they are involved in movement organising work and subsequently identify and connect with the movement.

For example, in discussing the experience of Farmstart with trainees from Kindling, many commented on not being aware of Kindling's wider work or feeling particularly integrated with the wider movement. Georgie, a Kindling Farmstarter, points to this in discussing her experience as a Farmstart trainee.

> Yeah it is tough, because a lot of stuff in terms of knowing what is going on in the wider sphere of activism and whatever we are adults and we could totally go and find it ourselves but just being part of a learning programme it would have been good to have been like this is happening over here and there is this group that is doing this sort of thing, you know. Like even things like the Northern Real Farming Conference, Kindling was involved, and we weren't told about it, I just happened to stumble across it because of something else (Georgie, 2020).

Being part of the day to day of agroecological growing for Georgie was, to a degree, separate from the wider activism of the movement and Kindling's involvement with wider networks. This is particularly apparent in how they discuss Kindling's work in networking and movement-building activities as separate from their own. This perception, however, is at odds with the centrality of Farmstart in Kindling's vision for a changed food system, as the programme provides a pathway to agroecological growing. This is a sentiment echoed by other trainees I spoke with who, when asked if they felt part of a wider movement, often expressed, 'not really, it's just growing here' (see Belinda, 2019). In highlighting these reflections, I am not suggesting that all labour at the grassroots of the movement needs to be politicised in the everyday; doing so would not always be possible nor would it account for the fact that the daily tasks involved in this labour are often 'graft and grind' and practically necessary.

However, it does raise the question of the significance and necessity of connection to the wider movement of those carrying out the daily labour at the grassroots. If individuals like Georgie, Belinda and Alexx don't share an explicit connection to the wider work of the movement beyond their labour of food growing or distribution, what effect does this have on fostering a collective identity in the movement? Similarly, is it necessary for new agroecological growers to share an explicit connection to the wider movement and does this affect the extent to which these new growers represent politically transformative ways of realising Food Sovereignty? I pick up these questions in Chapter 7; I acknowledge them here as they emerge in the confluence between the practices and labour at the grassroots and the wider work of the movement.

In highlighting the relationship between labour and the wider 'work' of the movement, I am not instilling binary distinctions between these two positions or suggesting there is a homogenous

experience of those who labour or those who 'work' in other areas of the movement. In fact, it is very difficult to generalise the division of labour at the grassroots, with roles often overlapping and intersecting. For example, the Landworkers' Alliance organising committee is made up of individual growers who work the land, are part of growing cooperatives and have their own agroecological practice. For many, their daily practice is a balance between the practical labour akin to that described at Hawkwood and by Farmstarter trainees, with the collective organising and strategizing at regional and national levels of the LWA. Similarly, Helen and Chris, co-founders of Kindling, were also growing as part of the Farmstart programme when it began, to demonstrate it could be done.

> I just think I am someone, and Chris and all of Kindling [who] need to get our hands dirty to be able to show what can be done. We try to do a little bit of everything, we do try and change policy, we do education stuff, but what we say is the way we have to start is by showing you can do it. That is why Chris and I personally took on half an acre of a Farmstart site when we first started, we just felt like we can't expect other people to do it when we won't do it ourselves (Helen W, 2019).

In this sense, the 'labouring' of the movement is not exclusive to trainees and volunteers. Instead, it is a shared or common practice that people in different roles within the movement often engage in. In this way, I depart from Arendt in drawing distinct binary positions between labour, which Arendt considers to be mundane in its consumptive focus (Arendt, 1958, p.88), and 'work' which produces the conditions for human existence. Work for Arendt has a permanence and longevity that labour doesn't. Similarly, for Arendt, work has a purpose in its efforts to achieve a greater goal (ibid), which in the case of the food sovereignty movement could be policy change and food system transformation. Yet, the 'work' of the food movement inherently involves the labour that sustains human life (i.e. food growing), with this labour interwoven into the 'work' (i.e. strategizing and organising to achieve systemic transformation). In this sense, 'labour' and 'work' in the context of the food sovereignty movement are not distinct but overlap and intersect in the carrying out of prefigurative practices that seek to bring a changed food system into being. As such, Arendt's categories, particularly in understanding the relationships between work and labour in the UKFSM, have limited applicability. For labour, as I argued earlier in this chapter, has value in and of itself and equally is interwoven with the 'work' of the movement, with agroecological practice the pinnacle of a sustainable and transformed food system. Thus, the means of labour cannot be disentangled from the 'ends' of the movement's practice, reflecting prefigurative logics of social change.

Consequently, we can think of the growing practice of the grassroots and the labour it requires as foundational to much of the 'work' the movement performs. This is echoed by Jyoti (2019), the LWA campaign co-ordinator for England, at the LWA AGM in 2019 'the weight we have is the work you do' when discussing the value of the grassroots to the LWA's political campaigns. This points to the intersection of movement building, campaigning, and political mobilising work of the national wing of the movement, drawing directly on the daily efforts and labour at the grassroots that are practising alternatives in real-time.

In this way the 'labouring' of the movement serves to further legitimate the demands at the national level, drawing on the experience and practice of those involved in the day-to-day work of agroecology at the grassroots. Yet, the extent to which there is common or shared immersion among those who labour in wider networks and movement strategizing is more varied. This was evident in Georgie's reflection on growing as part of Kindling's Farmstart programme (see page 99). This in part seems to be based on individuals' roles in the movement. For example, Helen and Chris of Kindling would regularly attend national meetings of the movement at the Oxford Real Farming Conference and the LWA's AGM. Similarly, a handful of OrganicLea's cooperative team would attend networking events and be involved in organising for food justice and food sovereignty in London as part of the LWA and the CFGN. This to an extent is unavoidable, it is necessary to have roles that relate to specific responsibilities and play to an individual's skills and interests, while also ensuring the daily labour of food growing, training and distribution continues. However, as Crowley (2008) suggests, the roles that individuals in a movement perform can correlate to how strongly they identify with a social movement and its aims. Consequently, those that are involved in the outward-looking 'identity work' of the movement i.e., campaigns, are more likely to share an identity with the social movement (ibid, p.708). This is significant as this division of labour in the strategizing, movement building and identity 'work' at the grassroots could contribute to disparities between how individuals identify with the movement and share a sense of belonging, a theme I speak to in Chapter 7.

While involvement in identity work or movement organising, can be integrated with the roles that individuals hold, there is a degree of choice as to how involved individuals are in movement building and identity 'work'. As Georgie (2020) suggested in her reflection previously, those involved in the grassroots and its daily practices 'are adults and could totally go and find out themselves' what is going on in the wider movement. However, Helen from Kindling described that often when presented with opportunities to engage in the wider activities of the movement, most Farmstarters do not attend.

> It used to happen more because we used to have Feeding Manchester that would talk about it [system change], so we would put on certain events and people could come along if they want to, but most of the time they didn't come […] People do see national groups meeting up and they [the Farmstarters] haven't in lots of ways got time for other things that attach to broader system change. (Helen W, 2020)

In this sense the 'labouring' of daily practice is all-encompassing for many at the grassroots of the movement, which leaves little time to engage in the 'work' of movement organising, strategizing and reflection. We might borrow from Arendt (1958) in understanding this, for the necessities of daily labour in agroecological growing to a degree flow into and occupy the 'work' of the movement and can cloud 'action'. This, for Arendt, is the problem of modern society: the fluidity of boundaries between 'labour', 'work' and 'action', which means one form of human activity could subsume another. In the context of the food sovereignty movement, the blurring of 'work' and 'labour' might, as I explained earlier, make these difficult to untangle, which is arguably reflective of prefigurative logics that connect means and ends. However, the reality of this relationship is that one form of practice can subsume the other, for those who put in the graft and grind at the base of the movement do not necessarily have time to participate in movement-based work or reflection on the movement's political aims and situate their own work within this. Thus, in drawing on Arendt's distinct categories of practice, we might ask how collectives are able to move between 'labour' and 'work' and the subsequent effect of this on human 'action'. What Arendt describes as 'action' has much in common with the liberatory position of Freire's (1970) 'consciousness', in that human action generates meaning and provides a foundation from which to act politically in the world (Voice, 2014, p. 47). As such, how political consciousness and identity can be fostered through collective practices in the movement requires further attention to the ways in which the nature of 'labour' and 'work' relate to collective 'action'.

## 5.3 Conclusion:

This chapter has explained the nature of daily practice at the grassroots of the movement, which is organised primarily around agroecological growing, the creation of practical alternatives to the dominant food system, and strategic organising to sustain and strengthen the work of the grassroots. I have explained that the nature of this work is not always politically explicit and can involve mundane and repetitive tasks. In doing so I have discussed these practices within Arendt's (1958) framework of human action, distinguishing between the labour and 'work' of the movement. However, in drawing on this framework I depart from Arendt's treatment of

labour as merely the essential elements of human life. As this chapter has shown, agroecological practices are commonly shared across the movement, with this labour constituting the foundation of the movement's efforts to realise social and political change. Similarly, I have highlighted that this labour in and of itself can act as a pathway for political consciousness-raising in connecting people with non-human nature, echoing the sentiments of Schlosberg and Craven' (2019) sustainable materialism.

I have also discussed that the engagement that goes beyond agroecological growing, which constitutes the 'work' and 'action' of the movement is not necessarily shared equally. This is, to an extent, unavoidable. As Section 5.2 explained, not all at the grassroots will be inclined or have the capacity to engage beyond the labour of food growing. However, I have raised questions in this chapter as to the relationship between labour, work and action, for the nature of the practice that individuals engage in can influence how they identify with the politics of the wider movement. As such, I have shown the need for greater attention to the relationships between labour, work and action at the grassroots of the movement, pointing again to Arendt's categories of action. In doing so, I have argued that there is a need to question how labour and 'work' relate to shared political action within the movement and processes of collective identity formation. I continue the discussion on the nature of practice as it relates to the movement's wider aims of social transformation in Chapter 7.

# Chapter 6 - Informing Practice: The Logics of Action

This chapter turns its attention towards the 'logics of action' of the UKFSM, which I argue inter-relates in complex and iterative ways with the practices of the movement. These 'logics of action' include the ideas and theories of change produced by organisations within the movement, as well as norms and values that influence the movement's collective culture. Discussing these collective 'logics' of action, will illustrate the relationship between logics and the movement's practice. In doing so, I explore how ideas, beliefs and values intersect and diverge within the movement's culture and the implications this has for the movement's practice. This builds on the premise that the logics of social change that exist within the movement influence the actions it deems legitimate and necessary to realise this change. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the movement's 'logics' in an analysis of culture and the practice of the movement, to understand why the UKFSM takes the shape and form it does.

The 'logics of action' to which I refer encompass the rationale and approach of various organisations within the movement to realising social change via the practices that they perform. However, these 'logics' include more than activist theories of change; they emerge from, and equally influence, the values the movement holds, and simultaneously affect the practices they carry out. This builds on the foundations of cultural analysis that suggest, 'culture…shapes the capacities through which strategies of action are constructed' (Swidler, 1986, p.273). However, as Swidler identifies, this culture is not determined purely by the cultural interests of collectives, as traditional cultural analysis would argue. Instead, culture produces tools through which collectives develop 'strategies of action.' In this way, the 'symbolic experiences, mythical lore and ritual practices of a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organising experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action' (ibid, p.284). Consequently, it is necessary to understand the fabric of the movement's culture and its relationship with approaches to social change.

These logics also speak to the movement's 'cognitive practice' (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991), with the movement producing knowledge and creating movement spaces to bring a new social world and alternative food system into being. However, as this chapter discusses, these practices are limited and constrained to varying degrees by the societal conditions in which they occur (ibid, p.64). Thus, historical and social context influence and inform the logics operationalised by the movement and influence an understanding of the 'politics of the

possible' (Gibson-Graham, 2006). As a result, I point to the influence of the social and historical context in Section 6.2 of this chapter.

These 'logics of action' share some commonality with social movement framing, which concerns the construction and production of ideas, beliefs and values that give meaning to what movements do (Benford and Snow, 2000). The 'framing' of the movement 'render[s] events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organise experience and guide action' (ibid, p.614). Collective action frames are therefore understood as 'action-orientated sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organisation' (Ibid). In discussing the 'logics of action', collective action frames provide a useful conceptual framework to draw on in relating strategic decision-making with the active meaning-making of actors in the movement. In this sense, borrowing from frame theory helps in analysing the relationship between meaning construction, interpretation and action in movement culture. I return to this in Section 6.2 of this chapter is discussing programmatic values.

While frame analysis can be helpful for connecting ideas with action, this chapter's focus on 'logics of action' rather than the framing of movement action is intentional. I do not exclusively class or limit the logics of the movement to the creation of frames. The 'logics of action' to which I refer include both implicit and explicit expressions of ideas and values that influence movement action. In this sense, activist 'logics of action' are not wholly deterministic in nature or strategically intentional to achieving desired outcomes. Building on the discussion of cultural analysis in Chapter 3, collective action framing tends to take a positivist analytical stance to the meaning construction of framing work (Lichterman and Cefaï, 2006; Benford, 1997). The movement's ideas, beliefs, and values are analysed through a strategic lens, suggesting purposeful intent in movement action to address interrelated problems of what Klandermans (1984) calls 'consensus mobilisation' and 'action mobilisation'. Instead, while there is strategic purpose in the 'logics' that informs the movement's action, it is not always the case that 'meaning is prefatory to action' as Benford (1997) claims. In this sense, not all culture and action within the movement is intentional or occurs through strategic decision-making.

In moving away from an exclusively cognitive analysis of culture centred on strategic conceptions of the relationship between theory and action, the 'logics of action' draw on a wider array of aspects that inform the movement's culture. These aspects extend beyond 'explicit intentions and instrumentalization' (Baumgarten et al, 2014) to those which are emergent, organic and implicit. The values and norms that the movement hold is significant in this regard, as these values are not exclusively explicit and include emotional factors that motivate action.

The values of the movement can be summed up as the normative commitments of movement action that are indicative of an individual's or collective's beliefs. Consequently, these values 'serve as standards by which to live, as well as goals for which to strive (Gecas, 2000, p.95). Nevertheless, identifying these values is a challenge as they are less apparent or explicit, and the extent to which they are shared or symbolise collective belonging in the movement is varied. However, it is necessary to discuss values in an analysis of movement culture, as the types of values and value-identities that individuals hold function as both 'push' and 'pull' factors that drive individual behaviour and collective action in movements and constitute understandings of 'self' (ibid). Consequently, I discuss the nature of the movement's culture through an exploration of its programmatic and implicit values in Section 6.1, illustrating the relationship between movement values and action, and how explicit values interact with those that are more implicit to inform a 'logic of action'.

## 6.1 Values and Practice– Programmatic and Implicit:

This section focuses on the values of the movement and how they relate to and influence logics of action. I focus on the relationship between the values that the movement expresses as 'programmatic' beliefs and intentions, and its 'implicit' values expressed and observed in collective grassroots organisations within the movement. In doing so, I explore the opportunities and tensions that exist within these values and explain how the movement attempts to navigate these in its 'logics of action' and resulting practice. Before getting into this discussion, it is necessary to distinguish between these types of values, which I term 'programmatic' and 'explicit' values. I first discuss 'programmatic' values in the movement and how they manifest before moving on to 'explicit' values.

### *6.1.1 Programmatic Values:*

Programmatic values include those that the movement communicates and disseminates as guiding values that inform its work and subsequent action. These 'programmatic' values can be understood as normative commitments that speak to the moral beliefs and collective feelings within the movement that are indicative of its collective culture. They share commonality with 'collective action frames' (see Snow and Benford, 2000) in that they serve to assign meaning to what social movements do and how they position themselves in relation to the world. This is particularly true when thinking about the construction of 'diagnostic' and 'prognostic' frames; i.e., what the problem of the dominant agricultural system is (diagnosis) and what the solutions (prognosis) are to change it (see Snow and Benford, 1988). In this sense, these values are an

attempt to 'break away' from cultural values of mainstream society and move towards values and beliefs that contest the values of the dominant agricultural system (see Johnson & Klandermans, 1995, p.6).

This is evident in the programmatic statements made by the Land Workers' Alliance. They build on the international movement's oppositional narrative to the dominant 'agricultural complex' (McMicheal, 2009), a narrative that attributes social inequity and environmental degradation in the global food system to the 'liberalisation of trade and its economic policies of agricultural adjustment that have globalized poverty and hunger in the world and are destroying local productive capacities and rural societies' (Via Campesina, 1996). This oppositional undercurrent and conflictual relationship are evident in how the LWA frame the UK movement and explains its purpose, with the LWA situating itself in direct opposition to mainstream agriculture and using this as a platform to advocate an alternative. As Adam of the LWA explained in reflecting on LWA strategies to achieve social change.

> I guess the underlying argument at the moment is a conflict between a neoliberal farming approach which is globalised trade, country specialisation in low labour but capital-intensive commodity production, and that works against our arguments quite directly. […] Our theoretical approach is that in order to address the climate crisis we need to massively localise our food system and use agroecological, low input methods of production. Because the food system accounts for around 10% of our emissions for production and similar for consumption. So localised food systems are essential to achieve a net zero vision. There are also the local economy benefits, so generally local food sales have a local economy multiplier of 2.5 so food sold locally keeps more money in the local economy than the international trade supermarket model. Then there is household food insecurity and dietary related ill-health side of things, so you could have the cheapest food in Europe but at the same time household food insecurity is rising we have the highest rates of this in Europe. Alongside this there is a loss of farmers, increasingly they are older, the UK lost 33,500 between 2005-15 about 10% of farms closed then and farmers are progressively getting older, and a higher proportion are over retirement age. That creates a really vulnerable position, the fewer farms you have, and the older and more precarious farmers are the more likely they are to fold with big economic changes like Brexit or environmental changes associated with climate change. (Adam, 2020)

Adam's account demonstrates how the LWA employs both diagnostic and prognostic frames (Snow and Benford, 1988) in developing a collective action framing, to evoke meaning whilst also giving legitimacy to the LWA and the movement's activities (Gamson, 1992). By identifying these problems, the LWA is diagnostically positioning itself in opposition to these issues and engendering a collective sense of identity based in part on an oppositional 'othering' to mainstream agriculture. At the same time prognostic frames signify its 'programmatic' values, based on localising food economies and supporting agroecological growing practices as solutions to these problems.

Beyond organisational theories of change and literature produced by the movement itself, many of these 'programmatic' values are evident in the movement's daily practices. This was demonstrated in a political training workshop that aimed to increase the campaigning capacity of the LWA's membership to lobby for changes to the proposed Agricultural Bill (2020b). Jyoti, the LWA's campaigns co-ordinator for England, situated the LWA's political aims within a broader context of agrarian resistance and particularly drew on issues of historical and racial justice when considering the nature of what a 'just' food system would like for the UK. This is a common theme in the work of the LWA, connecting the UK to broader processes of agrarian change and consequently invoking the principle of solidarity in their advocacy and campaigns. For example, the farmers' strike in India following proposed changes to agricultural laws that protect small-scale farmers from an unregulated market (Ellis-Petersen, 2021) led the LWA to develop an e-petition to the UK government to withdraw funding in Indian industrial agriculture as well as launching a social movement campaign among its membership. In this way, the work of the LWA and its members sit within a broader movement for global justice in the food system, while recognising the specific demands and constraints of the UK's domestic agricultural conditions. In doing so, the LWA has also highlighted the interdependent relations that exist between the UK and exporting nations, whilst pointing to contemporary and colonial patterns of exploitation that have shaped UK food culture and agricultural systems. Jyoti explains this in the extract below:

> In the UK agriculture was industrialised quite early on, there was a lot of enclosure of land that began at the time of the enclosures of the commons, and the whole industrial revolution pushed all of that. At the same time the UK as a colonial empire was dependent on resources from across the colonies for a long time as well, so those mindsets have informed a lot of our food culture now, and our attitudes towards food. Now we are at a point in time where we have the Agriculture Bill coming up, which really looks at the agriculture of our country. Our union is looking to those concepts of food

> sovereignty and looking back to the principles of agroecology that is working with nature to produce our food. We are wanting to look at the agricultural policy of the UK through those lenses that we have gotten from being part of this global movement that supports both of these concepts (Jyoti, 2020).

Jyoti's discussion of the LWA within a global movement for food system change illustrates how the LWA has developed an ideological frame for explaining the need for advocacy in the UK that draws on a historical and international sense of justice and food sovereignty. This can be understood as part of a strategy of transnational movement building that seeks to embed the UK agrarian struggle in a wider context of resistance and reimagining. This is further evident in the deliberate and conscious effort of the LWA to cultivate an ethos of solidarity and shared struggle within the movement's cultural practice. I experienced this at the LWA's AGM in 2019 where, during the closing ceremony, homegrown produce, soil from members' market gardens and farms as well as seeds from across the globe were offered in the making of a hearth. This was done to honour land working practices in the UK and across the globe, with LWA representatives emphasising the interconnection of land workers and agroecological practice. The emphasis on solidarity is not limited to the international context as the LWA has a primary aim of 'building relationships of solidarity and mutual aid' between members of the union. As was evidenced in the outbreak of Covid-19, where the LWA set up a solidarity pot to support struggling small-scale growers and businesses affected by the crisis (Landworkers' Alliance, 2020a).

Similarly, values at the grassroots speak to supporting and encouraging local organic growers and are evident in much of the daily practice discussed in Chapter 5, such as the focus on creating new pathways to agroecological growing and new local markets for accessing agroecological produce. Kindling and OrganicLea, for example, subscribe to the principles of vegan organic horticulture in how they choose to grow and educate new entrants in agroecological growing. This is not a practice adopted or subscribed to by the whole movement but reflects specific beliefs and values of these grassroots organisations that are evident in how they carry out their practices. Helen D, Kindling's Farmstart co-ordinator, explained this to me when discussing why Kindling uses vegan organic growing methods:

> Not tapping into the whole animal industry, which is really precarious and abusive, and to be able to grow without being involved in that by default i.e. using compost rather than manure. If you can use the waste that is created from a benign industry, then that

> is a good thing…to be able to work towards creating a closed loop system […] it is attached to your political or ethical beliefs (Helen D, 2019).

In this regard, there are distinct connections between programmatic values and beliefs and their guiding influence on movement action and practice. However, in pointing to the links between movement values and cultural practices carried out within the movement, I am not seeking to inscribe causality or build on an analysis of culture that draws from an 'instrumentalist-structuralist lens' (see Baumgarten et al, 2014; Johnston, 2009, p.3). Instead, I suggest that while these programmatic values do influence movement action, there are limitations to the reach of these values and their congruence with movement practice.

An example of the difficulties in aligning programmatic values with the movement's practice is evident in the challenges faced by Veg Box People, a co-operative veg box scheme in Manchester. Chess, a former co-op member, explained that Veg Box People found it difficult to match customer demand and expectation with their values of supporting local farmers and sourcing seasonal produce. This is particularly difficult during the winter months in the UK, where there is not a huge variety of UK-grown produce.

> […] the original concept was the thought that yeah let's do fruit bags and let's show growers there is a demand for fruit and that we can take these bits. We can get it from the EU for now and let's show farmers that we are in demand of 60kg's of cherries a week or whatever in the UK, because often you have to create the demand first. So that is the reason we get a lot of EU fruit, for us we feel it okay to be getting stuff from the EU, that is line with our principles. But when it is further afield that is when it can become a bit contentious, particularly with the Fyffe's bananas, because it is a big corporate company that is producing these organically, but still. A couple of customers have questioned it as well. So I suppose our reasoning has been variety, so we can get enough variety in the bag. One of the things we do possibly differently to others is that we change every item every week, in the fruit and veg bags so that people get some diversity in their bags, that is part of our thing to say, "you will always get variety from us". So yeah, it is weird isn't it that we are always seasonal, but we mix it up a lot. So, we could just for instance during the whole winter do root vegetables, if we wanted to stick to the UK, but it's a risk, customers don't want to eat celeriac all winter! A massive thing is also price. Like that has really killed - us the price for fruit. The price for UK fruit is insane, we have the lowest profit margin on the fruit, and it is £5 for that bag. Some weeks it is a really decent amount, and other weeks it isn't and that is another reason

> we get bananas - it adds variety, and it is cheap. But how does that help the wider food system I don't know, but if it means we keep hold of the customers that are then supporting the veg bag, is it worth it? (Chess, 2019).

This reflection demonstrates the difficulties of organisations within the movement living out their programmatic values while simultaneously trying to run successful social enterprises and attract and sustain support. Some of these challenges arise in part from systemic constraints, such as balancing the financial viability and competitiveness of what Veg Box People offers its customers with the values of supporting local and seasonal production. As Chess points out, balancing the necessities of making Veg Box People a viable business and attractive offer for customers with realising systemic change in the food system is difficult and requires compromise. For Veg Box People, this has meant sourcing produce from further afield and not exclusively offering seasonal produce. We might ask, as Chess does, what the cost of this compromise is; 'is it worth it?'. Or perhaps, it is more appropriate to recognise that an absolutist understanding of the movement's values is too reductive. These programmatic values don't take place in a vacuum; rather, these values are being lived out and applied in alternative spaces of experimentation that are still evolving within the 'cracks' of the dominant system (Holloway, 2010). As such, it is more realistic to treat the limitations of these programmatic values as inevitable. While these values speak to the desires, beliefs and intentions of individuals and organisations within the movement, in practice there are trade-offs in the friction between these values and bringing them to fruition within the constraints of the dominant system.

Nevertheless, while there are contextual and practical constraints on realising programmatic values like those discussed by Chess, the degree to which particular programmatic values are pursued can also be determined by strategic processes and considerations within the grassroots. Prioritising movement values is a strategic process that influences the extent to which these values are evident in movement practices. Decisions around how and what values are prioritised are particular to individual organisations and are influenced by a multitude of factors, such as context, movement actors' experiences, resource access and the aims of organisations. For example, OrganicLea is vocal about its commitment to social justice in its programmatic statements, emphasising 'equality and solidarity' in creating a just food system (OrganicLea, 2022a). Having spent time volunteering and talking with members of OrganicLea's co-operative at both their Hawkwood Nursery and Wolves Lane sites in Haringey, this value is apparent in their practice. In discussing whether OrganicLea's Farmstart programme is trying to appeal to a specific demographic, Brian, an OrganicLea co-op member, spoke about

OrganicLea's approach that seeks to enable otherwise marginalised groups to access food growing.

> That I guess is how we have gone in this work, it's asking how do we get to those people who don't automatically end up doing this work […] because they don't have all the experience, skills and confidence. So, it is almost like we are trying to develop a way of supporting people who wouldn't naturally get to that point, which is more in the training programme that the Farmstart model. So, one of the things we are doing but needs more resources, is in partnership with Ubele at Wolves Lane we are in a process of identifying people who are not really growing very effectively at Wolves Lane and want to get them together. They are called Black Roots, and we kind of basically want to help them get to a place where if they want to do a 2-year Farmstart programme we have some space for them and we can do that and they are all BAME community in Harringay which, are working together to try and create a BME [2] led commercial food business (Brian, 2019).

This focus on inclusion to address issues of social equity in OrganicLea's programmes and training opportunities is, in part, driven by OrganicLea's immersion in community networks. This is exemplified by OrganicLea's partnership with Ubele in the Wolves Lane Consortium, which brings together Ubele and OrganicLea along with a local veg box scheme, to act as 'stewards' of Wolves Lane, a three-acre plant nursery (Wolves Lane, 2019). Brian explained that 'through the Wolves Lane Consortium we have kind of established an interesting bi-lateral crossover where we can kind of join forces and hopefully change something about the food system for BAME food producers.' (Brian, 2019). In this way, OrganicLea's connection and involvement with organisations like Ubele that seek to increase social and economic opportunities for marginalised groups (The Ubele Initiative, 2022) make questions of social justice in the food system more immediate and a higher priority. Consequently, values of social inclusion and addressing barriers to participation in the food system are explicitly discussed by OrganicLea and evident in their practices. This is not to disregard the role of individual and collective agency in developing these values, for the impetus to focus on structural barriers to food growing

[2] Since this interview took place in December 2019, the language around race and ethnicity in the UK has moved away from referring to Black, Asian and ethnic minorities as BME and BAME, due to the exclusionary nature of this grouping that highlights certain ethnic identities over others. As this language was used by participants at this time of my research, I have included the terms BME and BAME in interview transcripts to reflect these conversations accurately. However, I recognise that these terms are no longer acceptable categorisations of race or ethnicity and will only refer to them when directly quoting interviewees.

arguably is a result of immersion in these networks and a collective commitment of OrganicLea to these values. While it is not the purpose of this discussion to ascribe causality to the values adopted at the grassroots, it is necessary to highlight that multiple factors converge in the forming and shaping of grassroots values like those of OrganicLea.

As the case of OrganicLea demonstrates, the process of deciding which programmatic values are privileged is driven by several factors, not least the extent to which organisations are connected or embedded within community networks. This can also be the result of strategic decision making within the grassroots, particularly with regards to resource access and capacity building. The dependence of grassroots organisations on grant funding and private sector investment in 'socially valuable' projects means that the grassroots may have to frame its work and activities to align with the values of external funders. In this sense, the values of the movement itself are shaped and constrained by the context and financial dependence on grant and private funding. In this context, the programmatic values of organisations within the movement are, to a degree, influenced by how much these values are in alignment with the funding interests of financial organisations. Corrina, a Kindling employee, spoke to this in describing how Kindling came to run a social prescribing course, *More than Medicine*, at its growing site in Woodbank.

> There was some money made available through NHS vanguards, which was given to community groups to try and encourage them to tackle issues the NHS isn't tackling. So…Stockport were given this pot of money and Kindling were asked to come and bid for it, partly because of what they were already doing at Woodbank at the time, and because no-one else was really bidding for it and we already had a pre-existing relationship with the council… That is something I have been thinking about a lot like I have been researching the social prescribing agenda and not feeling that great about it because it feels to me that it is part of that whole David Cameron's 'Big Society' thing, where the government pushes the onus back on to people to look after vulnerable people, and I don't feel very comfortable with that. I think the whole model is flawed actually and I think we need to reflect a little more deeply as to how it fits into our work and how we can avoid playing into this (Corrina, 2020).

As Corrina suggests in the case of Kindling, grassroots organisations can extend their programmatic remit to access resources and pursue projects that may not directly align with their own values and ideas of social change. Doing so does not necessarily mean that other programmatic values are lost, but the capacity of the grassroots to pursue these values is limited

by competing demands on small grassroots organisations. This can contribute to certain programmatic values being deferred to the future or the national wing of the movement, which I discuss in the following Section (6.2) with the unionised logics of movement organising.

Nevertheless, in pointing to the relationship between programmatic values and subsequent practice, this relationship is not always harmonious or correlative. This can be for reasons discussed above and varies among and between organisations. It is important to also note that programmatic values meet those which are more implicit, yet it is not always clear how they are collectively understood. For example, the programmatic values discussed in this section are largely explicit in their actualisation or expression. Yet, the degree to which these values are held collectively or have resonance within the movement is less clear. This is largely because the nature of values and beliefs discussed throughout this chapter are much more than explicit programmatic statements; they also include those which are implicit within the movement's culture. The subsequent section of this chapter turns to explore the nature of implicit values in the movement and then considers the tensions that exist between programmatic and implicit values and their implications on the movement's practice.

### *6.1.2 Implicit Values:*

Programmatic values do not account for all values present in the movement culture. In this sense, 'people know more culture than they use' (Swidler, 1986, p.277) and as Baumgarten et al (2014, p.4) argue 'movements may use culture, but movements also have culture without always strategically applying it'. Consequently, to understand the relationship between values and practice, it is necessary to also explore those values which are less explicitly communicated and don't necessarily have a correlative relation with movement strategy.

These 'implicit' values are not easily identifiable: they are not necessarily communicated or acknowledged by the movement or organisations within it. Similarly, these values are variable, evolving and not always operationalised with the intent of realising specific aims but instead, reflect the beliefs of individuals and collectives within the movement on how they want to live their lives. Lifestyle behaviours are one such area where the implicit values of the movement are evident. For example, there is a culture within the grassroots of the UKFSM that encourages individual consumption of vegan and vegetarian food, especially that which is locally grown and/or sourced from independent and sustainable organisations. Kindling's volunteer days include a seasonal lunch for volunteers that is always vegan and homemade. OrganicLea also offers a communal seasonal meal with volunteers and trainees, where people are encouraged to eat together and share food and time in working at Hawkwood Nursery. Similarly, Bridge 5

Mill, a sustainable office and event space that Kindling's co-founders set up in the early 2000s and where Kindling's office is based encourages no meat consumption on the premises and sources all its refreshments and food from ethical, co-operative and local suppliers.

From what I observed in working with Kindling, OrganicLea and the Landworkers' Alliance, these organisations attract individuals drawn to more alternative ways of living, i.e., volunteers and staff that live in housing co-operatives, off-grid or nomadically, work in other co-operative organisations, choose not to fly or drive and are often keen cyclists. This has resonance with Tindall et al's (2022, p.385) findings that members of environmental movements often hold individual post-material values and support a 'new ecological paradigm'. My experience of working within the movement is that its culture not only attracts individuals that hold these values and lifestyle practices but also reinforces and softly encourages them – though rarely explicitly. In this sense, these cultural practices are intuited or encouraged through a process of socialisation within the organisation's culture. For example, individuals that engage with grassroots growing sites that practice vegan organic growing methods are familiarised with veganism and its principles through training in these growing practices. The process of socialisation is complex, with individuals that share these values attracted to the culture and the culture simultaneously recreating these values. The complexity of this relationship is noted by identity theorists such as Stryker (2000), with multiple conceptions of self-identity influencing, and often competing, in individual engagement and participation within social movements. Similarly, New Social Movement perspectives suggest that a movement's collective identity is shaped by the 'common interests, experiences and solidarity' of its members that is 'sustained through interaction in movement communities' (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, p.112).

Nevertheless, in discussing these implicit values and lifestyle practices, I stress that they are not necessarily homogenous or universally adopted by all in the movement. For example, not all members of the movement identify as vegan or subscribe to a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle. However, there is a shared culture and belief that is critical of industrialised agriculture, a position that unites those in the movement despite their individual moral and/or political beliefs and lifestyle choices. This was best expressed at the LWA AGM in 2019, where discussion time was devoted to bridging binary distinctions between veganism and non-vegan agroecological practices resulting in the LWA reaching a consensus on the following statement:

> The real binary is not between vegan diets/ growing and livestock farming, but between the industrial-corporate food system and organic/ agroecological systems (LWA AGM fieldnotes, 2019).

While this is an explicit value, it also manifests implicitly as a shared belief between individuals in the movement who embrace this through their rejection of corporate agriculture in their own consumer choices and collectively within their respective organisations. Similarly, these implicit values signify to others in the movement that they share a culture, with these practices demonstrating the value commitments of the movement and individual alignment with these values. In this way, these values signify the lines of commonality and membership to the movement, demarcating 'insiders' of the group from 'outsiders', a central process in social identity formation according to identity theorists (see Stets & Burke, 2000). Of course, the reality of where the lines of movement allegiance and membership exist is messy, for there are individuals involved in the movement's practices that might share these implicit beliefs; however, the degree to which those that share these beliefs also participate in movement mobilisation and activities is variable. I return to discussing the relationship between beliefs, values and collective identities in Chapter 7, but point here to Stryker's (2000) observation that 'identities can wield their influence over action,' with the salience of identities influencing individual commitment.

In discussing the implicit nature of these values, I highlight that the values held by individuals and collectives extend beyond those which they proclaim or express as programmatic. In this way, implicit values emerge within the organisational culture and are not necessarily intended or directly correlative to organisational aims, but they reflect the shared beliefs of individuals within these spaces. Nevertheless, the nature of these values is evolving and is part of a movement process that invites experimentation that is not necessarily informed by strategy but driven by 'passions' (Mouffe, 2000) and beliefs. In this sense these values, though not prescriptively strategic or necessarily tied to the explicit aims and objectives of the movement, are quietly prefigurative in nature. The embodiment of specific means (i.e., not flying, eating a seasonal or vegan diet and ascribing to certain behaviours that could be classed as expressions of 'lifestyle politics') are linked to the political goals or ends imagined in a sustainable and just food system. In this sense, the values that the culture of the movement attracts and reproduces are also the 'means' through which it seeks to realise the ends of a food-sovereign agroecological system (see Graeber, 2009). However, the extent to which there is a collective embodiment of other values necessary for realising food sovereignty, such as solidarity and social and racial justice, is more variable, specifically at the grassroots of the movement. I return to this in discussing the prefigurative logics present in the movement and further consider the implications for the movement's politics and practice in Chapter 7.

## 6.2 Ideas and Logics of Social Change:

This section discusses the ideas that influence the movement culture and subsequent 'logics of action.' In exploring these ideas, I focus on three central themes that speak to the rationale, strategy and beliefs expressed by the movement about achieving social change. Firstly, I explore logics of diffusion, emulation and legitimation in movement action, and how they influence the movement's approach to processes of social change. I then discuss the logics of prefiguration and experimentation, before moving on to the collectivised and unionised nature of the movement's structure and organisation. These sections are separated for clarity; however, these logics interweave. Thus, these sections speak to each other in discussing the ideas and beliefs evident in the movement's practice and theorising.

### *6.2.1 Legitimation, Emulation and Diffusion:*

A key thread in movement ideas and theorising is that of emulation and diffusion. This follows a particular logic that suggests that to be impactful, alternatives must 'emerge from their niches to become diffused throughout society as far and wide as possible to maximize their impact through processes of upscaling, replication, and translation' (de Moor et al, 2019, p.6). This is not particular to the food sovereignty movement, as has been observed in other environmental movements (see Seyfang & Longhurst, 2016), but reflects a trend in collective movement processes that seek to affect change by expanding niche innovations outwards. In the food sovereignty movement, this extends to agroecology or the proliferation of opportunities to enable new entrants to access agroecological growing opportunities through programmes like Farmstart.

Projects like Farmstart that sit within the coordinated national network of the Farmstart Incubator Networks (FSIN), as mentioned earlier, are part of a collective process of experimentation and knowledge sharing. I return to the experimental nature of these practices below (in Section 6.2.2) but highlight here how knowledge and experience are shared through the movement to develop 'best practice' and contribute to collective learning. For example, Steph the FSIN coordinator described the purpose of the FSIN as encouraging and supporting the adoption of incubator farm projects. 'It is not a particularly well understood model in this country, so the broad aim is to encourage its expansion and uptake across the UK' (Steph, 2019). This sentiment is echoed in other work at the grassroots that seeks to provide demonstratable models of alternatives that can be emulated and adapted in different locations. For example, in conversation with Abi, a Kindling Farm Director, about the purpose of Kindling's aim to develop

an agroecological farm, Abi told me: 'We want to create a completely different system that anywhere in the country could replicate and make a success of' (Abi, 2019).

In this sense, the action at the grassroots is part of a wider process of social change that seeks to engender emulation and ultimately the scaling up and out of these alternative models of agroecological production. Since its inception, the FSIN has grown from its three founding members (Kindling, Organic Lea and Tamar Grow Local) to eleven members, each practicing or attempting to implement a different iteration of the Farmstart model. Understanding this practical and locally specific action as part of a process of diffusion dramatically contrasts with an analysis of alternative production and consumption that might understand these practices as singular expressions of alternative practice, isolated from wider processes of social transformation. Instead, this demonstrates a strain of political theorising that has resonance with Holloway's (2010) depiction of the 'crack' that expands and contracts, but ultimately is part of a wider process of social change. As Roo (2019), an OrganicLea Co-op member and Farmstart co-ordinator said: 'The idea is that we, as OrganicLea, do what we do here - but we are a small example of what can be done at the grassroots on a greater scale, it's about spinning off and self-seeding'.

This emphasis on 'self-seeding' and diffusing grassroots practices and experiments outwards is not prescriptive in nature, instead it builds on the foundations of agroecology that are placed based and built on local ecological knowledge. As such, these examples of alternative practices can be adapted and modelled in other locations to affect meaningful change in a local food system and inspire grassroots action. There has been significant discussion in social movement literature of the relationship between strategies of diffusion and emulation and processes of contention and agonism in social movements (see Eckersley, 2020; Seyfang & Smith, 2007). In this sense, when movements seek to encourage replication as a strategy, it can result in movements adapting their radical message, as de Moor et al (2019, p.317) found in working with activists in Manchester and Bristol, 'the more acceptable alternatives appear to wide sections of society, the more they will spread'.

This logic is also evident in the food sovereignty movement and how they position and 'frame' themselves to appeal to others. Simon, from Tamar Grow Local captured this is in talking about how Tamar Grow Local describes themselves and the work they do:

> Because of the history of co-ops in the Tamar Valley calling ourselves cooperative growers has been quite detrimental because the co-ops folded and those who were in it at the end lost out and prior to us getting local food funding, there was a cooperative

> in Liskeard that folded and people lost money, small scale producers lost a lot of money. In that environment pushing the cooperative food angle was not a good idea, in the same way, that we don't push organic strongly and we push local over that, and we don't push activism either. We need to make what we are doing seem normal, and the normal way of doing things is to set up your own business or to be in a business or to be a grower and prioritise localness, so that is what we do. It may well be activism, and it may well be promoting sustainable growing, perhaps not badged organic […], but it is about how you frame that message in order to gain local support (Simon, 2019).

Simon's reflection touches on how gaining local support for small-scale alternative businesses and organisations, means making themselves amenable and relatable. Thus, the movement engages in 'strategic framing' of its action and practice to achieve this, while simultaneously creating scope for them to extend their reach within local communities. The extent to which this is framed as explicitly 'radical' or uses discursive activist language is variable. I pick up on this in discussing the nature of collective identity in Chapter 7, but it is important to note here that these processes are part of a trend to legitimise the movement's action to expand it out and beyond the confines of its 'niche'. This shares parallels with Smith's (2006) analysis of the organic food movement, as it expanded out of the confines of a radial niche in the 1940s-70s to interplay and influence the mainstream dominant food regime. However, Smith (ibid) stresses a central paradox between how these niches attempt to influence the incumbent regime and also sustain a radical agenda when engaging with that regime requires you to be more appealing and adaptive to current regime practices, standards and ideas.

In seeking to expand and proliferate its projects and practices, the movement focuses on legitimating its actions to individuals and collectives outside of the movement as well as institutions and governmental organisations. This legitimacy, as de Wit & Iles (2016, p.18) argue, is 'formed between actors and audiences; it comes from people attesting to knowledge as credible in their various institutional and societal contexts'. At the grassroots, the pursuit of this legitimacy manifests in organisations seeking to prove their 'worthiness' (Tilly, Castaneda and Wood, 2020) through their actions, particularly when seeking to engage external bodies in their work or individuals and collectives that are not familiar with the movement. Abi spoke of how Kindling has focused on legitimating its efforts to establish the Kindling Farm as a large-scale example of agroforestry:

> I think an interesting observation is that it has taken 20 years to get to this point and you know the reason the business plan is so long, is because they [Kindling co-founders]

> feel they have to put so much detail in it. I say to them quite a lot that they don't have to justify themselves so much, the brochure we have just written, they must have said five times over two pages, "because of the foundation we have built over the last 12 years". They are constantly trying to prove they have the experience. I think part of that is because […] people don't engage in it unless you are able to articulate how you make a difference and how you have proven you make a difference. I think that is part of the reason it has taken 20 years […] So they have had to spend all these years setting up projects to prove that they can do the different aspects that would get them to the point that we can now do this [Kindling Farm] on a large scale (Abi, 2019).

As a result, much of the work at the grassroots involves proving and capturing the 'worthiness' (Tilly, 1994) and efficacy that is used to bolster the campaigns and advocacy of the movement for agroecological transition. As documented in the literature on 'food regimes' (see McMichael, 2009; Friedmann & McMichael, 1989), establishing legitimacy around agroecology is a challenge when working within the dominant narrative of industrialised agriculture. However, as de Wit & Iles (2016) argue, the movement for agroecology struggles to achieve legitimacy in a multitude of ways. Legitimacy is not realised through a single process but is 'co-produced' and can include 'scientific validation, recognition in policymaking and government, practical testing against experiences, and verification by civil society actors' (Ibid, p. 2). Many of these processes are evident in the food sovereignty movement, though the focus of this chapter is not on detailing the specific nature of these practices or exploring the extent to which they are present, to illustrate how logics of legitimation influence the practices of the movement.

For example, this desire to demonstrate 'value' in its practice is evident in the metric accounting of the movement, which increasingly seeks to capture measurable social and environmental 'impacts' of its projects. Steph the FSIN Co-ordinator described the impetus to gather collective data that could be used to strengthen the movement. 'I think one thing we spoke about at the network meeting is like what data can we all gather that would be helpful, like deciding what five metrics can we all measure to strengthen the movement and have a louder voice' (Steph, 2019). Having spent time working with Kindling, it can also be a stipulated demand on grassroots organisations to capture their 'impact' in social data and accounting by external funders. This is increasingly a trend in the third sector: organisations that lack economic self-sufficiency have to cater to the demands of funders that want quantifiable returns on social investments in projects at the grassroots (Thompson and Williams, 2014; Darby, 2016). Consequently, the felt sense of needing to demonstrate value and legitimacy in the work at the grassroots of the movement is evident, as Chess reflects, 'I think there is so much pressure on non-profits and third sector

organisations to show what they do matters and how. That has definitely been Chris' [Kindling co-founder] approach […] showing how what we do matters. When we do it, that is when people will realise that what we are doing is necessary and important' (Chess, 2019).

Chess speaks to a sentiment echoed by many at the grassroots about proving worth through effective action. In this sense, grassroots projects and the movement more widely increase their legitimacy and standing among external audiences by showing demonstratable, workable alternatives. These legitimating efforts at the grassroots also feed through to the wider movement, as is evident in how the LWA discuss their relationships with public bodies and policymakers. At the LWA AGM 2019, the room gave out thunderous applause in reflecting on the work of the LWA to earn a 'seat at the table' of key decision-makers around issues of UK food and farming. 'We definitely have a seat at the table, where we are speaking the truth' Jyoti, the campaign's coordinator said and 'we are finally being heard' (LWA AGM fieldnotes, 2019). Being included in critical conversations around food and farming in the UK is a big shift for the movement in recent years, where it has gained momentum in its union representation and membership increasing alongside the work it has done to make a case for agroecology. Adam from the LWA reflected on this:

> I would say we have had a significant amount of influence, though there is still a long way to go, like recently in debates in the House of Lords and Commons and the Agricultural Bill we have been referenced and quoted quite a lot. We have done training for DEFRA on what agroecology is, what it means what is looks like as well as study tours. We have had a surprising amount of influence because there was such a need for us, but still, we are combating the years of neglect (Adam, 2020).

The movement theorising includes opportunities to enhance the status and position of the LWA and generate approval from external audiences, i.e., the general public and governmental and public sector institutions, of its practices and of its membership. To a certain extent this is inevitable when operating within the neo-liberal economic climate where access to resources can require a demonstration of 'value' added. However, this legitimating logic stems in part from movement theorising that views engagement with existing institutions of the status quo and the state as necessary to achieve social change. This is largely unavoidable with the food sovereignty movement fundamentally necessitating access to land to practice agroecological growing and develop alternative socio-economic food systems. However, the historical and contemporary political context of land rights and access in the UK, and more specifically England, makes accessing land beyond a private ownership model increasingly difficult (see

Christophers, 2018). Helen W of Kindling explains how this context has influenced Kindling's approach to securing a farm.

> […] I suppose with the Kindling farm we could squat the land, but it is so much work to make your land good. This is what I have seen over the years like to get rid of the weeds and make the soil amazing, to protect it, and build up the soil, and protect biodiversity…if we just took the land which in [a] different political situation in different countries can work, we would just get kicked off and then we would have wasted all of that time. I mean I saw that happening in New York, where people had made these amazing community gardens which brought the area up in value and niceness and then get kicked off for them to build a new apartment block on there. But it was only nice because of the community gardens. That is why I have never been into squatting land for community gardening either, because I just think what a total nightmare for people to put all that time in and then get kicked off, its heart-breaking. So, I don't want us to buy and own it privately because I don't agree with that for us as an organisation, but I think it needs to be owned otherwise there is no security (Helen W, 2019).

Helen's reflection indicates that for grassroots projects like Kindling, squatting, or reclaiming land for agroecological growing is not considered to be feasible in the context of the UK. For the work and labour put into regenerating soil require security and stability to sustain an alternative food model or community of growers. As a result of the constraints of land rights and access in the UK, the grassroots of the movement often must raise capital to purchase land, rent it from existing landowners or engage with bodies that have access to land and are amenable to supporting organisations that provide social and environmental 'goods' i.e., local councils and authorities.

Understanding this context and the opportunities it curtails for grassroots activists, informs an understanding of legitimacy within the movement, with the grassroots often having to appeal to others to access land, when it is beyond their means financially to access it independently. In highlighting how this context influences the movement's emphasis on legitimating its practice, I am not suggesting that the movement does not engage in the politics of land rights and access. At the level of the LWA there is a considerable amount of policy work that centres on campaigning and lobbying for land access for new entrants. For example, the LWA's land access scheme aims to 'support organisations providing farm incubation opportunities and put a stop to the sell-off of council-owned farm estates' (LWA, 2021d). However, the political and historical context of the UK plays a significant role in influencing the logics of legitimacy and subsequently

diffusion and emulation. This exemplifies Polletta's (1998, p.424) argument that movement cultures and 'activists very understanding of 'strategy,' 'interest,' 'opportunity,' and 'obstacle,' may be structured by the oppositions and hierarchies that come from familiar stories'. Consequently, contextual histories of resistance and constraint influence how movements approach social change, as exemplified in the discussion of traditions of resistance in Chapter 2. To reiterate the example of Tamar Grow Local, the history and familiar stories surrounding the decline of the cooperative movement in the Tamar Valley influenced the organisational structure of Tamar Grow Local to not follow a cooperative model. Consequently, situating these 'logics' in political and historical contexts informs an understanding of why certain logics have resonance and are deemed to be legitimate and rational approaches to social change.

### 6.2.2 Experimentation and Prefiguring a Changed Food System

This section of the chapter builds on Section 6.2.1 in discussing the prefigurative logics and experimental nature of the movement's practice. The propensity towards action and the building of lived alternatives is evident in the daily practice and efforts of the movement as described in Chapter 5. The material practices that organisations within the movement perform speak to a wider tradition of prefigurative politics that attempts to 'build hoped-for-futures in the present' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010, p.476). In constructing alternative local food systems through projects like Farmstart and local veg box schemes, the grassroots of the movement focus on bringing a hoped-for vision of the food system into the present. As Alexx a VBP co-op member remarked in reflecting on the day-to-day work of Veg Box People: 'We are doing the graft and grind of making that change possible, this is what that changed system change would look like' (Alexx, 2019). The process of bringing this changed food system into being is not straightforward or linear, rather it is created through what Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p.10) argue is the 'deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now'. I return to the 'social relations' that Raekstad and Gradin (ibid) refer to shortly, after discussing the nature of experimentation in its practice.

Many of the activities and projects described in Chapter 5 have a tangible and distinct form. This form is not static, but part of a practice that is constantly in motion. In this sense the 'work' of the movement is not complete but in a perpetual state of becoming. This process is one of experimentation. These spaces of experimentation create 'cracks' as Holloway (2010) argues in the status quo of social life and offer opportunities for 'a different way of doing' (ibid). Farmstart projects for example, are, by their nature, a product of trial and error, with these models adapting based on how they have played out on the ground, learning from 'what works and

what doesn't work' (Chris, 2019). However, experimentation is not guaranteed to be fruitful and groups like Kindling and OrganicLea cannot be certain that any of their practical innovations will be effective at creating accessible pathways for new entrants into agroecological growing. The only way to be sure if these projects offer opportunities for alternative social realities is by trialling them and persistently pursuing them in real-time through everyday practice.

Chris of Kindling exemplified this on a tour of Kindling's Farmstart site at Woodbank, where he spoke of how earlier iterations of the Farmstart model did not integrate trainees with other parts of an alternative supply chain. These projects include Veg Box People and the wholesale supplier Manchester Veg Box People, which were designed to increase access to local organic produce in Manchester while providing a market for new growers to supply. Chris explains that those who came through the programme often went on to pursue individual business endeavours, rather than contribute to these alternative markets. In speaking with Farmstart trainees who were part of Kindling's earlier model, I found there was an appetite to be part of and contribute to an alternative food system among those who have gone on to develop their own businesses. However, it was felt by some that the emerging markets Kindling was working to establish, i.e. Manchester Veg People and Veg Box People, were unable to offer consistent demand for the produce of these new growers. Lindsay (2019) said:

> Originally, we were told that if we could grow it they would buy it and we could set the price, we wouldn't be getting a really low wholesale value. When in reality that didn't happen. The reason I started selling to weekend markets was that I grew a lot of crops that rotted in the field because MVP couldn't buy them.

Lindsay's reflection on her Farmstart experience demonstrates the difficulties of realising a systemic and holistic vision of an alternative food system, which simultaneously requires experimental practice and alternative interventions along the supply chain. Organisations like Organic Lea and Kindling are essentially starting from scratch, and consequently face the challenge of meeting multiple demands in developing alternative practices and infrastructure to support them. This process of creation is messy and imperfect. However, in leaning into these spaces of trial and error we can move beyond romanticised notions of alternatives as innately positive forces for change (Holloway, 2010, p.20) or, by contrast, critiques of alternative practices that suggest these alternatives remain 'purely experimental and unlikely to unhinge the logic they appear to be challenging' (Blühdorn, 2017, p.57). Instead, we can understand projects like that of Farmstart as part of an ongoing process of experimentation that is still evolving. The Kindling Farmstart model and the subsequent markets it has established have

grown and developed an integrated relationship with the Farmstart project in recent years. Veg Box People staff crop plan at the start of the season with the Farmstart co-ordinator and trainees in their second year of the programme. As a result, they can provide a consistent demand, as Luke of Veg Box People tells me: 'we take whatever they can give us…and be as flexible as we can, we prioritise Glebelands and Woodbank that crop plan with us' (Luke, 2019).

Similarly, this experimentation doesn't take place in a vacuum, with individual projects learning from experience and trial and error and sharing this knowledge collectively to inform shared practice and understanding. This collective knowledge production is both formal and informal, moving through established pathways such as the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) and equally through informal networks and connections of peer-to-peer support and learning. In this sense, practical experimentation is specific to individual organisations and projects, but also manifests collectively. This is perhaps best exemplified by the collective learning of the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN). The network acts as both a forum for discussion and reflection on best practice whilst also fulfilling strategic campaign and lobbying objectives that are facilitated by the LWA that holds the network at a national level. Steph the FSIN's coordinator explained that the purpose of the FSIN is to create 'space to seek advice, for networking, troubleshooting, but it relies on the projects on the ground holding it. So, it brings together Kindling, Organic Lea, Tamar Grow Local and around twelve other organisations in the process of setting up similar models' (Steph, 2020).

By contextualising processes of experimentation within a wider network, we can understand experimental practices at the local level as part of a broader collective endeavour. In this sense, the local is not isolated from the rest of the movement. Rather, it acts as the site at which agroecological practice plays out, is trialled, adapted, and reformulated through experience. This knowledge is then shared with others across the movement, both informally through the close-knit network of movement actors and formally through the FSIN and the LWA that holds this network. Steph explained how Bristol Food Producers learnt from changes Kindling made to its original Farmstart model, in recognising the need to focus on growing skills and training before providing independent access to land. 'We had to go, oh wait if that doesn't really work [for Kindling], maybe we should learn from that' (Steph, 2019). In this sense, collective knowledge is generated through grassroots experimentation that is then used to inform approaches and alternative practices.

The nature of much of this experimentation involves the practical exploration of alternatives, in this sense focusing on the 'doing' of prefigurative action. I return to the 'social relations' that

Raekstad and Gradin (2020) refer to as integrative to a prefigurative politics later in this chapter. However, much of this 'doing' stems from a desire at the grassroots to demonstrate what is possible, as Helen W (2019) of Kindling explained:

> I just think I am someone and Chris and all of Kindling need to get our hands dirty to be able to show what can be done, we try to do a little bit of everything, we do try and change policy, we do education stuff but what we say is the way we have to start is by showing you can do it.

This emphasis on leading by example and arguably demonstrating the 'politics of possibility' demonstrates where prefigurative logics interrelate with those of diffusion, emulation and legitimation discussed in Section 6.2.1. In this sense, the movement's focus on prefiguring workable and lived alternatives to the dominant agriculture system is also a process of legitimating the actions and practices of the movement. For organisations within the movement seek credibility through their action and prefigurative building, as Brian of OrganicLea expressed, 'if someone is in the right space, we can also get them on side quite quickly. Because of our track record […] we are significant enough that when someone is looking for a solution, they can kind of spot that maybe we are that solution' (Brian, 2019). In this way, prefigurative action reinforces a logic of legitimation that increases credibility and allows organisations to approach and work with strategic actors in local authorities and national departments.

With this in mind, the prefigurative logic of practical action is often an implicit logic informing everyday action at the grassroots of the movement, in its attempts to influence and affect change. As a result, contention and agonism towards the existing agricultural system and the processes that perpetuate it are not often the focus of the grassroots in the everyday. Instead, the grassroots often focus on the 'positive' alternatives that it offers, centring on solutions that bring an envisioned future food system into being. In an interview with Chess, a Kindling employee and Veg Box People co-op member, they reflected that 'maybe inherently within the organisation there was a bit of the fact that we were doing the shouting before, and the activism and now we have come into the doing' (Chess, 2019). This was a sentiment echoed by Helen W:

> Before we set up Kindling, we came from a more activistic background and that was more kind of saying no to the current system and to the damaging things that the current system was doing […] But then it's interesting isn't it, […]because then where we came out of that was saying, "Well, we can't keep on just saying no all the time, we have to show what it could be like," […] so that's why we were sort of went, right, we need to create the food

system that we want to see we need to actually make it happen so we can show that it happens (Helen W, 2017). [3]

In this sense, this logic and approach to social change have evolved, with the grassroots moving away from an approach that centres more directly on campaigning and contention to one that seeks to demonstrate its values and ideas through the building of a viable alternative system. However, to suggest that the movement is subsequently not contentious is to misunderstand the movement's structure and strategy, which I return to in the following section on unionism and collectivism.

Nevertheless, the nature of the movement's practical experimentation is ultimately shaped and constrained by the context in which it takes place and emerges, as discussed with legitimating logics. In this sense, the material possibilities of experimentation are, to an extent, governed by access to resources i.e. land, finances and skills to establish alternative food economies. However, the factors that determine the logics and experimental approach of the movement extend beyond resource mobilisation theories alone. Instead, the experimental practices are shaped by multiple intersecting factors as Shove et al (2012) argue in their analysis of food systems. These factors include resources and extend to the social and material structures in which these practices emerge i.e. within the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2009) and the specific history and context of activism and dispossession under capitalism in the UK (see Gould, 1988; Spaargaren et al, 2016).

In considering how factors influence the nature of experimentation in the movement, it is important to discuss divergence within the experimental practices of the grassroots, particularly when considering the 'social relations' that Rakestad and Gradin (2020) refer to as part of a prefigurative practice. While much of the experimentation discussed above relates to the material creation of alternatives, the social relations necessary for bringing a transformed food system into being are considered integral to a prefigurative practice. In this sense, these social relations offer a window to the future while simultaneously enacting 'ways of being' and relating in the present, that challenge 'informal and indirect hierarchies and inequalities' (ibid, p.89). These social relations are hard to capture and observe in the practices of the movement, as they concern 'being' or 'embodying' the relationships among and between individuals that are liberatory and transformative to the existing relations of the dominant agricultural system.

[3] This data was drawn from research by de Moor et al (2019) for a research project with the Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP) carried out 2017-2018. This data informed the paper by de Moor et al (2019) (see Bibliography). I was given access to this data by the research team (see Chapter 4) and had the interviewee's permission to cite this data.

However, the extent to which transformative social relations are present in the experimental practices of the grassroots alongside the physical 'building' of alternatives in the movement is variable. I discuss the implications of this when discussing the reflexivity of the movement's politics in Chapter 7.

### *6.2.3 Unionised structure and political deference:*

In discussing the logics that inform and effect the movement's practice, the unionised and collective structure of the movement is significant in understanding the relationship between daily practice at the grassroots and the work of the Landworkers' Alliance regionally and nationally. In this way the practices and prefigurative experimentation discussed in the previous section sit within a broader movement structure or movement ecology of food sovereignty. As discussed in Chapter 2 and illustrated by Figure 1.1 the UKFSM exists in a collective and integrated structure held by the union representation of the Landworkers' Alliance. This formal movement structure means that the LWA exists as the visible representation of La Via Campesina in England and Wales and fulfils much of the central organising function of the movement. For the LWA represents its membership, and focuses on campaigns, lobbying and influencing the broader political context in which the grassroots operate.

In this regard the LWA 'gives voice' to its membership, as Gerald a longstanding LWA member tells me (Gerald, 2020). With the LWA taking over much of the national campaigning and advocacy work of the movement, which was previously organised by grassroots organisations directly. However, the logic that Gerald alludes to suggests that the grassroots felt national representation through the LWA is more impactful with regards to advocacy and campaigns than individual grassroots organisations are alone. In this way the LWA fulfils a key strategic role in representing and organising across the varying branches of the movement and in influencing the political environment the movement seeks to change. Adam, a member of the LWA's co-ordinating group responsible for new entrant policy coordination, described how the LWA fills a necessary space at the national level in advocating for food sovereignty.

> Before we were around there wasn't really a national-level advocacy organisation for small producers and that obviously means that those producers are not represented so their interests will be undermined. So there has been a gradual loss of influence I suppose. The main advocacy organisation was the NFU [National Farming Union] representing producers, and then you had the environmental organisations that had gained a lot of power. It is just inevitable that without an advocacy organisation, the political situation will deteriorate. (Adam, 2020)

As Adam explains, the LWA was created to meet a perceived need within the movement for more effective national representation as well as campaigning and advocating for small-scale agroecological growers. With the LWA predominantly taking on this function there is less emphasis on campaigning and advocacy in the everyday action at the grassroots. As described in Chapter 5, the everyday action of the grassroots concerns the material tasks of running projects and sustaining prefigurative practices. This is not to dismiss the work and involvement of the grassroots in regional and city-wide networks and campaigns that seek to influence and affect change, such as OrganicLea's involvement in the Community Food Growers Network (CFGN) in London or Kindling's efforts to influence food policy in Greater Manchester through the Sustainable Food Strategy (2017b). However, this is not a central feature of the daily practice of the grassroots, with the role of advocacy and campaigning deferred to the LWA. Simon from Tamar Grow Local points to this in explaining how Tamar Grow Local frames the work they do locally.

> Do you think you are activists?
>
> I am not comfortable with that term, because the system that we are trying to change is a mainstream system, and as soon as you describe yourself as an activist you put yourself in a position that is counter-mainstream and alternative that is not pragmatic for what we want to achieve. For a changing policy angle, I think it is essential we have activists but for changing consumer behaviour I don't think activism is the most productive way for us to go locally, it may well be in a city but in a rural context it wouldn't work for us. (Simon, 2020)

Simon's reflection demonstrates that the work of Tamar Grow Local at the grassroots is distinguishable from the campaigning and advocacy work carried out by the LWA. Similarly, Simon alludes to the necessity of movement framing in how the grassroots seek to affect change, which manifests differently for each organisation, with Tamar Grow Local operating in a rural context. However, this reflects a general trend at the grassroots that focuses more on the environmental 'goods' of realising workable alternative to the dominant system than challenging the environmental 'bads' of the existing system. Others have commented on this transition in the environmental movement more widely towards 'prefigurative' logics, questioning the trade-offs that come from moving away from more directly contentious action (see de Moor et al., 2019). However, to suggest as Schlosberg and Craven (2019) do, that this is a result of activist fatigue, does not account for the strategic decision-making within the movement to reorient its structure and approach. The prefigurative logics of action at the

grassroots exists alongside and are interrelated with the more direct campaigns and outwardly contentious focus of the LWA. In this sense, the work of the national union is not separate from the work of the grassroots; they reinforce each other, as has been argued in discussions of legitimacy. To reiterate how Adam from the LWA has described the unionised structure of the movement:

> I think the LWA is fairly at the grassroots as well as being a policy organisation, we frame ourselves as a union and our work is at a solidarity and support level for members as well as at an advocacy and campaigning level and we have already taken a social movement approach to change. So, like working collaboratively with organisations, so I think in that sense the LWA is fairly at the grassroots of that transformation. But the direction of the grassroots movement is the same direction that the LWA is going. (Adam, 2020)

Consequently, separating the everyday practices at the grassroots from the more active contention and agonism evident in the lobbying and campaigning work of the LWA, fails to acknowledge or appreciate the democratic structure and organising of the movement, which is connected in a collective and unionised nexus. This challenges Arendt's (1958) distinction between the 'labour' of everyday food growing and political 'action', by situating it within the totality of the movement allowing for a holistic understanding of the movements structure and practice. Doing so creates space to consider, as de Moor et al (2019) argue, whether variance in the practice of the grassroots can be compensated by the political strategising and strategic decision-making of other movement organisations. Such an analysis allows for an iterative dynamic between the composite parts of the food sovereignty movement and can subsequently situate the focus of the grassroots on creating environmental 'goods' alongside the advocacy and campaign work of the LWA and La Via Campesina in challenging the environmental 'bads'. It is perhaps unreasonable to expect the grassroots organisations can both create and model workable alternatives for a changed food system and challenge the dominant food regime and existing structure that perpetuates it.

However, there is a need to ask if the deference of this work from the grassroots to the national level of the movement has an impact on the nature of political association to the movement and the degree to which there is a strong or coherent collective identity of food sovereignty at the roots. This reiterates the questions raised in Chapter 5, which suggest that the extent to which individuals are involved in strategic or political work can affect the degree to which they associate with the UKFSM. As such, there is arguably a role for the LWA as the national body of

the movement, to articulate an identity of food sovereignty with which the movement can cohere. However, associating or communicating a coherent identity of food sovereignty is made more complicated, given the breadth of the movement's base. Adam from the LWA speaks to this complexity in discussing the structure of the LWA, which positions itself as a democratic union within a wider social movement.

> Union means being democratic, and member-led, it means being run by producers and for producers and it means building collective power to find collective solutions to the problems we are facing. It is a sectoral approach and rooting ourselves in a social movement theory of change…the context of this sector is a difficult one and a confusing one, I think and many other countries within LVC have a much clearer identity around the term peasant, here in the UK we are referring to a complicated mosaic of small farms, foresters, land-based workers and food producers… there are a lot of different identities and employment status within this, so many of our members are employees and employers at different times of the year, for example. So the structure of unionism for us doesn't map very clearly onto the legally defined terms of trade union, […] So, we straddle both […] so union for us on paper is a co-operative not for profit, and union in practice means building power across a democratic member-led platform to achieve a wide social change vision. (Adam, 2022)

The complexity of the LWA's position that Adam refers to in many ways reflects the emergent nature of the movement, which is still evolving and finding its place within legally defined structures and in identifying with a social movement framing. The LWA's unionised structure is emblematic of its democratic values, with the LWA being close to the direction of the grassroots as Adam expressed previously. However, there is arguably a role for the LWA in defining what the UKFSM is, as well as representing the interests of its membership. For there is a question of whether the movement needs a coherent collective identity around food sovereignty to effectively mobilise its base around a political vision for a changed food system. Similarly, how coherent an identity of food sovereignty could be, is questionable given the complicated framing around its membership that Adam refers to above. I pick up on these tensions that emerge in the unionised structure of the movement in the following chapter, asking how necessary a coherent collective identity is within the UKFSM.

## 6.3 A Logic of Action/Conclusion:

This chapter has centred on the 'logics' of the movement's action, which I have argued are informed by ideas as well as its values and normative commitments. I have distinguished between the normative values and ideas of the movement by treating it's values, whether

implicit or programmatic, as evidence of collectively held beliefs and moral intentions. I suggest that these values are indicative of the movement's collective culture and similarly play a role in collective identity-making, signifying to those within the movement that they share a culture. This builds on the premise discussed in Chapter 3 that cultural 'tools' (Swidler, 1986) of the movement inform its action and approach, bringing together the movement's values with its ideas for social change. I have discussed these ideas through the logics of legitimation, emulation, and diffusion as well as prefiguration and unionisation, which are evident in the practice of the UKFSM.

In discussing the values and ideas of the movement as 'logics', I argue it is necessary to move beyond purely cognitive, explicit, and intentional aspects of culture to understand how norms, values and ideas inform movement practice. As such, this chapter has shown that ideas and values aren't purely programmatic but emerge organically, collectively and not always intentionally. Yet, in treating these implicit and strategic elements of the movement's practice as 'logics of action', I have demonstrated that there is an iterative relationship between values and ideas, which intersect and overlap. Understanding the values and ideas of the movement as the 'logics' of its action overcomes binary distinctions that speak to deterministic understandings of cultural formation; instead, strategic and organic elements of culture emerge concurrently. Similarly, the 'logics' of the movement account for the ongoing processes of cultural formation that are in motion and evolving through practice. In this way, these 'logics' are constantly being configured and adapted through iteration between collective actors and through the experience of acting on these logics.

Conceptualising the values and ideas discussed in this chapter as 'logics' provides a useful perspective for understanding the relationship between these logics and the action of the movement. For, as discussed in this chapter, these values and ideas coalesce in complex ways in their influence on movement practice, for the collective values of the movement produce ideas and similarly these collective ideas produce cultural values. Thus, the action or practice of the UKFSM is influenced by these 'logics' and the inter-relations between them. Consequently, understanding these 'logics' is necessary when making sense of collective practice within the movement, pointing to how values and ideas influence the nature of the movement's practice.

# Chapter 7 - Making Sense of Practice: Meaning and Reflection

This chapter builds on the 'logics of action' discussed in Chapter 6 to explore the collective identity of the movement, returning to questions and themes surrounding shared belonging and identity raised in Chapters 5 & 6. More specifically, it addresses the question of what degree of shared collective identity there is in the movement and the impact of this on both an individual and collective sense of belonging. Doing so means a return to collective identity theory, to echo the sentiments of Flesher-Fominaya (2010, 2018) that collective identity is something that can be held by individuals, 'but unless it is expressed through action and interaction, it cannot be generated in the first place, nor can it be constructed, maintained or developed over time' (Flesher-Fominaya, 2018, p.430 see also Gamson, 1991 and Snow and McAdam, 2000). I take this further to ask how necessary it is for the UK food sovereignty movement to have a strong shared collective identity, in building the movement and working towards social change. Section 7.1 of this chapter is divided into two sections, the first focuses on whether the base of the movement needs to hold a strong sense of collective identity, while asking who needs to hold this. The second section asks if this identity needs to be consciously held and understood and points to the implications of this.

The remaining sections of this chapter, Sections 7.2 and 7.3 connect discussions of collective identity with critical consciousness, building on the premise that collective identity formation is predicated on collective consciousness for individuals to act collectively. As such, the later sections of this chapter discuss critical consciousness-raising as it relates to collective identity, drawing on the work of Paulo Freire (1970). The main argument is that there is a need for active construction of consciousness and identity within the movement to develop a shared sense of belonging and mobilise individuals to act collectively. I argue there is a role for political education and critical pedagogy in informing collective consciousness and a political praxis within the movement that can intern strengthen processes of collective identity and the transformative potential of the UKFSM.

I begin by discussing collective identity processes within the movement and the extent to which these identities are shared and cohere among the movement's membership.

## 7.1 A Collective Movement Practice: Identity in meaning-making.

As discussed in Chapter 2, collective identity is significant as a sense-making process through which members of a movement relate their practice or action to the aims and objectives of the

wider movement. In this sense, collective identity is the active relationship between individual feelings of connection and belonging and the collective expression of this in the form of movement action, which in turn reinforces or reconfigures individual feelings of connection. Without both, collective identity can as Flesher-Fominaya (2010; 2018) argues remain an individual's own held beliefs and feelings of association which cannot be subsequently described as 'collective'. However, these feelings of association are not singular or universal, they are felt and related to differently by individuals across the movement. Yet, we might ask if collective identities are not 'fixed' as Flesher-Fominaya (2010) argues or necessarily commonly held, how might we identify what collective identity in the food sovereignty movement is? Similarly, if feelings of collective identity are variable and not necessarily consciously understood, can we claim there to be a process of collective identity?

As discussed in Chapter 5, the extent to which there is a widely shared and expressed collective identity or sense of connection at the grassroots to the wider food sovereignty movement is variable, especially in the everyday 'work' and practices. As Alexx from Veg Box People remarked 'I guess day to day I don't feel like what we are doing is part of a bigger movement, there is so much in front of me to get on with to just keep things going' (Alexx, 2020). Similarly, Farmstart trainees when asked if they felt part of a movement, largely echoed sentiments of not feeling particularly connected to the wider movement. This demonstrates that the 'work' of the everyday at the grassroots can feel disconnected and detached from the wider context and political movement of food sovereignty. This is particularly true of work I have discussed as 'labour' in Chapter 5, compared to that which is more strategically focused on activities such as organising, networking, or managing organisational communications. In this regard, the work that people perform or are involved with can affect the extent to which they individually express knowledge of and feel connected to the wider movement, echoing Crowley (2008). This has implications for understanding the movement's collective identity if a felt sense of collective identity is influenced by the role you perform within the movement and the extent to which individuals and collectives engage in wider movement work.

As a result, it is necessary to draw further attention to the divisions of labour within the movement and question if it is necessary for those at the grassroots, such as Farmstart trainees, volunteers and staff that are not directly engaged in strategic work, to connect through their 'work' and 'labour' with the wider movement. A strong movement identity that is widely shared by members of a movement is important in fostering movement connection and engendering movement action. Yet it would be an unreasonable expectation to suggest that this requires active participation in movement mobilisation and identity 'work' by all who sit under the

umbrella of the food sovereignty movement. This is especially true when considering individuals like Alexx and Farmstart trainees like Belinda, whose everyday activities and engagement with the work of the movement centres on practical activities that sustain local food production and consumption. For these activities are time-consuming and leave little time for active reflection or connection to the wider movement. This was evidenced in reflections from Helen W of Kindling and Sara of OrganicLea, who both suggested Farmstart trainees often didn't have the capacity to participate in movement-building opportunities offered to them (Helen W, 2019; Sara, 2020). Similarly, the grassroots of the movement appeal to a wide spectrum of individuals who are drawn to local agroecological food growing for an array of reasons that are not necessarily political. This is demonstrated in discussions with Farmstarters in Chapter 5 who discussed the benefits of food growing and the experience of working outdoors in nature. Not all individuals at the grassroots would necessarily choose to engage in strategic work or collective system change forums. Thus, the grassroots can engage individuals where they are, rather than creating requirements for individuals to participate in explicitly political collective practices.

In doing so the grassroots are able to attract individuals who are not politically driven to grow, eat or work in local, agroecological organisations. This shares some commonality with a Freirean politicisation process of consciousness (1970), suggesting that the development of critical consciousness starts from the standpoint of where individuals are. In this sense, we cannot expect those who engage with food sovereignty through the grassroots, necessarily to be drawn to the movement's politics, as this depends on the motivations of individuals themselves. In this sense, I echo the sentiments of Melucci (1995) in suggesting that collective identities are not 'given' or rather those who participate in the movement will not innately associate with an identity of food sovereignty. Instead, a collective identity emerges from active construction through a relational process of negotiation and understanding (ibid). Yet, we might ask how active this construction is at the grassroots of the movement, whether it needs to be political in nature and include collectives of individuals involved in the labour at the grassroots.

### *7.1.1 Coherence in collective identity:*

Fostering collective identity among those who are integral to the work at the grassroots, is not necessarily viewed as a priority by grassroots organisers and strategists. From working with Farmstart trainees from OrganicLea and Kindling, trainees reflected on not feeling particularly aware of, or actively included in the movement-based work at the grassroots. Similarly, many did not experience explicit exposure to the political ideas of food sovereignty or feel that their

training and 'work' as agroecological growers was contextualised within a wider political or socially transformative narrative. This is significant, as the active construction of a collective identity is necessary for developing a coherent movement identity at the grassroots. Consequently, if those who are training to become agroecological growers or work within alternative food networks, do not connect with an identity of food sovereignty or situate their work as part of a wider political struggle, it may impact the extent to which the movement can claim to have a coherent collective identity and mobilise a movement base that identifies with it. Similarly, this can impact the extent to which individuals or collectives of individuals at the grassroots engage in the politics of food sovereignty, and thus limit opportunities for consciousness-raising among the movement's membership which is discussed in greater detail in Section 7.2.

Discussing whether the movement needs a coherent collective identity requires a return, briefly, to the themes of unionism explored in Chapter 6. There is arguably a role for the LWA as the national representative and collective expression of food sovereignty in defining what a social movement for food sovereignty is in the UK context. As Adam from the LWA explained, the movement framing of the LVC and international movement doesn't easily map onto the UK context, especially concerning the identity and meaning of 'peasantry' and 'union'. As such the LWA has adapted collective action frames from the international movement and applied them to the UK, creating an identity of 'landworkers' united around the principles of food sovereignty and the practice of agroecology. Yet, the breadth of the movement's base combined with the complexity of the LWA's position, makes a cohesive and collective identity of food sovereignty more complex. Given that the LWA's position as a union is atypical in the context of the UK, and it is still emerging and evolving as a representative organisation, it is perhaps unavoidable that a clear and coherent collective identity is not easily achieved. Though as argued in Chapter 6, for the movement to have a coherent collective identity there is a role for the LWA to facilitate shared meaning in food sovereignty that resonates with its membership.

However, the food sovereignty movement is more than its national expression and, therefore, it is not necessarily appropriate for its collective identity to be narrowly defined. Instead, the movement's collective identity reflects its emergent and evolutionary nature (Iles and De Wit, 2015). Nor is a singular or fixed collective identity necessarily possible, given that the process of collective identity construction is always in motion and evolving and being reconfigured and negotiated through exposure to the external environment (Flesher-Fominaya, 2018). In this sense, the collective identities emerging within the movement are not singular but multiple,

thus there is a challenge for the LWA to develop a coherent collective identity that can mobilise collectives from the grassroots, where multiple identities have resonance.

Consequently, it is understandable that the movement's collective identity is broad and attracts a mixed level of association and coherence. While this can present a challenge in developing coherency around a shared identity, on the other hand, the movement's broad appeal means that it is able to speak to a wider movement base. In this sense, the breath of the movement's collective identity framing means that it can appeal to newcomers who otherwise may feel ostracised by a narrow or coherent collective identity (see Saunders, 2008). This points to the rub of coherency in collective identity, the more coherently it is communicated, identified with, and recognised, the more concentrated its membership will be. However, the more fluid and intangible the nature of collective identity, the broader the food sovereignty movement's appeal, attracting people to its practices who can engage in the movement where they are. As explored in Section 7.2 of this chapter, the nature of the UK's socio-economic and cultural context influences and shapes a broad approach to identity building. In this way an explicitly precise definition and culture of food sovereignty along ideological lines would not necessarily garner support among those at the fringes of the movement. Furthermore, the breadth of the movement can mean it is able to avoid factionalist conflicts that can emerge between organisations that have a narrow or rigid identity and approach to social change, as discussed by Saunders (2008) in her study of environmental movement organisations (EMOs).

Yet, there is a need to ask if the form of this collective identity impacts the extent to which the movements membership, particularly at the grassroots, share an affinity and connection with the movement and can subsequently be politically mobilised, or if their commitment can be sustained over time (Gamson, 1992). In this sense, the extent to which collectives of individuals at the base of the movement understand themselves as part of a movement impacts how collectives at the grassroots participate. As discussed in Chapter 5, many involved in the everyday work at the base of the movement are not exposed or assimilated into the wider movement through their engagement with and participation in grassroots activities. Georgie, a Kindling Farmstart trainee, pointed to this in suggesting that the degree of explicit discussion and contextualising 'why' individuals are being encouraged to grow using certain methods is already assumed to be understood among trainees (Georgie, 2020).

In this regard there is a degree of assumption at the grassroots about the coherence of a collective identity. The grassroots are not strategically considered as a site of identity building, rather the grassroots are primarily focused on the practice of alternative building and

agroecology. As discussed in Chapter 2 and further in Chapter 6, the evolution of the movement's structure between the grassroots and the national representation of the LWA means that movement-building work is often concentrated at the national wing of the movement. This structure has strategically aided the movement in that it has enabled the grassroots to focus more on the delivery and building of local alternative food systems. While primarily concentrating resources, campaigning and lobbying work at the national sphere has allowed the movement to develop a recognised public profile and arguably garner greater influence at the national level. However, this division has arguably resulted in less attention paid to how those at the base of the movement relate to the wider movement. This means that employees, volunteers and agroecological trainees at the grassroots are not necessarily included or prioritised in collective identity processes.

This is significant, to return to Melucci (1995), as collective identities need to be constructed, they do not just emerge organically. If those at the base of the movement who are training in agroecological practices, do not consciously share a connection with the wider movement, we might ask if the movement is creating a collective identity that is inclusive of these groups? In considering this question, I return to Flesher-Fominaya's (2018) argument that collective identity can exist without a shared articulation or definition and extends beyond that which is visible or explicitly communicated. As discuss in Chapter 6, implicit cultural values, ideas and practices exist within the movement and act as movement signifiers of those 'inside' from those who are 'outside'. As such, explicit association or involvement with the wider movement is not necessarily the only way that individuals express belonging and collective identity. Many involved with the movement, even at the grassroots where association is more variable, share an affinity with the values and lifestyle practices at the roots of the movement, which can foster a sense of belonging for those involved with the grassroots of the movement.

I agree with Flesher-Fominaya (2018) that explicit markers of movement identity are not the only way to understand processes of collective identity. For the degree to which individuals at the edge of the movement remain connected to it is driven in part by the level of emotional connection and shared belonging individuals feel, evident in affective ties and reciprocal solidarity (see Fominaya, 2010, 2018). As such, the implicit values that members of the grassroots share can signify collective identity in subtle ways, for those within the movement and engender a sense of belonging. However, if those at the touchstones of the grassroots are primarily connected to the movement through the emergence of implicit cultural values at the local level, it raises the question of whether this is enough to engender collective action for food sovereignty. For as argued by Tarrow (1989) and McCarthy & Zald (1977) the nature or extent

of collective identity within the movement can impact the degree to which individuals at the grassroots share a sense of commitment to the wider movement.

Furthermore, if those at the grassroots do not share or resonate with a collective identity, it is also less likely that they will feel included or mobilised to participate in the political 'work' of the movement. There is arguably a risk that without conscious and intentional collective processes of identity-making that target the base of the movement as a collective, engagement at the base will be disconnected from the wider movement. As such, there is a need to look at processes of collective identity formation in tandem with politicisation processes in the food sovereignty movement. For individuals can identify with grassroots practices in ways that aren't necessarily political and can participate without being exposed to a political narrative of food sovereignty and agroecology. This brings with it opportunities for grassroots engagement like those discussed above, but also presents challenges for developing a critical and collective consciousness. I build on the Freirean position that developing critical consciousness is necessary to develop different ways of 'doing' and 'being' that challenge the dominant systems of oppression. Without this embedded process, there is a risk that collectives coming through the grassroots will reproduce and participate in similar social relations to those of the existing system. I explore this in greater depth in Section 7.2 of this chapter, however, without the process of politicisation and consciousness-raising interwoven with collective identity the movement will struggle to create the radical subjects necessary for a changed food system.

## 7.2 Radical Subjectivity and Critical Consciousness:

Building on the discussion of collective identity in the previous section of this chapter, I explore and discuss the political subjectivity of individuals within the movement, including those within the core of the movement's strategic organising and those who engage with the movement through the grassroots as staff, volunteers, and trainees. This stems from the premise that critical consciousness is necessary for processes of social transformation, building on the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970) and Franz Fanon's (1967) position of political consciousness. In doing so I ask if the movement is creating a political collective consciousness, that extends to individual political consciousness among members of the movement. I ask if the movement is creating 'radical subjects', while building on the framework of the international movement, LVC, that purports the need for a radical pedagogy in building a socially transformative movement. I draw on examples from the international movement in Brazil, to explore the themes in this section, using these examples to illustrate possibilities for a radical and transformative approach. In doing so I ask two fundamental questions: 1) What is the role of radical subjectivity

in social transformation and the formation of collective identity; and 2) what are possibilities for critical consciousness in the context of UK food sovereignty?

The term 'political' or 'radical' subject for the purpose of this chapter relates to the embodiment of collectively held political beliefs and values, that are then enacted and expressed through social practice both at the individual and collective level. In this sense a 'radical' subject is also a prefigurative one, as this draws heavily on principles of prefigurative practice that unite values with practices, in an interconnected and self-reinforcing way. The embodied political beliefs, and values of a collective influence its practices, inextricably connecting the 'means and ends' of prefigurative politics as Franks (2006) and Gordon (2020) have argued. This speaks to many of the examples of the movement's logics of action discussed in Chapter 6 and practised in Chapter 5 of this thesis. However, the relationship between 'means and ends' and the embodiment of the 'political' within the movement is not always coherent. Similarly, the degree to which questions of social transformation within the grassroots, extend beyond practical and material change to relational and embodied processes is mixed.

This is evident in the primary emphasis of the grassroots on the practical building of alternative food networks and the logistics of running viable commercial growing businesses. By contrast the LWA's 'work' centres more explicitly on creating spaces for reflection and participation for different 'ways of being' out on the land for marginalised groups and recognises the influence of social conditions such as coloniality, heteronormativity, whiteness and male dominance in shaping and sustaining Britain's agricultural landscape. As evidenced in political training workshops facilitated by the LWA among its membership, that situated the LWA within the global food sovereignty movement and resistance to the dominance of industrial agriculture (Jyoti, 2020).

Consequently, I argue that the formation of a collective political consciousness is necessary for developing collective identity. As discussed by Taylor & Whittier (1992) consciousness-raising is thought to be linked to changes in individual identity, emotional transformation, affiliation with collective identities, or participation in collective action. In this way the development of consciousness within a movement shapes both individual and collective identities, that intersect and overlap. There is an obvious synergy as pointed out by Klandermans de Weerd (2000), that collective consciousness is necessary for a group to act collectively. As with the discussion of the logics of action in Chapter 6, the movement's ideas, values and practices influence and inform a collective culture that can influence individuals to act collectively in realising these logics of action. Hunt and Benford (2004, p.445) speak to this in suggesting it is through collective action

that ‘meanings are produced that facilitate the alignment of personal and collective identities, identity constructions, and convergences that condition future micro mobilization efforts’. In this way, collective identity is developed through processes of collective consciousness-raising, and simultaneously produces a collective consciousness that impacts individually held consciousness.

However, what meanings, or consciousness (Hunt and Benford, 2004) are formed through this process is varied and not necessarily always political. While there are multiple collective identities produced by movements (see Hunt & Benford, 2004) the nature of collective consciousness within the movement will shape the form of these collective identities. As a result, if the movement is not actively creating a collective political consciousness that seeks to politicise individuals through collective processes, this will impact how individuals within this collective act. If the movement is not prioritising collective consciousness-raising processes, there is a risk that individuals within the collective will not see themselves as political agents of change. This could present challenges at the individual and collective level for how individuals and collectives participate in the movement, as they are less likely to embody politically prefigurative ways of ‘being’ and ‘doing’. In other words, the extent to which there is a political culture of consciousness-raising within the movement will impact how individuals go out and act in the world. This is significant across the breadth of the movement, and particularly has implications for those who engage through the grassroots and are not particularly integrated in movement-based work or the LWA.

It follows then that a ‘radical’ or ‘political’ subject does not exist innately but emerges through a process of active construction and meaning-making. This construction is not prescriptive, but emergent and ongoing as Fanon (1967, 108) argues in suggesting that the ‘awakening of a whole people will not happen all at once’. Rather the making of a political or radical subject is through a process of praxis i.e. ‘the active reflection of individuals upon their world in order to transform it’ (Freire, 1970, 60). This dialectic is distinguished from collective identity in that it involves action. While one can hold a political identity without acting on it, a radical subject or collective of subjects embodies the political and act on it to achieve transformation. Though, as discussed in Chapter 3, this is not the same as practice alone. Praxis involves active reflection and reconstruction, which arguably builds the foundations for a critical pedagogical approach to systemic transformation in the food system. Given that food sovereignty as a movement seeks to create an alternative food system, I argue that a praxis born from a process of critical consciousness and reflection is integral to this process. This applies to the practical action of the

movement directly and to processes of embodied transformation at the collective and individual levels.

In considering this, the role of political education within the movement is essential, as advocates of a revolutionary and critical pedagogy have argued, it is through shared learning and critical education within social movements that a 'consciousness for reason, action and social justice' (Anderson *et al.*, 2019) emerges. Similarly, the LVC explicitly highlight the role of shared learning and critical education in agroecology within the Nyeleni Declaration of 2015 (Via Campesina, 2015):

> Our learning processes are horizontal and peer-to- peer, based on *popular* education. They take place in our own training centers and territories (farmers teach farmers, fishers teach fishers, etc.), and are also inter- generational, with exchange of knowledge between youth and elders.

Nevertheless, the shape and form of this critical education are varied and can manifest in formal and informal ways, however this education exists broadly as 'a tool for developing critical consciousness' while also 'recognizing power structures that shape agricultural contexts' as Meek et al argues (2019, p.617). As discussed in Chapter 6, both formal and informal networks of knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer support exist within the grassroots of the UK movement and connect other organisations through prefigurative experimentation and knowledge sharing. Yet, much of this experimentation and peer-to-peer learning concerns practical issues and capacity building at the grassroots, such as the development of Farmstart projects. This transfer of knowledge is certainly valuable and useful among grassroots organisations that have developed training models based on the rich experience of others, working in similar agricultural conditions and economically restrictive contexts. Equally, building the practical capacity of these projects is transformative in the sense that it offers pathways to realising lived alternatives to counter the dominance of mainstream agriculture. However, there is not necessarily an explicitly critical focus on education and knowledge sharing at the grassroots among those in strategic roles or those involved in the daily practices or everyday 'labour'. In other words, critical education and dissemination are not necessarily expressed at the level of the grassroots or prioritised as a function of this activity. Sara from OrganicLea and Helen W from Kindling described how engagement in the 'political' of agroecology and food sovereignty was not integrated into the training of Farmstart trainees, instead participation exists outside of the parameters of the programme.

This does not mean that mandated political education of trainees or individuals is appropriate or necessary to engender a sense of political consciousness at a collective level. As stated earlier the nature of political education within the movement shouldn't be prescriptive, but emergent and determined by individuals themselves, taking the lived experience of individuals and collectives as the point of critical reflection (Freire, 1970). However, there is a need to question whether training and education at the grassroots largely centred on practical skills for growing and establishing a commercial business is enough to generate political consciousness and a radical subjectivity at the grassroots that is critical of existing socio-economic structures. In raising this question, it is important to make clear that this is different from the post-political critique of (Blühdorn, 2007), as the practical focus of the grassroots on building alternatives is much more than merely a 'simulation' of an alternative future, as Blühdorn would have it. Rather, this practice in and of itself is transformative, in that it provides collective resistance to the dominant model of industrialised agriculture and can inspire individual and collective transformation based on relationships with nature and food growing. As discussed in Chapter 5, meaning and connection is generated through agroecological practice, with individuals finding fulfilment through labour at the grassroots and connection to the natural world. I return to the significance of the practice itself in Chapter 8. However, greater attention to individual and collective processes of politicisation at the grassroots is necessary to understand how and if the movement's approach to social change enables critical consciousness.

### *7.2.1 Critical Pedagogy in Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST):*

In discussing processes of politicisation, it is helpful to draw on the pedagogic project of other examples from the food sovereignty movement such as Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) and the model of formación embraced across Latin America. Formación relates to training and education that has a transformative purpose (McCune, Reardon & Rosset, 2014). In this regard, the MST, in association with the LVC, have centred their approach to realising social change on a logic and commitment to formación. The MST has systemically integrated political and social education into a vision of realising agroecology and land reform in Brazil. The MST over its 35-year struggle has been successful in pressuring the state to redistribute land to more than 370,000 rural peasants while also institutionalising a radical social and environmental education programme for agroecology, Educação do Campo (Meek and Tarlau, 2020). This programme combines teaching rural peasants the 'technical components of agroecology' while also supporting and encouraging 'the formation of people for a radically different non-capitalist society based on collaboration and self-governance' (Ibid, p.212). Similarly, the MST worked

with the state to institutionalise the National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform (PRONERA) which for two decades, operated on the premise of popular education and sought to ensure basic adult education while also placing emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices and student self-governance (ibid). Consequently, the MST has taken an approach that views land reform and critical education as fundamentally interlinked, creating a radical peasantry that understands their praxis as innately political and socially transformative. The movement draws heavily and explicitly on Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), which is widely recognised and understood among the Brazilian peasantry (Meek, 2015, p.1190).

Pointing to the case of the MST, enriches an imaginary of what 'radical' pedagogy and subjectivity can mean for food sovereignty in the UK. The Brazilian approach focuses on popular and explicit political education and has managed to influence and work with the state to institutionalise a programme of agroecological education. The explicit and systemic nature of this educational approach means that individuals educated within these programmes have technical knowledge of agroecology, and a 'political critique of agribusiness, an anti-capitalist ethos, and a collective work ethic' (Meek and Tarlau, 2020, p.213). This contrasts with the experience of trainee Farmstarters in the UK, and those whose engagement with the movement doesn't typically extend beyond the grassroots. As discussed in Chapter 6, explicit discussion or critique of industrial agriculture and the systems of capital are not necessarily evident in the everyday practices at the grassroots. Nor is instilling an anti-capitalist ethos and education around collective ways of working necessarily an instrumental objective of grassroots organisations.

These differences are to be expected, for the context and socio-political histories of Brazil and other Latin American countries are very different to that of the UK and have given rise to the explicit and instrumental nature of this pedagogy. Similarly, differences and complexities in the fabric of the peasantry as a social group and term used in the UK, means that connotations associated with it as 'radical' are not the same, as Adam from the LWA described in discussing the nature of unionism in Chapter 6. For the peasantry as a socially mobilised and radical group, does not have the same resonance within the UK movement, as it does for small-scale farmers and peasants in Brazil and other countries, which have a more explicit political logic of social transformation. This demonstrates the difficulties for the UK food sovereignty movement in building new identities around a 'peasantry' or 'landworkers' frame. For as discussed in Chapter 2, the movement often situates itself within the historical legacy of activist struggle, by invoking the Diggers movement of 1649 and referring to the 'back to nature' and 'back to the land' sentiments of 19$^{th}$-Century struggles (Gould, 1988). However, drawing on these historical

struggles does not necessarily foster a shared historical or cultural memory of these identities among members of the UKFSM. Nor is this the same as defending an existing peasant culture from oppressive forces as is the case in much of Latin America. As such the UK movement faces the challenge of building new collective identities, that could build on historical legacies of activism, to recruit agroecological growers that will identify with an agriculturally transformative movement.

Similarly, the contemporary context limits what Gibson-Graham (2006) term the 'politics of the possible', which extends not only to material realities of social transformation but to the popular imaginary of an embodied political subject. For the history invoked by the movement meets the contemporary socio-economic and political agricultural context of the UK, which undoubtedly influences the logics of action deemed possible and pursued by the movement. Similarly, the extent to which drawing on the anti-capitalist stance of historical and international movements would resonate as a collective approach at the grassroots is also questionable as discussed in Section 7.1 of this chapter. For not all who engage with the movement at its roots share an explicitly political sensibility or see their engagement in grassroots practices as particularly subversive or political in nature.

Despite the limits of the UK's socio-economic and political context a transformative social praxis and radical subject in the UKFSM is evident through its critical engagements. In this sense how the movement engages with contextual limits that constrain the possibilities for agroecology and food sovereignty will influence the nature of critical praxis that emerges. Callo's (2022, p.2) work on land reform in Scotland makes a similar case in arguing that agroecological transformations in the Global North, require more targeted criticism of property regimes and their associated power in shaping agricultural land use. This connects with discussions on the role of consciousness in social movement literature, that stress the importance of consciousness in enabling collective actors to 'attribute their discontent to structural, cultural, or systemic causes rather than personal failings' (Taylor & Whittier, 1992, p.114).

From a Freirean perspective, there is a need for critical engagement with the limits of the existing system for political consciousness to emerge. Yet, individuals that choose to engage in grassroots projects often have a degree of awareness of the limits of the existing system, consequently drawing them to participate in the practices of the UKFSM. Kindling Farmstart trainees were in part drawn to the project because they share the political ideals and values of the organisation, as Helen (2020) remarked 'the political…is one of the reasons we are all doing this'. However, while political ideas can motivate and inspire action and participation in the work

of the grassroots, as argued by Schlosberg (2019), a collective critical political consciousness is not necessarily produced by or through the practices at the grassroots. As a result, there is risk that without collective processes of consciousness- raising, individuals 'labouring' at the grassroots do not see themselves as political agents of change, and therefore defer the 'political' work of agonism and contentious action to others. This resonates with Arendt's (1958) discussion of divisions in human action discussed in Chapter 5. This points to a tension in the divisions in labour both in the roles that individuals perform and between levels of the movement. Similarly, it raises the question of how the movement will grow if those at the base do not necessarily share a connection to the wider movement or see themselves as political agents of change.

## 7.3 Reflexivity in Practice:

Reflection plays a crucial role in the process and evolution of praxis, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Yet to understand how the movement is evolving it is necessary to ask questions about the nature of reflection and adaptation essential to the processes of experimentation and prefigurative practice discussed in Chapter 6. In this sense, how the movement reflects, and what it reflects on shapes and influences the logics of action the movement pursues in achieving social change. Similarly, it is necessary to consider who is reflecting on the nature of the movement practices, and whether it is necessary that there is collective space for reflection to engender the formation of praxis and a critical pedagogy. In doing so this section speaks to the role of reflection in collective identity formation, following the logics of Gamson (1991) that active reflection is necessary in the construction of identities, to foster mobilisation and connection with a movement, which otherwise can be taken for granted. As a result, this section of this chapter is organised around three core questions that relate to those explored in the previous sections on collective identity and radical subjectivity: 1) how does the movement reflect and who is involved in this reflection; 2) is the nature of this reflection conducive to a process of praxis; and 3) how does this process of reflection influence the movement's 'logics of action' and approach to social transformation.

Much like other aspects of the movement, reflection is not homogenous, but variable both in degree and form depending on organisations and actors within the movement. Drawing on the example of the Farmstart model discussed in Chapter 5, there is evidence of material reflection and adaptation, linked to the intentions of the grassroots projects to facilitate specific outcomes i.e. creating new agroecological growers that are part of a holistic system for social change. In this way, formal structures like the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) exist as forums to enable

shared reflection on practical experimental processes, while highlighting barriers and opportunities available to grassroots projects in delivering agroecological training. This was exemplified in discussions around accredited training in 2020 within the FSIN, seeking to emulate OrganicLea's approach to agroecological training across the network. This was considered a way of overcoming financial barriers to course participation, and reducing the difficulty of multiple, and often competing, demands of running incubator sites as both productive commercial projects and training sites for new growers (FSIN Meeting fieldnotes, 2020).

In highlighting this example, I draw attention to the often practical and material form of reflection occurring at the grassroots, which centres on the practices and operational form of activity in the everyday. Such reflection and evaluation on of the movement's projects are necessary to gauge if, and how the social aims of these organisations are reached through these projects. My own work with the Kindling Trust from 2016-18 was capturing and evaluating the social impact of the organisation's projects, so that the organisation could understand its 'impact' across, social and environmental metrics. As commented by Jensen (2019), the impetus placed on grassroots projects to capture the social 'value' created through their practices, is often driven by the third-party funding bodies. As discussed in Chapter 6, the legitimating logics of the movement are influenced by this neo-liberal funding landscape that seeks to capture efficacy and 'value' in community-funded projects. This subsequently can influence the nature of reflection within the movement, which can be geared towards demonstrating or 'proving' value, to access resources and garner legitimacy.

Beyond these contextual factors, practical and material reflection at the grassroots, is linked to the innately practical nature of grassroots activities which centre on the building of AFNs and educating new growers. As a result, reflective resources, particularly individual time are pooled towards questions of efficacy in grassroots projects. As discussed in Chapter 5, the 'work' of the grassroots largely focuses on everyday practices that sustain grassroots projects, especially for those that carry out much of this daily 'labour'. In this regard, there is not much time to reflect beyond 'the things right in front' (Alexx, 2020) of individuals at the base of the movement. Thus, it is not necessarily efficient or even practically possible, through the lens of movement capacity building to take a horizontal and inclusive approach to the process of reflection at the grassroots. Though this is not always the case, as flatter and inclusive decision- making and reflective evaluation are arguably, more likely in cooperative and non-hierarchical structures. This is demonstrated within the example of the MST in Brazil, where cooperative working

cultures that subvert the dominance of individualised capitalist organisational structures are pursued (Meek *et al.*, 2019).

Nevertheless, day-to-day practices can dominate the focus of grassroots organisations, even those with co-operative structures in the UK. Sara an OrganicLea co-op member explained how some members of the co-op volunteered to be part of the system change working group, a group that discusses what OrganicLea can do to support more change in the global food system (Sara, 2020). This work is voluntary and requires interested co-op members to give up their own time, however, it is used 'to inform' Organic Lea's work more generally (Sara, 2020). While grassroots organisations like Organiclea may attempt to integrate a broader reflection and political narrative in their work, the primary occupation and purpose of the grassroots centres on practising modes and methods of agroecological production. Sara from OrganicLea even made a point of distinguishing the work of the systems change working group: 'it is separate to our work if you like, but we use it to inform our work'. This points to the challenges of embedding collective reflective processes even within horizontal structures and the emergence of divisions in labour between those who actively reflect on the wider movement and those who carry out these practices.

While an emphasis on material and practical reflection on the 'doing' of grassroots practices is necessary to achieve change in the food system, we might ask if and how this reflection extends beyond the practice of what the movement does to the 'embodiment' of this action. By embodiment I return to the prefigurative ideas of social change that suggest the 'means and ends' of social movement action are intimately connected, encouraging a focus on the processes of social change within movement organisations and individuals themselves. Through a prefigurative lens, social change involves a 'conscious channelling of energy into modelling the forms of action that are sought to be generalised in the future in circumstances characterised by power, hierarchy, and conflict' (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2020, p.664). In this sense, the embodiment of prefiguration stresses that social transformation is not achieved purely through practical action, but is a relational process that is conscious, and aligns how movements 'go about struggling for change with the idea of what a post-change better world will look like' Kropotkin (1889). The nature of the movement's reflection is consequently integral to thinking about relationships between what the food sovereignty movement does, how it does it and how this challenges dominant systems that perpetuate injustice, hierarchy, and environmental exploitation.

Thus, the instrumental nature of practice at the grassroots and the subsequent focus on capacity building within these projects, risks limiting active reflection to these practices. As a result, reflection at the grassroots does not necessarily embed an explicit critique of capitalism or existing power structures within a reflexive process. Though there is a greater focus on wider political objectives and aims at the macro level of the movement, the reflexivity at the level of the grassroots is largely concentrated on grassroots practices. This is exemplified in the experience of individuals working on grassroots projects. Abi from Kindling remarked that there isn't necessarily a culture of self-reflection or asking 'whether their vision is actually achieving these things' (Abi, 2019) among organisational strategists. In this sense we might question if the nature of this reflection is conducive to instilling a critical pedagogy and approach at the grassroots that resist processes of exploitation and domination. This links to Freire (1970) in suggesting that reflection is integral to the relationship of theory and action, moving from the ideas about the world and how to actualise them. As Freire argues, without reflection 'theory is blah and practice is merely activism' (p.68). It is, therefore, reflection that brings meaning to what the movement does and creates space for a critical evaluation of the nature of practice. As such the nature of the movement's reflections is significant and has implications on how the movement pursues its actions and strategizes for social change.

Similarly, other individuals described broader political questions or discussions of systemic change as typically 'left to the pub', and not integrated directly or formally with the work of the grassroots. This to a certain extent speaks to the practice of food growing and the pursuit of social change at the grassroots which is fundamentally organised around developing and sustaining agroecological practices. In this sense, individuals and collectives can engage in the singular practice of food growing with minimal integration in the wider political context and a critically reflexive praxis. Agroecological practices are not by their very nature explicitly political in the way that practices associated with more traditional social movement organisations may involve direct and explicit immersion in a movement's politics. For example, political affinity or identification with the values and aims of a movement is often a prerequisite to participation in an act of protest or civil disobedience. However, individuals can engage in the practice of food sovereignty at the grassroots, without necessarily being mobilised by shared or collective values or a coherent collective identity of food sovereignty or agroecology.

Similarly, it is necessary to ask whether this critical reflection needs to be collective. It would be unreasonable to expect that all individuals at the grassroots would want to engage in a reflexive praxis, that extends beyond the specificities of growing practices. Similarly, it is not always practically possible or an efficient use of time at the grassroots, which is stretched to find time

beyond carrying out everyday practices. Despite this, it is logical that the more people involved in a process of collective reflection, especially that which focuses on self-reflection, purpose and direction, the richer a reflexive process would be. This process is also likely to impact individual, as well as collective consciousness and could be an avenue for collective identity formation and the development of critical praxis discussed in Section 7.2. In this sense, collective reflective processes can empower individuals and introduce those involved in these processes to egalitarian and emancipatory values Zibechi (2012). Thereby creating an environment where prefigurative social relations are embodied at the grassroots, creating the means through which a radical political subject can emerge. In this way, collective processes of reflection and evaluation are intimately associated with politicisation as such collectively asking questions of 'who we are' as much as 'where are we going' is integral to a process of praxis and arguably social transformation.

Returning to the discussion of collective identity and radical subjectivity earlier in this chapter, reminds us that political consciousness and collective identity needs to be actively constructed. Without this active construction, which by its very nature emerges from a reflexive process, there are fewer opportunities for a critical praxis to emerge. For as Freire (1970) has argued praxis emerges from the friction between action and reflection, not only on the action itself but the wider context and systems that collectives seek to change. Consequently, if collective reflection is not prioritised at the grassroots, there is a risk that questions of collective identity as well as, the purpose of grassroots practice will not actively or collectively be considered.

**7.4 Conclusion:**

This chapter has drawn on the empirical discussions of previous chapters to discuss the role of collective identity in meaning-making and collective action within the UKFSM. Collective identity is a necessary sense-making process for actors within the movement and is linked to collective action. As such understanding the nature of this process, who participates in it and is involved in its reflection, is essential. In doing so I have argued that there is a need for active collective identity formation within the movement, for these identities do not exist innately and need to be constructed. This speaks to the premise that people within the movement need to feel that they are part of a collective to act collectively. As such this chapter has discussed how coherent identities of food sovereignty are and has raised questions about how active involvement needs to be, speaking specifically to the reflexive nature of these processes. In discussing the nature of collective identity, there is a role for collective consciousness in influencing collective identity formation; drawing on the Freirean position that developing critical consciousness is necessary

in constructing different ways of 'doing' and 'being' that challenge dominant systems of oppression.

Consequently, there is a role for political education and collective reflection as forms of active construction of political consciousness within the UKFSM in strengthening the movement's collective identity. I build on the critical pedagogic position of Paulo Freire (1970) and examples of popular education in Brazil's landworkers movement to illustrate that radical subjectivity and political consciousness can be fostered through critical education. The grassroots of the UKFSM do not necessarily see their role within the movement as raising political consciousness or fostering political engagement with the wider movement. This raises questions about how political subjects for a transformed food system will emerge if they are not being actively constructed at the grassroots. As such this chapter suggests that critical political education and reflective processes that extend beyond the material can act as a form of praxis within the UKFSM that bring together critical pedagogy and active reflection in collective action for a changed food system. I revisit these themes again in the following chapter in considering the role of praxis and critical pedagogy in the transformative potential of food sovereignty as a movement for social and political change.

# Chapter 8: A Socially Transformative Practice?

This chapter picks up questions raised in Chapter 6 and 7 around the movement's logics of action and processes of collective identity within the UKFSM, to consider the movement's approach to realising social transformation. The aim of this chapter is not to assess how effective the practices of the movement are in realising social change, which would be the focus of more positivist social movement analysis. However, social movement action can rarely be assessed using binary distinctions of either 'success' or 'failure' for processes of social change are more complex than this. In this regard, social transformation in relation to the food sovereignty movement does not refer to a fixed goal or endpoint. Rather social transformation as explained in Chapters 5,6 and 7 is a process. This process itself is emergent and orientated around transformative practices that are material in nature. Yet, to understand how processes within the movement's culture are emerging, there is a need to assess what is being produced through its practices. Thus, to understand the movement's political culture and situate it within the structural and cultural limits of the hegemonic system (Morris, 1992, p.370), we need to understand the movement's 'logics of action' without limiting this to strategy. In this sense, to understand the interwoven relationship between movement action and culture, it is necessary to consider 'strategic' action and the more implicit role of collective identity and political consciousness in informing collective mobilisation and individual connection to the movement.

As such the focus of this chapter is on the nature of social transformation within the movement based on its 'logics of action' and practices discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis. In doing so I discuss the tensions and opportunities that emerge and question the impact on processes of social transformation. As such this section is organised in two parts: 1) the opportunities and constraints in 'logics of action', drawing attention to processes of diffusion, emulation, legitimation, and prefiguration. Similarly, I discuss tensions that emerge in practice whilst highlighting the limits and potential opportunities that emerge from divisions of labour within the movement. 2) the second section of this chapter returns to discussions of collective identity and consciousness and the role of praxis in opportunities for collective mobilisation within the UK. This highlights critical questions concerning the nature of social transformation within the UKFSM and the question of what a transformative politics for food sovereignty could look like in this context.

## 8.1. In the 'cracks': opportunities and tensions

As illustrated in Chapter 5, social transformation is largely concentrated on facilitating agroecological practice and developing material alternatives to the dominant food system. In this way, much of the activity and organising at the grassroots is centred on sustaining grassroots projects that act as an example that can be emulated and diffused (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016). This shares resonance with how Holloway (2010, p.11) has discussed the 'crack', as cracking capitalism through 'try[ing] to expand and multiply the cracks and promote their confluence'. In doing so the practice of diffusion and emulation are crucial, for grassroots organisations seek to affect social change beyond the local domain in the proliferation of these 'cracks' outwards. This contrasts with an approach that centres on economies of scale, that seek to influence change by engaging in the construction of alternative food systems within the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2009).

As such, the model of change pursued within the movement is not predicated on financial influence, through the economic weight and impact of this practice alone. Grassroots organisations seek to create sustainable local food economies with a comparatively small economic impact when compared with the economic domination of the agri-food market by conventional agriculture. This is not to dismiss the economic contribution of grassroots organisations, that can have a significant impact and effect on collectives working within these organisations and local communities. However, working within the existing opportunity structures of capital means that economies of scale have an unjust influence on the existing socio-political and economic context. As such the economic impact of these organisations does not exert the same influence or produce the same economic opportunities to leverage power and concessions from the existing status quo.

However, it is not necessarily appropriate to assess the activities of the grassroots through a lens of economic scale. As Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) argue the 'scaling-up and out' of alternatives is an academic position that stems from a vanguardist view of revolutionary change. Agroecological transformations are inherently rooted in place and the specific ecology and social relations that inform an agroecological-driven approach to a changed food system. Thus, aspiring to an economy of scale that achieves change through expansion, is disconnected from the reality of a truly agroecological food system. Consequently, a strategy of social transformation at the grassroots rests on other processes like diffusion and emulation and creating multiple 'cracks' in the existing system through place-based alternatives. Yet, it would be inaccurate to suggest that these 'cracks' are creating absolute ruptures in the existing system,

for individually these cracks are snags or pulls the fabric of the dominant system. This is not to belittle the potential of these cracks, for they offer promise for a different way of 'doing' and seek to resist the worst of the political, economic and social injustice of the dominant system. However, as Holloway (2010) has argued to understand the potential of these cracks, we must move beyond absolutisms in discussing their transformative potential. Instead, we must lean into these 'cracks' and draw further attention to their structure and the ways in which they resist and at times reproduce inequalities of the existing system to truly understand their potential for social transformation.

Consequently, there is a need to revisit the division of labour that exists within the grassroots as discussed in Chapter 5 and between different levels of the movement. As discussed in Chapter 2 and 6, there is a division of labour between the grassroots and the LWA largely in campaigning work and the practices at the grassroots. These distinctions are not binary, as stated previously there are many individuals who are both fulfilling campaigning roles with the LWA and other regional campaigning organisations as well as being agroecological growers. However, the outsourcing of direct campaigning work from the grassroots to the national and regional levels of the LWA, leaves less of a focus on broader political action and contention at the grassroots. Instilling functionary divisions of labour between different levels of the movement, follows a logic of resource mobilisation and capacity building that recognises the national sphere as having more resources and weight in advocating the interests of the movement. Similarly, this division in labour reduces the pressure on the grassroots to both 'be the change' and 'demand change' from the state, local authorities, and existing institutions of power. As noted by Schlosberg and Craven (2019, p.125) there is a tension for practice-based organisations to both 'maintain agonism when the idea is to spread, diffuse, and replicate one's practice'.

While this division allows the grassroots to focus more predominantly on carrying out agroecological practice and building sustainable materialisms (Scholsberg & Craven, 2019), it raises the question of whether this division depoliticises the culture at the grassroots of the movement. This is not to suggest that activities at the grassroots of the movement are depoliticised. As de Moor, Catney and Doherty (2019) and Scholsberg and Craven (2019) demonstrate practice-based organisations are often driven by political ideas and agnostic views of politics. Similarly, these divisions are politically strategic and reflect conscious awareness at the grassroots of their limits and the possibilities available given systemic constraints (de Moor et al, 2019, p.313). However, the political nature of these activities is not as evident in the everyday of grassroots movement organising, which is influenced in part by strategic divisions

in labour between the national wing and the grassroots. For the grassroots can defer politically explicit movement building work that centres on campaigns to the LWA, which mean processes of politicisation including collective reflection are not necessarily concentrated at the grassroots. This presents a potential tension for the movement in how it includes individuals in collective processes of reflection and politicisation at the grassroots, when the more active explicitly political work is carried out at the national level. Thus, there is scope to question the impact of this division on political processes at the grassroots, as de Moor et al (2019, p. 325) point out in arguing for more research into the separation between explicitly contentious action and practically focused alternatives within the same movement.

Nevertheless, the structural divisions of labour within the movement also inform a legitimating logic that seeks to prove a sense of worthiness, (Tilly, 1994) in the UKFSM attempting to influence institutions and policy. As discussed in Chapter 6, the unionised nature of the movement means that the practices at the grassroots are interwoven with those of the national level. As such the grassroots play an instrumental role in evidencing 'best-practice' and demonstrating viable alternatives that bolster the work of the LWA in advocating for structural interventions to enable and proliferate projects at the grassroots. In doing so, the movement has created an interconnected strategic approach that brings together the often-disparate practices at the grassroots with campaigns and advocacy work at the national level. This focus on legitimacy extends to cultural change through demonstrating 'best-practice' at the grassroots and using this to raise awareness and legitimate agroecological practice. Steph demonstrated this in explaining how the LWA has made efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the values of agroecology within government departments.

> Until the LWA got involved in policy and lobbying there wasn't really anyone talking about small-scale farming and the needs of new entrants to DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). There have been people like Sustain and the Soil Association, but for me I have just seen an explosion of DEFRA taking it seriously and going out to see farms and seeing people doing agroecological growing and talking to them (Steph, 2019)

This speaks to de Wit and Iles (2016, p.18) discussion of legitimacy in knowledge production, for the LWA along with the movement more widely has raised the profile of agroecology as a term and understood practice. Demonstrating and attesting to credible knowledge through grassroots practice has garnered legitimate support at a policy level and within institutions. As a result, the movement has been effective at influencing cultural change in the discourse and

language used outside of it. While this process is still unfolding, and as Adam from the LWA explained 'there is still a long way to go', it is necessary to recognise that there is a relationship between the material practice of agroecology at the grassroots and cultural change beyond the movement. As described above the structure of the movement connects the grassroots to the national level, reinforcing and legitimising its campaigns and advocacy work. Consequently, we might think of the movement's structure and efforts to unite grassroots practice with the advocacy of the union as an attempt to 'overcome structural constraints to maximise their impact' (de Moor et al, 2019, p.325). Divisions in the structure of the movement need to be understood as strategies that seek to strengthen the movement's ability to effectively campaign and engage in advocacy at the national level while supporting work at the grassroots. It is through this process that the LWA along with other campaigning organisations within the movement have been able to promote agroecology and influence the cultural rhetoric around small-scale growing and agroecological practice in government.

Despite the opportunities that divisions in the work of the grassroots and national level of the movement create, it is necessary to question how divisions within the grassroots can affect collective mobilisation and similarly create conditions for a 'just' food system. I turn here to distinctions in the labour of the grassroots, especially between waged and unwaged labour. As Nic (2020) a Kindling Farmstart trainee remarked 'it is working isn't it', referring to the unpaid labour of volunteers and trainees that is integral to sustaining agroecological production at Kindling's growing site in Stockport. We might ask how transformative a model of agroecological production is, that is reliant to a certain degree on the unpaid labour of individuals like Nic, as this is not a model that makes training in agroecological growing or the growing itself accessible to everyone. Nic further adds:

> I think for a farm to be sustainable it is not just about being ecologically or economically sustainable it has to be socially sustainable; it has to provide a decent living wage for people. I think that is what is lacking from regenerative farming is the social element, yeah it is totally more sustainable to other ways of farming, but it doesn't pay fairly. I don't know if that is a result of the farms themselves or the wider system, but that is something that can maybe be looked at (Nic, 2020).

The issue of unpaid labour within alternative food networks has been raised elsewhere (see (Pottinger, 2013), particularly in questioning the financial viability and sustainability of these models as 'transformative' when reliant on unpaid labour (see Novelli and Corsi, 2018). Questioning the social relations of the labour involved in agroecological production as Nic points

out is certainly necessary in thinking about transforming food systems. However, to criticise these projects for reproducing exploitative labour relations of the dominant agricultural system is not necessarily very useful. Agroecological growing sites like Woodbank and training projects that support them like Kindling's Farmstart are not conventional farms or growing sites whose central objective is profitability. Instead, these sites are hybrids that act as centres for agroecological growing and training. Consequently, to criticise these projects on economics alone misses the dual functionality of these sites as both commercial growing sites that aim to be productive and demonstrate the possibilities of small-scale agroecological production. While also acting as training incubator sites that educate and provide valuable skills to trainees and volunteers who are interested in commercial growing. That said, this balance is difficult to achieve and as such can leave trainees like Nic questioning the value of their labour. Helen D the Farmstart co-ordinator at Woodbank pointed to this tension between labour and training:

> It's a difficult one to work out because the training is bound up in running that site financially… one of the ladies at the 'Who Wants to be a Farmer' day came and asked, "is this a training programme or is it a work programme?" Which I thought was a really poignant question – it's one we have to look at and really think about (Helen D, 2019).

Similarly, these growing sites and the projects that support them, to a certain degree are constrained by the wider social and economic conditions in which they exist. The resources available to projects like Kindling and OrganicLea beyond what they earn by selling produce and delivering training, is grant funded which is competitive and often time limited. As such it is very difficult to offer land-based training in agroecological growing that is free or pays a wage to participants. Nevertheless, there is scope for the grassroots to make more conscious interventions within its training programmes to address issues of access relating to unpaid labour. For example, OrganicLea has made efforts to offer free and affordable training, through a process of accreditation. By offering recognised adult education provision through the City and Guilds framework OrganicLea is paid by the local authority to deliver horticultural training. This framework provides scope to offer this to those on a low income or who are unemployed for free, which to a degree ameliorates some of the barriers to participating in these projects.

However, this speaks to the tensions of trying to realise a materially different agroecological food system that is constrained and limited by the opportunities of the existing economic and political context. Tensions have also been raised in this regard in relation to the grassroots focus on encouraging social enterprise and entrepreneurialism in developing alternative food networks (AFNs). Such an approach is conditioned by the market as Julie Guthman (2008) argues

in demonstrating the move towards entrepreneurialism in the food economy is in keeping with the trends of neo-liberalism that have moved food provision away from an entitlement model. Similarly, a model of entrepreneurialism is built on the existing processes of capitalism. This as noted in the Shared Asset's report on Farmstart and New Entrants in the UK (2021) can lead to individualism and the reproduction of competitive capitalist interests within the frame of a market economy. In this sense, there are competing pressures on how individuals balance having an agroecological growing practice that respects the limits of nature and of people, while simultaneously competing in a capitalist market that necessitates yield and increased production. This represents a tension for the movement in how it builds and encourages new entrants to practice alternatives to the dominant system 'within the shell of the old', while not reproducing exploitative capitalist social relations.

An answer to this question could be in the role of agroecological education and training at the grassroots. As discussed in Chapter 7, processes of movement building and political consciousness-raising are interwoven within a radical pedagogic project of agroecology. In this way 'collective political learning can help to overcome individualising tendencies and promote collective subjectivities as the basis for collective action' as argued by Anderson, Maughan & Pimbert (2018, p.21). Many organisations like OrganicLea, Kindling and Tamar Grow Local have an element of explicit agroecological education or training within their projects, the Farmstart programme delivered by all three is representative of this. The aim of this agroecological training is to create new pathways for agroecological growers to access commercial training and become commercial growers. Immersion in grassroots agroecological training may not produce desired or intended outcomes i.e. more agroecological growers, but it can act as a pathway for individuals to engage in the wider food and environmental movement. This was evident in the fact that many Farmstart trainees have gone on to work in other areas of the sustainable food sector, though they may not be growing food. In this way these opportunities offer more than a pathway to agroecological farming, they also open possibilities for immersion in a grassroots culture and the wider UKFSM.

However, this agroecological education and training much like the practices at the base of the movement are centred on the material nature of practice and the 'doing' of agroecological change. In other words, these training opportunities are orientated around the practice of agroecology itself. While integral to a process of agroecological change this practice alone cannot achieve social transformation, instead as argued by Anderson, Maughan & Pimbert (2018) it needs to be intentionally integrated with the political dimensions of agroecology to achieve social transformation. As discussed in Chapter 7 the practice of agroecology serves as

unifying entry point that has broad appeal and attracts individuals not necessarily motivated by the politics of food sovereignty to engage. Yet, there is arguably a role for the movement to integrate individuals that engage through the grassroots in the more explicitly political nature of food sovereignty to build a political movement from the base upwards. Thus, there is a need to question the potential consequences of the grassroots primarily functioning as a site of agroecological practice, rather than agroecological praxis predicated on critical reflection on the 'limits' of the existing system while also seeking to create political subjects for an agroecological society.

## 8.2 A transformative praxis:

As discussed in Chapter 7, there is a need to ask what the role is for political consciousness in the movement, and whether it is necessary that those at the base hold it. Much of the discussion in this and the previous chapter has echoed the findings of Chatterton and Pickerill (2010, p.13) on grassroots UK activism, finding that there was little open discussion of political values at the base of the movement, and these 'political values were often implicit or taken for granted rather than rigorously interrogated'. It is necessary to discuss if there is an impact of this lack of explicit political culture at the grassroots and how this can connect with both individual and collective processes of political consciousness.

Connection with the political frame of food sovereignty will always bring with it a degree of variability, especially when the appeal of agroecological growing is not singularly political in nature. However, the fact that the grassroots do not necessarily see their role to be in developing or fostering collective political consciousness can have implications for the movement. For the movement to generate a new generation of conscious political agents of change there is a need to critically educate through a praxis and radical pedagogy at its base. Without this, the movement may be successful in achieving a degree of material change i.e. increasing local consumer choice to access agroecological food and incentivising individuals into growing or the sustainable food sector. However, there is a need for greater engagement with the 'limits' of the existing system, for change to extend beyond the material building of alternatives to also engage with the injustices and inequalities of the dominant system. Similarly, for agroecology as part of a vision for food sovereignty to be realised, it has to be understood as a political project as much as material and relational practice of food growing. In this way I argue there is potential for transformation at the grassroots to be more than the creation of sustainable materialisms discussed throughout this thesis. This transformation can

bring together the material practice of 'doing' with 'being', thus making the means conducive to the ends of a prefigurative model of change.

This connects to the discussion of critical-consciousness raising among the MST land-based workers movement in Brazil discussed in Chapter 7. The social and historical evolution of this approach is vastly different to that of the UK context, and a radical pedagogy for food sovereignty in the UK, cannot be expected to look the same, given vastly different socio-economic and historical contexts. However, the fact that a critical pedagogy is embraced as a strategy by the grassroots to achieve social transformation has universal application. This transformative power lies in the recognition that 'critical education contributes concretely to the formation of experiences, practices and ways of understanding that are unlike those of the neoliberal paradigm' (Da Vita and Vittori, 2022, p. 78). As such there is a role for a radical pedagogy in collective consciousness-raising processes that can have a direct impact on the development of individual consciousness. Such an approach brings the 'process' of how to achieve this change into conversation with the 'limits' of the existing system, which creates a reflective dialogue informing action. Thus, a critical pedagogy can have an impact on the practice of the grassroots in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it creates a means through which a radical political subject can emerge from the grassroots and subsequently engage in collective movement action. Therefore, connecting the grassroots with the political work of the LWA and wider movement, means there is less of a binary between material practice and the politics of the movement. Secondly and perhaps most important, a critical pedagogic approach at the grassroots can equip and encourage individuals to act collectively to challenge the limits of the existing system that they encounter. In this sense, it offers a pathway to creating socially mobilised members of the movement, that are more likely to act collectively in developing alternative practices that challenge the dominant system.

Yet, the 'political' at the grassroots does not necessarily need to be openly contentious or centred on campaigning and advocacy work like that carried out by the LWA to generate a political praxis. As discussed in Chapter 7 these strategic divisions between the national campaigning wing and grassroots do in many ways serve to make the building and demonstrating of alternative models of agroecology more effective at the grassroots. Instead, there is scope for the grassroots to challenge the existing system within the practice of agroecology directly, in producing radical subjects that connect their food growing with the wider movement and seek to subvert the injustice in enacting agroecological alternatives. In this sense, embodying a prefigurative politics and connecting the 'means' and 'ends' of social transformation for food sovereignty. For example, in resisting individualisation and adopting

collective and co-operative production and trading systems built on horizontal relational processes. However, as this chapter has discussed these relational political processes that connect a practice of 'doing' social transformation with 'being' are not as evident in efforts to build agroecological alternatives at the grassroots.

Similarly, the deference of expressly political issues by organisations at the grassroots to others or the future, represents a strain of political theorising that shares parallels with a vanguardist understanding of revolutionary change. Postponing inherently political questions such as, 'how are we challenging property relations or inequity in land access and food growing' to after the material conditions for an alternative food system have been realised, means these questions are not centred in the present formation of alternatives. In this sense, deferring these political questions to others or the future, means that active reflection on these political ideas and subsequent material praxis is not necessarily embedded within material alternatives. This poses a tension for how the movement can address questions of social inequity embedded in the dominant system, whilst building alternatives in the present.

This speaks to Gordon's (2020) 'temporal paradox' of prefigurative models of social change. How can the movement navigate contradictions between visions for the future that can lock in an end goal or fixed ideal and practice just solutions in the present. This necessitates a process akin to praxis that rests on practical experimentation, reflection and adaption at stages in the development of a transformative prefigurative process. While there is no prescription for this process nor should there be in a Freirean (1970) pedagogic sense, for praxis at the grassroots of the UK food sovereignty movement to be transformative it must start from the grassroots taking an active role in developing collective political consciousness at the base. This doesn't mean such politics need to be 'loud' or explicitly anti-capitalist, as discussed in Chapter 7. But it does require grassroots organisations to see their role in building alternatives to be more than a material project of 'practice' and equally a relational one that creates the conditions for new political subjectivity to emerge. This also speaks to the need for more active reflection at the grassroots beyond material practice that embeds questions of social transformation as well as capacity building into an inclusive praxis of reflection and action.

Nevertheless, the movement's focus on the 'material' nature of practice is not apolitical or removed from the political sphere, nor is social transformation only achieved through that which is explicitly political. In this sense, the practice of growing local agroecological food and proliferating a local market while training new growers and engaging people in alternative agroecological food is subversive. This speaks to what Pottinger (2017) and Chatterton and

Pickerill (2010) have argued about expanding the conceptual parameters of 'activism' to that which is more than protest and active contention. In this sense, collectives, and individuals at the base of the movement carrying out agroecological practice are in themselves engaging in a practice with subverts the dominant ideology of food production. This shares parallels with Holloway's (2010, p.12) argument that suggests cracks in the existing system emerge through 'the daily activities of millions' rather than through 'activism' in its traditional sense. In this way the 'quiet activism' (Pottinger, 2017) of agroecological growing itself has transformative potential at an individual level, as it can act as an entry point for engagement with the movement. For the political can emerge through implicit processes embed within the material practice of agroecology, that can act as a gateway for exploration into the politics of food sovereignty.

Similarly, engagement in these practices will by the very nature of the socio-political and agricultural landscape of the UK bring those carrying out this practice into contact with the structural and contextual 'limits' of the existing system. The nature of small-scale agricultural production within the UK means that these practices themselves create opportunities for critical reflection and engagement with 'limits' that Freire argues are necessary for critical consciousness to emerge. For example, the challenges of agroecological growing and establishing viable small-scale growing businesses bring those engaging in these practices with the constraints of the existing system, particularly around access to land, resources, and the societal and economic value of local food. Thus, grassroots practices can provide the space for critical consciousness-raising at an individual level through the act itself and immersion in the implicit culture and values shared by the grassroots of the movement. This is emblematic of the movement's emergent culture, and evolution of those within it whose political values and practices are in a constant state of becoming.

However, there is a need to question the extent to which these practices can create a collective and cohesive political landworkers movement. These practices may engender the development of political consciousness at the level of the individual, but without collective processes of consciousness-raising and collective identity formation an individual won't necessarily act or participate in collective movement processes. In this sense, how we qualify the value or role of implicit or explicit political consciousness within the movement is in its relationship to collective movement processes. This shares parallels with Rupp and Taylor's (1999, p.365) categorisation of collective identity as 'embodied in symbols and actions that connect members of the group and link their everyday experiences to larger social injustices'. To understand the significance of political consciousness and collective identity in relation to practice, there is a need for greater

attention on the interdependent and self-reinforcing relationship between collective identity and consciousness-raising.

In spite of these tensions, those at the base of the food sovereignty movement aren't opting out of the 'political' as some post-political theorists (See Blühdorn, 2007; Blühdorn and Deflorian, 2019) would argue. Instead, they are working within specific constraints that make some outcomes more possible than others in striving for a changed food system. As such the grassroots and the movement as a whole are trying to create a viable and transformative food system predicated on values of fairness, agroecology and local control. This process by its very nature is messy and imperfect. It is also impossible for these attempts to 'crack' the existing system to do so outside the material and relational constraints of the present context. As such I return to my proposition at the start of this chapter, that it is not appropriate to categorise the practices of the movement into rigid and reductive binaries of 'good' or 'bad'. These processes are still in motion, constantly evolving and being played out in real-time, the outcomes of which are complex and inter-connected and span individual and collective spheres.

This is evident in the adaptation and evolution of the movement's practice and collective reflection, which since the end of this research period has continued to evolve. Kindling has sought to access funding from a third-party to evaluate organisational practices, focusing on the outcomes of its projects, and linking this to questions of social change. Similarly, the breadth of the movement is continually shifting, with new organisations taking prominence with Land in Our Names (LION) growing in numbers and influence, working in partnership with the LWA to support the interests of people of colour working or seeking to work in agroecology. As such, the tensions that this and previous chapters have discussed are not fixed or absolute, for the movement is still emerging and learning through collective process and experience. As a result, the possibilities for social transformation within the movement aren't static, or necessarily confined to the discussion of this chapter. For the movement is continuing to evolve along with the organisations within it, thus the possibilities for social transformation aren't limited to those discussed in this chapter.

However, that doesn't mean that we turn away from areas of tension that this chapter has discussed, for as mentioned earlier it is only by leaning into these spaces that we are able to understand the nature of these alternatives and the possibilities they offer. In doing so we avoid labelling the collective practice of the movement as either transformative or post-political (Blühdorn, 2017) instead revealing the grey. The reality of social transformation lays in the grey, not in absolute positions that are able to wholly resist the injustice of the dominant system, but

in the muddy truth that understands these transformations as being influenced by the dominant system in practice and ideal. As such, a vision of food sovereignty in the UK is not necessarily one which can shake off the dominant system *absolutely but* can creates space within it to reimagine and practice something more akin to ecological and social transformation. In this sense I reiterate Holloway (2010) that we must not romanticise the 'cracks' discussed in this chapter or 'give them a power they don't possess' (pg.20), but it is from these cracks that we begin to envisage alternative imaginaries that challenge the dominant system.

## 8.3 Conclusion:

This chapter has discussed tensions and opportunities that arise from the movement's 'logics of action' and its practice. It has argued that the material focus of the movement's politics on building an agroecological food system creates possibilities for local food economies and 'opting out' of the dominant food system. Similarly, agroecological growing practices are valuable in and of themselves in connecting practitioners with non-human nature and subverting the dominant means of agricultural production. Yet, I also highlight tensions that emerge in the movements approach pointing to questions of value in labour at the grassroots whilst discussing consequences of divisions of labour within and between levels of the movement. I discuss the nature of the political in this regard, and question how necessary it is that those at the base of the movement engage in it or share a sense of collective political consciousness.

I return to discussion of political consciousness and transformation raised in Chapter 7, to argue that food sovereignty is inherently a political project. As such there is a political role for the grassroots, which doesn't necessarily mean they engage in outwardly contentious activism, but it does necessitate radical praxis at its base. This contrasts to a largely practice-based material approach, creating the conditions for a political subject to emerge through their engagement with and reflection on the limits of the existing system. As such this chapter argues that for social transformation within the UKFSM to extend beyond the construction of material alternatives and to collectively mobilise individuals for food sovereignty there is a need for critical pedagogy and a radical praxis. For as this chapter has argued without this critical pedagogy and engagement with the limits of the existing system, the responses at the base of the movement wont necessarily be collective or seek to subvert the dominant exploitative processes and structures of capital. Thus, for the movement's collective action to be truly collective and alternative, a radical praxis built on the principles of critical pedagogy needs to be embedded in processes of social transformation.

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

This research contributes to an understanding of food sovereignty in the UK as a concept and practice. As the first study of the UKFSM it uses critical ethnography and participatory action research (PAR) methods, working with three grassroots cases: The Kindling Trust, Organic Lea and Tamar Grow Local and the national body of the UKFSM, the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) to outline how the UKFSM can be understood as a social movement. This approach allowed for an analysis of processes of cultural formation within the movement. These cultural processes of movement formation are treated as collective sense-making and an expression of the movement's political process. Consequently, this research highlights the nature of these cultural processes in understanding the relationship between meaning and action and the political significance and potential of the UKFSM.

In drawing together the overall findings and arguments of the thesis, this chapter returns to the four research questions that opened this thesis:

1. What does food sovereignty mean in the UK and how is it practised?
2. How is food sovereignty as a concept and social movement adapted and applied to the context of the UK?
3. Why is it important that we recognise food sovereignty as a social movement in the UK?
4. What is the potential for realising social transformation for food sovereignty in this context?

The final section of this chapter provides an overview of the contribution of this thesis, before outlining the limitations of the project and the areas for further research.

## 9.1 The meaning and practice of food sovereignty in the UK:

This thesis has shown that the meaning of food sovereignty in the UK is emergent and variable. This reflects the broad and malleable nature of food sovereignty as a concept, which is evolving through an ongoing process of cultural formation. The formation of the movement's culture is then a process of meaning-making, whereby the movement makes sense of itself and its practices. The movement assembles 'cultural tools' (Swidler, 1986) such as the values and ideas discussed in Chapter 6, and develops collective identities, which influence its collective action. It is through these expressions of movement culture that the meaning of food sovereignty is constantly negotiated and reformulated. As such, we can better understand collective meaning

making by drawing attention to how it is expressed through cultural practices. Chapter 3 drew on social practice theory and the work of Paulo Freire (1970) to argue that the meaning of food sovereignty is intimately associated with the movement's practices. These practices play a critical role in meaning making as expressions of ideas, beliefs and values as well as being the means through which affective ties, identities and consciousness are generated. Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of 'praxis', we can understand ideas and action as intertwined in a dialectic relationship, with ideas informing action and actions equally informing ideas (see Freire, 1970, p.108-110). As a result, to understand the meaning of food sovereignty in the UK it is necessary to focus on how it is practised.

In Chapter 5 it was shown that agroecological practices are widely shared across the movement, both at a national and local level. Whilst there is diversity in approaches, the movement collectively engages in agroecological growing practices and seeks to proliferate the number of agroecological growers in the UK through training programmes like the Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN), as well as increasing access to agroecological produce. Similarly, the movement engages in strategic movement-building work alongside its day-to-day practices of agroecological growing and building an alternative food system. However, the capacity of the grassroots to engage in strategic movement-building work is constrained by access to resources, with funding constraints influencing what grassroots organisations can do. Consequently, the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) plays a central role in fulfilling strategic and campaigning work for the movement that the grassroots do not necessarily have the capacity to carry out. There are also divisions in labour, at different levels of the movement, with not all involved in the day-to-day 'labour' engaging in the political and strategic 'work' of the movement. Drawing on Arendt's (1958) framework of human action, I argued that divisions in the practices carried out within the movement affect the degree to which individuals identify with food sovereignty.

As illustrated in earlier chapters, those at the base of the movement who engage primarily in the daily 'labour' of movement practices do not necessarily connect as deeply with a collective identity for food sovereignty as those involved with more strategic work, nor do they feel as connected to the wider movement. This supports Crowley's (2008) findings that suggest the roles that individuals in a movement perform can correlate to how strongly they identify with its aims. As such, it is necessary to consider divisions of labour in the practice of the movement when discussing the meaning of food sovereignty.

There will always be a degree of variability in association with food sovereignty, as earlier chapters have demonstrated in discussing the drivers of Farmstart trainees which are not

necessarily political in nature. In this way, the meaning of food sovereignty for many is not conscious or politically explicit; instead, it lies in the quiet sewing of seeds and working in the outdoors inherent in daily agroecological practice. Similarly, as argued by Flesher-Fominaya (2010; 2018), meaning and connection to the movement is not confined to explicit expression - it is also evident in the implicit values and subtle ways members find belonging within the UKFSM.

Thus, this thesis has shown there isn't one single meaning of food sovereignty; it is defined and understood broadly. The breadth of meaning widens the appeal of the movement, attracting newcomers that may otherwise feel excluded by a narrowly defined more explicitly political collective identity of food sovereignty. However, the lack of coherence around a shared identity and meaning of food sovereignty in the UKFSM raises questions about how the movement can politically mobilise its membership, when members at the grassroots do not necessarily share an affinity or connection to food sovereignty. Drawing from Melucci (1995) I suggest that a shared meaning of food sovereignty is not inherent but needs to be actively constructed, which is arguably a role for the LWA. Yet the breadth of the interpretation of food sovereignty, combined with the complexity of the movement's base means creating a unified and shared collective identity of food sovereignty in the UK is no easy task.

Meaning and action are intimately connected, with meaning motivating action and being produced through it. This thesis has pointed to the tensions which emerge in the complexity of meaning-making for food sovereignty, illustrating the relationship between meaning-making, identity formation and collective action. In demonstrating both the explicit and implicit elements of movement culture and the complex relationship with movement action and formation, the arguments about the UKFSM add weight to calls among social movement scholars (see Swidler, 1986; Gillan, 2008) for explorations of culture to move beyond instrumentalist accounts that treat culture as largely ideational (Snow and Benford, 2000). Consequently, there is scope for further research on the nuances of movement culture, especially of movements whose practice is sustained over time to understand how the nature of cultural processes influence meaning and connection to movements like the UKFSM.

## 9.2 The application and adaptation of food sovereignty to the UK:

One of the main findings of the thesis is that the adaptation and application of food sovereignty from an international framework to the UK context is a process which required translation work by the UK movement. Food sovereignty as a concept provides broad and guiding principles, which lend themselves to be adapted across diverse contexts (see Iles and de Wit, 2015).

However, food sovereignty is given meaning through processes of adaptation and translation to specific contexts, with actors applying the framework to suit contextual needs. In Chapter 2 I discussed how the LWA adheres to the six principles of the Nyeleni declaration but adapts them to suit the political and socio-economic context of the UK, placing particular emphasis on the 'value' of agroecological knowledge. The movement's 'logics of action' demonstrate that food sovereignty in the UK is opposed to the existing model of agriculture, evidenced in the programmatic statements of the movement. Similarly, the ideas discussed in Chapter 6, which include prefiguration, legitimation, emulation and diffusion, as well as unionisation further inform the approach to food sovereignty in the UK context. These logics are the product of activist agency and reflect the perceived political opportunities and constraints of the UK. To this end, the ways in which the movement theorises processes of social change for food sovereignty reflect this process of translation.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, the structure of the UKFSM has been influenced by the international movement in its emphasis on unionised representation, combined with the desire of the grassroots to be represented by a national body, the LWA. However, this research has also shown that the UKFSM is situated within a history of environmental activism and radicalism within this context. This is illustrated in the emergence of the LWA, which was born out of a convergence of previous waves of activism, with 'This Land Is Ours' preceding the LWA along with the legacies of the anti-gm movement of the 1990s. Moreover, the legacy of activist traditions is present in the UK expression of food sovereignty, as evidenced in the invoking of the Diggers movement as well as the commonality of the movement's approach with the 'back to the land movement' of the 1840s (Gould, 1988). The radical traditions and legacies of previous iterations of activism provided a framework for resistance that those working to achieve autonomy in the food system could identify with. These predated the language and frame of food sovereignty but shared common values and ideals with it. As such the similarity of historical activist struggles in the UK with the framework of food sovereignty influenced its adoption to this context (McAdam, 1995).

The process of diffusion and translation can be strategic in nature, but it is not purely instrumental, insofar as this process is one of cultural formation which is emergent and implicit as well as strategic. This reinforces the value of paying attention to processes of adaptation and diffusion when discussing the politics of social movements. Discussion of the UKFSM has exemplified the influence of historical legacies and traditions on activist practices, and the influence of these histories on contemporary logics of action in movements. The discussion of this thesis demonstrates the advantages of situating social movements within contextual

histories of activism. In doing so it enriches social movement literature in understanding movements like the UKFSM to be part of a tradition of activism that is continually adapted and reformulated.

## 9.3 Food Sovereignty in the UK, a social movement for change:

A central claim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the UKFSM can be usefully analysed as a social movement. This was measured in Chapter 2 using Diani and Della Porta's (2006) social movement framework. Consistent with this model, the UKFSM is linked through dense informal and formal networks, connecting local and national levels of the movement with groups connected through interpersonal relationships and shared membership of the LWA. The UKFSM also produces collective identity as exemplified by the public statements of the LWA and grassroots organisations. This collective identity extends beyond the explicit to include collective values, beliefs and culture which are part of a continually evolving process. As Melucci (1995) and Flesher-Fominaya (2014) argue, a movement's collective identity is emergent and in a process of becoming. Taking this processual view of collective identity accounts for expressions of identity or values which are not explicitly programmatic and does not limit this identity to a singular expression. Despite the lack of coherence around an explicit identity of food sovereignty, the movement does have a collective identity that individuals associate with differently.

Similarly, the politics of the movement is not expressed primarily through contentious action and forms of protest. In Chapter 2 I argued that it is more useful to understand the movement's politics through a lens of social transformation. Building on the position of Staggenborg and Taylor (2004), I demonstrate that a lack of expressly political or contentious action in the form of protest does not suggest that the movement is 'apolitical', nor does it limit its politics to the realm of lifestyle activism. Instead, the politics of the movement is expressed through a material practice of prefigurative politics which reflects the nature of food sovereignty: firmly rooted in place, connected to the land and its ecological systems. Despite the movement not engaging in protest as its primary form of politics, its efforts to realise social transformation through a collective prefigurative practice constitutes it as a social movement. The transformative practices of movements like the UKFSM offer a perspective on social movement categories that rests less rigidly on the need for active contention through protest. Instead, the movement engages in what Edwards (2014) terms 'collective, organised efforts at social change'.

Treating the UKFSM as a social movement creates opportunities for considering its politics and the possibilities of social transformation as more than individual expressions of alternative

practice. A social movement framework can situate both grassroots and national expressions of agroecological practice as part of collective movement action. Therefore, adding conceptual depth to existing discussions of the movement's practice that frame it as singular examples, rather than a collective endeavour for social transformation. As discussed in Chapter 6, the logics of legitimacy, emulation and diffusion further emphasise the relationship between the grassroots and national representation of the LWA. With the movement demonstrating best practice through local alternatives which then strengthen the legitimacy of the movement to campaign for its interests at a national level. Understanding the interconnections between the locally based grassroots of the movement and the national representation of the LWA accounts for the local expressions of food sovereignty, whilst situating this within a broader strategy for social transformation. Doing so creates space to ask questions about the nature of the movement's practice, how it mobilises and its approach to realising social change. Thus pointing to the themes discussed throughout this research concerning the nature of the movement's culture, and collective identity, as well as the relationship between practice and a socially transformative 'praxis'. The next section of this chapter reviews the possibilities for social transformation discussed in this project; however, I emphasise that treating food sovereignty in the UK as a social movement opens possibilities for further enquiry as to the nature of the movement's politics, organisation, and culture. Moreover, illustrating the nature of the UKFSM's politics demonstrates a need for social movement studies to take account of expression of the 'political' that extend beyond active demonstrations of contention. Doing so expands the parameters of the political and makes way for further analysis of 'quiet activisms' (Pottinger, 2017) and prefigurative practices that are ongoing, and hold promise for social transformation not exclusively in waves of collective protest, but in the enduring struggle to build everyday alternatives.

## 9.4 Social Transformation for Food Sovereignty in the UK:

In considering the opportunities for, and tensions around achieving social transformation for food sovereignty in the UK, this thesis has raised critical questions about the nature of the movement's politics, culture, and approach. It has emphasised that processes of social change are not prescriptive, nor can they be understood through rigid frameworks of either success or failure. Instead, it has shown that social transformation for food sovereignty is an ongoing and emergent process - one that is messy and reproduces injustices while resisting others. As such, it is necessary to pay closer attention to the possibilities that emerge in the 'cracks' (Holloway, 2010) produced by movements like the UKFSM. This leads to an exploration of the potentials and limitations for social transformation.

The potentials discussed for food sovereignty in the UK concern the material and practical building of alternatives, or the 'doing' of prefigurative politics, simultaneously concerning relational processes of social change that speak to the subjectivity and consciousness necessary for a transformed food system - the 'being' of prefiguration. These elements of social transformation are intimately connected, for the political consciousness and radical subjectivity of actors influences the nature of their actions, echoing Freire's (1970) discussion of praxis. In this sense, political consciousness can produce a collective identity of food sovereignty necessary for realising a social transformation praxis. However, both collective identities and political consciousness do not exist innately; they need to be actively constructed to exist and have value for members of the UKFSM. Chapter 7 explains that this construction emerges through active reflection and engagement with the 'limits' (Freire, 1970) of the existing system in a dialectic relationship, to reflect and reconstruct action based on this reflection. As such, this thesis has drawn attention to the nature of reflection in the UKFSM and how integral it is in shaping the nature of material practice and processes of political consciousness within the movement.

The movement's process of reflection has been shown to be primarily centred around practical and material questions of efficacy in relation to daily practice. To a certain extent this is a result of UK contextual constraints and the need for the movement to legitimate its practice by proving its value, both to supporters and wider publics. However, reflecting on the material nature of practice is also in keeping with the wider focus of the movement on the practice of agroecology. While this form of reflection does have value for the movement in terms of evaluating and restructuring the nature of its material practice, I argued that a transformative praxis requires more than material reflection. Moving from discussions of practice to praxis requires reflection on the meaning that influences and is produced through action, thereby drawing attention to identities held within the movement and the political consciousness shared. In other words, determining *who we are*, *what we stand for* and *how this influences our action* is integral to the process of social transformation. As Freire argued, this reflection must be shared to engender collective action and consciousness raising, with political consciousness fostered through processes of reflection. Thus, if reflection is left only to movement strategists, it raises questions about how a collective political consciousness and radical subjectivity for food sovereignty can emerge in the UK.

Instilling political consciousness and creating political identities around food sovereignty is made more complicated when taking into account the discussion of Section 9.1. Identification with the meaning of food sovereignty varies among the movement's membership, particularly

between the roles that members of the movement perform and whether they engage in its politics. As such, the debates this thesis has discussed surrounding political consciousness and collective identity within the UKFSM indicate that grassroots organisations and the LWA do not necessarily see their role to be in developing or fostering political consciousness among its membership. This has implications for the political possibilities of the movement if its membership does not understand themselves to be political agents of change. Those at the grassroots who did not engage in the explicit political work of the movement or understand themselves to be part of a movement for social change, were more likely to engage in individual capitalist ventures entrenched in embedded inequalities rather than challenge them. In this sense, if the movement does not see engendering political consciousness as an essential part of its transformative practice, is there a need to question how new subjects for a transformed food system will emerge in the UK?

This thesis has shown that critical pedagogy and shared learning play a critical role in creating the conditions for political consciousness, echoing the position of Anderson et al (2019). However, the nature of this critical pedagogy, following a Freirean position, cannot be prescribed; rather it is determined by individual's and collectives themselves, taking their lived experience as the point of critical reflection. As such, this research has pointed to the example of the MST illustrating that other movements within LVC embed a critical pedagogic approach to realising social transformation, generating critically political landworkers for a changed food system. There are challenges for the movement in creating a radical or political subjectivity in the UK of that kind, given that the UK does not have a common cultural memory of peasant life, nor is it defending an existing peasant culture. Instead, the UKFSM is faced with the challenge of creating a new subjectivity that could resonate in this context. Doing so involves an active process of construction and collective imagining within the movement, embedding a process of praxis and critical reflection. This does not necessarily rely on overt or explicit process of politicisation, as it would not necessarily garner broad appeal or suit this context. However, this research does emphasise that social transformation of food sovereignty requires the movement to understand critical pedagogy and raising political consciousness as integral to a project of transformation.

In arguing for a critical pedagogic approach to social transformation predicated on a transformative praxis, this thesis builds on the revolutionary sentiments of Holloway (2010) to argue that radical subjectivity is necessary for the movement to generate new ways of 'being'. Prefigurative logics developed by movements harmonise the embodiment of a transformative politics with the material practice for social transformation. However, it is also evident that the

UKFSM is influenced and constrained by the existing system and the dominance of the prevailing logics of capital. This is inescapable, for the dominant system will pervade and influence solutions that emerge to counter it; the opportunities discussed for social transformation are not absolute ruptures in the dominant system. Nevertheless, the practice of the UKFSM, however imperfect, sustains the challenge to the industrial food system and narratives that suggests 'there is no alternative'. Its daily agroecological practice and alternative relationships with food, the land, and local communities demonstrate that another food system is possible, keeping the cracks of possibility open. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to answer with certainty what the future possibilities for food sovereignty are in the UK. Yet, pointing to the areas of tension and highlighting the nature of the movement's practice, contributes to debates about social transformation in prefigurative literature and social movement studies. It raises critical questions surrounding the role of collective identity and political consciousness in meaning-making, and similarly points to the role of praxis and critical education in creating subjects for a changed food system. These questions, though they remain open to further investigation, have been shown to be significant for considering how social transformation may play out and similarly the potentials for realising food sovereignty in the UK.

## 9.5 Contribution of this research and future research:

As the first research on the subject this thesis has contributed to an understanding of food sovereignty as a concept and social movement in the UK. Prior to this, very little investigation has been carried out into the expression and practice of food sovereignty in the UK. With this thesis I offer an understanding of the structure and form of the UKFSM, while illustrating that it is most useful to conceptualise it as a social movement. In doing so, I challenge more rigid conceptions of social movements predicated on an explicit politics and singular collective identity. In treating the UKFSM as a social movement, this research has demonstrated that the movement has a culture, expressed through values, beliefs, identities and ideas. Through discussing these elements of movement culture, conceptions of collective identity which treat these identities as absolute have been complicated, demonstrating that they are part of a fluid process of meaning-making. The collective identities of the movement have been brought into discussion with processes of political consciousness to show these processes as critical in movement mobilisation and need to be actively constructed. The Freirean framework of praxis has been drawn on to show there is a role for political consciousness in social transformation, which this thesis has argued can be fostered through critical education and an embedded radical pedagogy.

This thesis has demonstrated that it is necessary and appropriate to treat the UKFSM as a social movement, consequently leaving scope for further empirical investigation into the nature of the movement's practice, structure, and approach to social change beyond the cases selected for this study. Given that this research was primarily concentrated in the English context, drawing on grassroots examples and the representation of the LWA in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland could provide fertile ground to broaden the empirical dimension of this thesis, particularly regarding the movement's cultural processes and the relationships between grassroots organisations and the LWA. Furthermore, in pointing to the complexity and significance of collective identity and meaning making, this thesis has demonstrated that there is a need to draw greater attention to the nature of cultural formation and movement practice in understanding the nature of social movements like the UKFSM.

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# **A**ppendix 1. List of Interviews

| Name/ pseudonym * | Organisation /Location | Role | Description of interviewee's role in organisation | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chris | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Co-founder and Director | Chris works closely with Helen to co-ordinate Kindling's many projects, including securing the Kindling Farm. He puts his practical skills to use at the ever-evolving Woodbank Community Food Hub. He was instrumental in its establishment of Kindling's enterprises. Chris is also an active worker-member of Veg Box People. | 26/07/2019<br>23/11/2019 |
| Helen W | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Co-founder and Director | Helen's role at Kindling is multifaceted. From helping organise Land Army trips, advising other organisations how to replicate Kindling's projects; and overseeing Kindling's finances, planning events and working to secure the Kindling farm. Helen is also a co-op member of Veg Box People. | 31/07/2019<br>29/01/2020<br>(Additionally drew on interview data with Helen W from de Moor et al (2019) project. Interview dated 05/05/2017) |
| Helen D | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Lead Grower at Woodbank Nursery and co-ordinator of Kindling Farmstart | Helen is responsible for training Farmstart trainees, crop planning and managing the growing at Woodbank Park Nursery, a 2-acre growing site attached to Kindling's projects and work. | 03/12/2019 |
| Abi | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Director of Kindling Farm and Kindling volunteer | Abi's involvement with Kindling began as a volunteer at Woodbank. She then went on to propose a secondment from her regular work at John Lewis to work at Kindling for 6 months to help them launch a community share campaign in early 2020 for | 01/08/2019 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Kindling Farm. Abi has since become one of the directors of Kindling Farm. | |
| Corrina | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | More than Medicine co-ordinator, former Farmstart trainee | At the time of interview Corrina was the lead on Kindling's social prescribing project *More than Medicine* which aimed to engage members of the community who were struggling with mental health issues or diet related issues in community food growing and cooking classes. Corrina also completed Kindling's Farmstart programme as part of one of the first cohorts. | 04/03/2020 |
| Chess | The Kindling Trust/ Veg Box People, Manchester | Co-op member of Veg Box People (VBP) and employee of Kindling | Chess began as an employee of Kindling working on communications and social media. They also worked for Manchester Veg People, before it merged into Veg Box People, fulfilling the veg order and liaising with restaurant and university clients who bought for their commercial kitchens. Chess then went on to become a fulltime co-op member with Veg Box People. | 26/09/2019 |
| Luke | Veg Box People, Manchester | Co-op member of Veg Box People (VBP) | Luke started working for Veg Box People the same week in September 2016 that I began working with Kindling. In that time Luke oversaw the growth of the Veg Box scheme from a few hundred customers in 2016 to over 900 at the height of Covid Lockdown in 2020. Luke played a crucial role in the expanse of the Veg Box Scheme and its general day to day operations. | 11/09/2020 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alexx | Veg Box People, Manchester | Co-op member of Veg Box People (VBP) | Alexx began working for Veg Box People while I still worked for Kindling. His role involves mostly practical tasks of the veg box scheme such as the veg pack and deliveries. Alexx and I spent a lot of time together as colleagues while I worked at Kindling and as a casual worker for Veg Box People intermittently throughout this research. | 29/09/2020 |
| Belinda | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2017) | I met Belinda when she was a Farmstart trainee at Woodbank Park while I was an employee at Kindling. I ran into Belinda frequently in the wider sustainable food scene in Manchester, where she was a regular volunteer at Woodbank on Kindling's volunteer days. | 06/11/2019 |
| Lindsay | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2015) | Lindsay was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's first growing site in Abbey Leys in Cheshire. She also ran and set up Reddy Lane Market Garden that supplied its own veg box scheme of around 30 customers. | 10/12/2019 |
| Nic | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2020) | Nic was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's Woodbank growing site through 2019-2020. | 20/04/2020<br>28/10/2020 |
| Nick | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2019) | Nick was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's Woodbank growing site 2018-2019. Since then, he went on to work on an acre growing site at Red House Farm in Cheshire. | 10/12/2020 |
| Michelle | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2020) | Michelle was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's Woodbank growing site through 2019-2020. | 20/04/2020<br>28/10/2020 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgie | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2020) | Georgie was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's Woodbank growing site through 2019-2020. | 20/04/2020<br>28/10/2020 |
| Helen | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2020) | Helen was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's Woodbank growing site through 2019-2020. | 20/04/2020<br>28/10/2020 |
| Dan | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2017) | Dan was a was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's Woodbank growing site in 2017. He was a regular volunteer at Woodbank park and took over the running of Glebelands Organics a small market garden in Sale on the edge of Manchester at the start of 2021. | 01/11/2019 |
| Jo | The Kindling Trust, Manchester | Kindling Trust Farmstart trainee (2015) and co-founder or Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD) | Jo was a Farmstart trainee at Kindling's first growing site in Abbey Leys in Cheshire. Jo is also a co-founder of Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD), a market garden in central Manchester. | 28/02/2020 |
| Brain | OrganicLea, London | Organic Lea co-op member and Farmstart facilitator | At the time of interview Brian was an OrganicLea co-op member and co-facilitator of the Farmstart programme. | 23/11/2019 |
| Roo | OrganicLea, London | Organic Lea co-op member and Farmstart facilitator | At the time of interview Roo was an OrganicLea co-op member and co-facilitator of the Farmstart programme. | 13/11/2019 |
| Tsouni | OrganicLea, London | OrganicLea co-op member | At the time of interview Tsouni was the co-ordinator of OrganicLea's Veg Box Scheme. | 24/11/2019 |
| Sara | OrganicLea, London | OrganicLea co-op member | At the time of interview Sara was a graduate of OrganicLea's Farmstart programme and employed by OrganicLea to deliver horticultural training. Sara also runs a growing site at Wolves Lane in Haringey in partnership with OrganicLea that supplies | 25/02/2020 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | produce for the ROVI restaurant in Fitzrovia London, run by Yotam Ottolenghi. | |
| Steph | Landworkers' Alliance, UK Wide | Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) co-ordinator | At the time of interview Steph co-ordinated the Farmstart Incubator Network. In this position Steph connected members of the FSIN with the LWA, authored and produced reports such as the 'How to start a Farmstart guide' (2019) | 23/10/2019<br>25/06/2020 |
| Adam | Landworkers' Alliance, UK Wide | LWA organising committee member and Farmstart Incubator Network (FSIN) co-ordinator. | At the time of interview Adam co-ordinated the Farmstart Incubator Network and was a member of the LWA's organising committee. Adam is also a small-scale grower. | 30/07/2020 |
| Simon | Tamar Grow Local, Cornwall | Tamar Grow Local, Director | At the time of interview Simon was a director of Tamar Grow Local and involved in running its Farmstart programme. | 24/02/2020 |
| Gerald | Landworkers' Alliance, UK Wide | LWA Member | Gerald is a Welsh farmer and long-standing member of the LWA. He was involved in the formation of the LWA and previous iterations of food and land activism in England and Wales. | 22/01/2020 |

# Appendix 2: Ethics Approval

Keele University HumSS Faculty Research Ethics Committee
humss.ethics@keele.ac.uk

11 July 2019

Dear Emily Westwell,

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Title:** | Exploring the roots of resistance: A study of food activism in the UK |
| **REC Project Reference:** | HU-190031 |
| **Type of Application** | Full application |

Keele University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee reviewed the above application.

**Favourable Ethical opinion**
The members of the Committee gave a favourable ethical opinion of the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation.

The research can proceed however:

a. On the application form, in 7.3 and 7.6 please clarify: presumably as this is a PhD project it is the intention to produce publications after the end of the PhD. Might it be necessary therefore to keep the recordings for a slightly longer period? Also, please indicate on the form that it is possible that the data will be used in publications.
b. On the information sheet, please check for grammar (use of apostrophes). Please either amend the information sheet to include participants who will be taking part in the focus groups (group interviews); or please create a separate information sheet for those participants. Please add to the information sheet that the data might be used in publications in the future.

Please consider: on the consent form, might it be a good idea to add an option as to whether or not the participant consents to the use of quotes?

Also, on the information sheet and consent form (and application form); do you want to specify a time limit on the time that a participant can withdraw (i.e. up to two months after the end of the research collection period - or similar? This is to mitigate against the possibility of withdrawal at a point when it would no longer be possible for you to collect new data. Please discuss with your supervisor and amend the forms as you see fit.

Please make the amendments as above, in consultation with your supervisor.

**Reporting requirements**
The University's standard operating procedures give detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Notifying issues which may have an impact upon ethical opinion of the study
- Progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

**Approved documents**
The documents reviewed and approved are:

| Document | Version | Date |
|---|---|---|
| E Westwell Ethics form - Draft 2 - Emily Westwell | 1 | 11/07/2019 |
| Info sheet and consent Emily Westwell Final - Emily Westwell | 1 | 11/07/2019 |
| Research Protocol Westwell - Draft 2 - Emily Westwell | 1 | 11/07/2019 |

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Helen Parr**
**Committee Chair**

# Appendix 3: Consent Form

## CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** *Exploring the roots of resistance: A study of food activism in the UK*

**Name and contact details of Principal Investigator:** *Emily Westwell, School of Politics, Philosophy,*

*International Relations and Environment (SPIRE), Keele University, UK, e.westwell@keele.ac.uk*

Please initial box if you agree with the statement:

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated …… (version no …….) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time ☐

I agree to take part in this study. ☐

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Name of participant | Date | Signature |
| _Emily Westwell_____ | _____23.10.19_____ | _____E.Westwell_____ |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |

***please delete as appropriate**

# CONSENT FORM

# (for use of quotes)

**Title of Project:** *Exploring the roots of resistance: A study of food activism in the UK*

**Name and contact details of Principal Investigator:** *Emily Westwell, School of Politics, Philosophy,*

*International Relations and Environment (SPIRE), Keele University, UK, e.westwell@keele.ac.uk*

Please initial box if you agree with the statement:

1. I agree for my quotes to be used ☐
2. I do not agree for my quotes to be used ☐
3. I agree that my name can be used in transcripts, fieldnotes and the write-up of this research project. ☐
4. I do not want my name to be used in any way for this research, I request to remain anonymous. ☐

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Name of participant | Date | Signature |
| _Emily Westwell_____ | _____23.10.19_____ | _____E.Westwell_____ |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |

## Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

# INFORMATION SHEET

**Study Title**: *Exploring the roots of resistance: A Study of food activism in the UK*

**Invitation**

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study *Exploring the roots of resistance: A study of food activism in the UK.* This project is being undertaken by *Emily Westwell, PhD candidate at Keele University.*

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Feel free to ask me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

**Aims of the Research**

This project aims to understand the nature of local radical food activism in the UK and how this affects activists approaches to achieve social change. It will explore how food activists mobilise support and resources to advance their aims and how they navigate potential opportunities and constraints. Ultimately, this research is looking to understand how activists translate theory of social change into action and what can be learned from this.

**Why have I been invited?**

You have been approached because of your involvement in a local food initiative that aims to create social change through its practices. This group will be a case study of local food activity, and individuals within the group can choose to take part in interviews and/or focus groups with the researcher.

**Do I have to take part?**

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to *complete a consent form*. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons (up to two months after the research collection period). *If you choose to withdraw, the data from any interviews you have taken part in will not be included in the study and will be destroyed by the researcher.* If you wish to withdraw at any point during the study, you should contact *Emily Westwell* at *e.westwell@keele.ac.uk.* Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact *Prof. Brian Doherty at b.j.a.doherty@keele.ac.uk*

**What will happen if I take part?**

*The researcher aims to conduct the case study of your group over a period of six months from a start date to be agreed with you (no later than September 2019). During this time, you will be asked to participate in at least one interview with the researcher. This will last approximately one hour and will take place at a venue of your choice- ideally this would be at the local food*

*initiative itself or at staff offices. You may be asked to take part in a follow-up interview at a later date.*

*The researcher will also attend volunteer days, workshops and outreach events as well as other activities undertaken by the group such as organisational meetings where it is appropriate, at which you may be present. The researcher will make notes during these visits, and you may wish to offer clarifications/ explanations for these notes, though this is not expected or compulsory.*

*You may also be asked if you can provide any documents about the project (for example, photographs, blog posts, printed leaflets, newsletters) which you think would be useful for explaining the work that the group does, and what it means to you to be a part of it.*

**What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?**

*This project will contribute to understandings of local food activism that aim to affect systemic social change through the production of local food. In participating you will help inform research into the link between food activism and social change and help in understanding how food activists frame and strategies to achieve social change.*

**What are the risks (if any) of taking part?**

*There are no anticipated risks involved in taking part in this project. In the collection and recording of data you will be asked at the start of the research process if you would prefer to be anonymised rather than named in this study. You can change this position at any point of the research project, i.e. if you originally agreed to be named and later feel that you would like to be anonymous, doing so would make all data collected before this point that is attributed to you anonymous. You can also ask for specific interviews, conversations or discussion of particular subjects with the researcher to be anonymised at any point of the research process. All data will be treated as confidential.*

**How will information about me be used?**

*Interviews will be recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Interview transcripts, notes from the observations/ visits, and documents you provide will be used primarily for this study. This information will be stored for 6 months after the completion (submission) of the project and may be used by the lead researcher in future research publications.*

**Who will have access to information about me?**

*The researcher (Emily Westwell) will have sole access to the data collected in this study. The researcher's supervisor (Professor Brian Doherty) will see the transcripts and notes as appropriate. All data stored will be encrypted on an external hard-drive and securely on the University of Keele's server and will be permanently deleted at the end of this study (by May 2022 at the latest).*

**Who is funding and organising the research?**

*This research is funded by Keele University*

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact *Emily Westwell at*

*e.westwell@keele.ac.uk.* Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact *Prof. Brian Doherty at b.j.a.doherty@keele.ac.uk*

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please first contact the Research Governance Department at Keele which can be reached at research.governance@keele.ac.uk. You can also find guidance on the research governance procedures here: https://www.keele.ac.uk/research/raise/governanceintegrityandethics/.