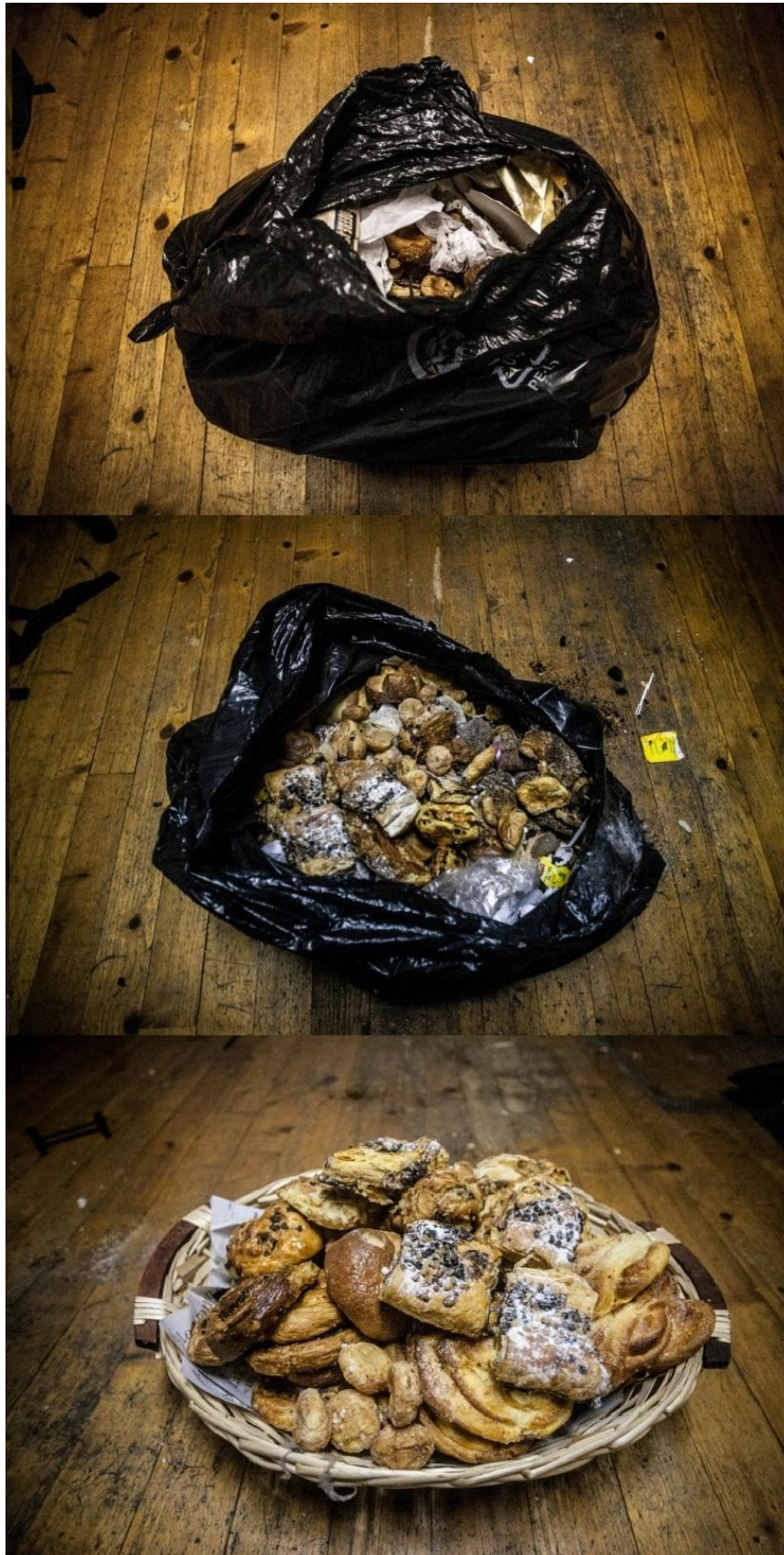

SUBSISTENCE OR SUBVERSION?
FOOD SCAVENGING IN A SQUATTING
COMMUNITY IN LYON, FRANCE



**MSc in
Anthropology, Environment and Development
Dissertation**

**Subsistence or Subversion?
Food Scavenging in a Squatting Community
in Lyon, France**

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(UCL).

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of urban practices related to the salvaging of discarded food from supermarkets and markets as undertaken by members of a squatting community in Lyon, France. In the context of 2014 designated as 'European Year Against Food Waste', my dissertation seeks to account for the different ways in which food discarded by supermarkets and markets is collected, consumed, and occasionally redistributed by the scavengers. In doing so, I analyse whether these actions are undertaken as means of subsistence for the food insecure, and/or subversion against a wasteful system.

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Photo Credit Abbreviations:

RC: Romain Costaseca

LGP: Les Gars'Pilleurs

CM: Claire Mohamed

1 - INTRODUCTION

As the old dark blue van comes to a halt in a dark and desolate parking lot, we prepare ourselves: headlamps are strapped to foreheads, scarves are wrapped around mouths and noses, phones are switched off. Sat in silence, Claude looks at us through the rear-view mirror and reminds us: “we have to be as quiet and as quick as possible”. We step out of the van and head towards a large white electric gate. Claude examines it, then nods: Camille climbs up and gracefully lands on the other side of it; I clumsily follow flanked by Ashley and Maud, two junior journalists who have accompanied us for the night. We wander into the loading bay; bright neon lights reveal cameras hanging from the outside of the warehouse, and seven grey industrial bins huddled together beneath them. I can sense the girls’ expectation, and despite Claude and Camille’s experience their excitement is clear as we walk together towards the containers. Camille slowly pulls open one of the lids, as we all simultaneously lean forwards to peer in. Piled in the shadows of the bin’s bowels, gleaming through a confusion of black bin bags, is the treasure we’ve come to collect. Claude and I dive our arms in and retrieve the first fruit our fingers find: mangoes, avocados, tomatoes... Heaps of fresh produce tumble down into the crates at our feet.

The more we take, the more appears. Aubergines hidden under uncountable lettuces, carrots crammed under cauliflowers, the list goes on as countless more plunges reveal countless more findings. As our crates fill up, we have to dig deeper, and reaching into the darkness, our eyes now useless, our sense of touch takes over. Claude expertly palpates the remaining bin bags, and exclaims: “The sweet stuff!” Untying the bag, he shows off its contents: “They always put the pastries at the bottom...they’re often

crushed by the weight of the vegetables, but these are looking good!” Remembering the article she has been commissioned to write about tonight, Maud takes this opportunity that Claude is not head-first in the bin to ask why it is that all this food has been thrown out, “It’s clearly still good to eat, right?” Eager, Claude launches into what I know to be a well-rehearsed and researched speech often performed to passers-by in the streets of Lyon on Les Gars’Pilleurs’ food distribution days, and explains: “If an apple is bruised it’s thrown out. If there is one single rotten orange in a sack of perfectly good oranges, the sack gets thrown out. Shelf life and expiration dates are dictatorial; supermarkets throw most of these items away because they’re marked with a date after which they can’t be sold. These shops are also stocking too much...they have too much on offer, and they don’t sell it all in time. Hence, all this waste... All this food is good to eat. I eat it, we eat it. And tomorrow we’ll be giving it out to people on the street so that they can eat it too.”

We take a break to contemplate the contents of our crates, and suddenly a faint bark echoes through the loading bay.

“I think it’s a guard,” says Camille.

“That’s not good, if the guards have dogs with them...” murmurs Claude, walking towards the noise to investigate.

“What do we do if there are guards? Will the police come?” Ashley asks, shooting worried looks at Maud.

“The guards will ask us to leave, the police may ask questions. We tell them that we’re starving students, that we can’t afford to buy food, and that we’re collecting all of this to give to friends who can’t either,” Camille replies.

Maud seems surprised, “But, that’s not completely false is it?”

Claude returns with an all-clear, and playfully adds, “We’re not all students, but we don’t have much money, and we are *very* hungry!”

Camille smiles, “You know, I think that even the police would realise that it’s scandalous that all of this was in the bins, all this food wasted...”

Turning our attention back to the remaining grey chests, we salvage stacks of yoghurts, bundles of bread, and packaged after packaged product...We have about fifteen crates strewn around us, overflowing with goods - later Les Gars’Pilleurs will reveal that we have just scavenged 100kg of food. It’s time to leave. I look around one last time with Camille, checking for any proof that may betray our trespass. Balancing the heavy crates in our arms we proceed to loading the van, and get ready to depart: headlamps are switched off, scarves are undone, a team of perfectly satisfied scavengers heads home.

INTRODUCTION

« Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai qui tu es. »²

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1825)

The food scavenging experience described in the introduction sheds light on unconventional and still relatively unknown methods of acquiring food, or more precisely, of feeding oneself on food waste. This experience stands as a challenge to what is considered the most basic of human rights, and to the idea that the 'right to food' is a given in developed European society today. Established during the 1996 World Food Summit, the 'right to food' is "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" (FAO 2005). In many ways, the very act of food scavenging denotes problems with regards to access to food, its quantity and quality, and the "fear" linked to the risks that go with it (Ziegler 2009). Yet, in France, not all those who scavenge do so out of necessity, and hence food scavenging carries other dimensions that may be economic, political, or moral, or a combination of these.

Indeed, beyond its status as a universal right, food is seen as a "highly condensed social fact", "a marvellously plastic kind of representation"(Appadurai 1981) that "identifies who we are [...] and what we want to be"(Belasco 2008). It is precisely in the continuation of these assertions and as an echo to Brillat-Savarin's famous aphorism that this dissertation seeks to analyse the alternative method of subsistence and consumption that

¹ All English translations of direct quotations from articles written in French are my own.

² « Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you who you are »

is food scavenging, why and how it is undertaken, and what it reveals about those who resort to it. This chapter aims to provide a review of the literature and contextual grounding for the scope of this dissertation and its case study of food scavenging within a squatting community in Lyon, France.

DEFINITION OF FOOD WASTE

Defining food waste is a contentious issue. The European Union previously defined food waste as “any food substance, raw or cooked, which is discarded, or intended or required to be discarded” (DEFRA 2009; FNE 2013). Recently, it has replaced this definition by the more general “‘waste’ means any substance or object which the holder disposes of or is required to dispose of pursuant to the provisions of national law in force” (DEFRA 2009). Consequently, there is currently no official EU definition of what constitutes “food waste” (FNE 2013). In the context of this dissertation, I will refer to “food waste” according to the French government’s definition³; although it should be noted that the latter, used by the following statistics, accounts for all discarded elements⁴.

The FAO estimates that one third (1.3 billion tons) of all food produced in the world each year is wasted (FAO 2011). In 2010 approximately 89 million tons of food was wasted in the European Union, and 7.12 million tons in France (FNE 2013; BIO Intelligence Service 2010). Food waste occurs at different life stages of the food chain as is illustrated by the two charts below.

³ “[Food waste can be defined as] any food destined for human consumption that has undergone spoilage or damage that could have been avoided” (FNE 2013).

⁴ Such as egg shells, bones, and fruit and vegetable peelings, among others.

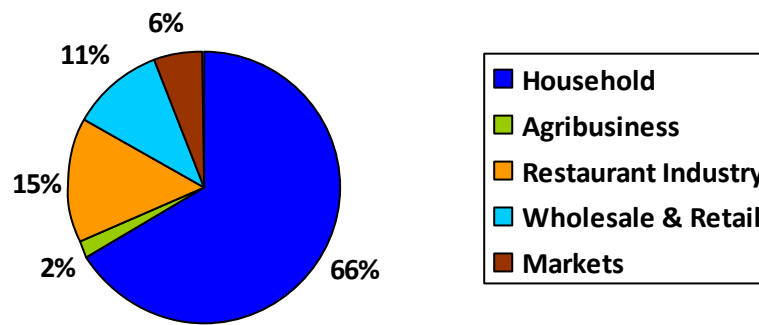


FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD WASTE BY SECTOR IN FRANCE (2010)

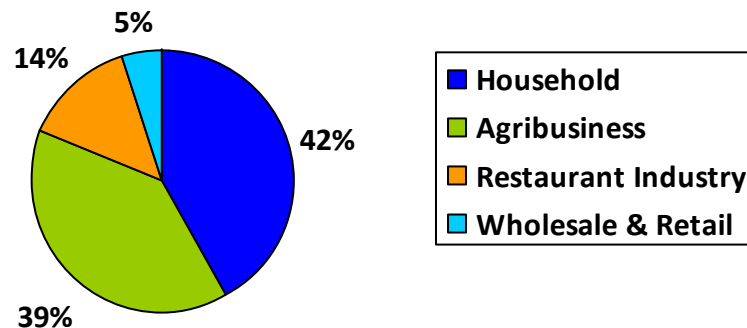


FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGES OF FOOD WASTE DISTRIBUTION BY SECTOR IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (2010)

As reflected in the charts, household are a main source of food waste, which explains campaigning efforts aimed at domestic waste. Nevertheless, due to the definition of food waste utilised in the collection of data, it is important to highlight that in fact, out of 79kg of food waste in France, 59kg represents non-consumables⁵, and 20kg of actual waste, including 7kg of still packaged goods. The lack of transformation of food in the wholesale and retail sector for instance, suggests an inferior production of non-consumable waste, and possibly a proportionally higher amount of actual food waste (Stuart 2009). Despite an early lack of interest in this sector, campaigning efforts, notably in the UK, have

⁵ Such as those elements mentioned above: egg shells, bones etc.

pushed for transparency and requested the publication of food waste figures by big supermarket chains (Parfitt et al. 2010).

2014: EUROPEAN YEAR AGAINST FOOD WASTE

The growing priority given to the issue of food waste both in research, government policies and campaigns, is tied to predictions on demographic growth and the expected pressure on food production in decades to come (Stuart 2009; Laisney et al. 2013). Consumer habits aside, food waste is the consequence of surpluses in production, and in stock, intended to minimize risks of shortages, as well as legislation on product standards, shelf life and expiration dates (FNE 2013; Bourzai 2013). In his seminal work Stuart (2009) states: “a population would be well-advised to grow even more food than its basic nutritional needs in case of extraordinary times of scarcity.” However, he underlines that due to the fact that current food production exceeds Western populations’ nutritional needs by a large amount, this surplus is no longer adaptive but gratuitous, and consequently highly wasteful (Stuart 2009). In addition to the issues linked to surpluses and pressures on food production, the environmental consequences of food waste also explain why the issue is being fervently addressed globally⁶.

Although the problem posed by food losses and food waste is not a recent one⁷, it has been largely mediatised following the publication of the FAO and Foresight’s reports⁸ in 2011 (Laisney et al. 2013). Shortly after the publication of these reports the European Parliament declared 2014 as “the European year against food waste”, with the EU’s goal

⁶ A lot of information is available on the environmental consequences of food waste in the literature; due to a lack of space and relevance I have chosen not to develop this particular aspect of food waste. For further information, c.f. Stuart (2009); FNE (2013); Laisney et al. (2013); FAO (2011).

⁷ In 1974 the FAO launched the *Prevention of food losses* programme, which it implemented for countries of the global South (Laisney et al. 2013).

⁸ *Global Food Losses and Food Waste* (FAO 2011); *The Future of Food and Farming: challenges and choices for global sustainability* (Foresight 2011).

set to reducing food waste by half by 2025 (Laisney et al. 2013; Bourzai 2013). This prompted the launch of France's development of the *Pacte national de lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire*⁹, outlining eleven key measures¹⁰ intended to help raise awareness and encourage direct action to be taken by consumers and businesses to help minimise food waste.

FOOD WASTE, FOOD SECURITY AND THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

A recurring motif in the literature and anti-food waste campaign discourses is the connection that is made between food waste and food security¹¹; as Mourad writes in her key study on food waste activism: “the problem nowadays is that waste is excessive to the point that surpluses no longer guarantee security, rather they are that from which food insecurity originates” (Mourad 2012). Similarly, Stuart (2009) argues that there is a “social imperative” for finding a solution to food waste. One of their main points is that food insecurity issues are not limited to the developing world but also concern developed countries (Stuart 2009; Mourad 2012). 2008¹² data show that in France, 2.5% of citizens aged 25-75 years old declared not having enough to eat “sometimes” or “often”, and 39.7% declared that they had enough to eat, but not always the food they would prefer (Laisney 2010). 2007 statistics reveal that 12.2% of French adults (over 6 million people) live in households that are food insecure for financial reasons, but only 3.5 million of them benefit from food aid (Darmon et al. 2007; Rollet 2013). Furthermore, drawing the

⁹ Translates as ‘national pact against food waste’, hereafter referred to as the ‘*Pacte*’.

¹⁰ C.f. Appendix 4.

¹¹ “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (World Food Summit, 1996) (FAO 2006).

¹² Laisney highlights that data collected on the subject of poverty in France previously only included 3 out of 28 indicators referring to food situations in the surveyed households. The first studies to use the USDA food sufficiency indicator (FSI) as a data collection tool for research on food insecurity in France were published in 2006, 2007 and 2008 (Laisney 2010; Darmon et al. 2007).

connection between food insecurity and poverty, research has shown that poorer households spend proportionally more of their budget on food, than richer households (CNA 2012). This is relevant due to the impact of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis on vulnerable households in France¹³ and the EU, and the increase in the number of food aid beneficiaries, as well as in the number of people resorting to scavenging for food (CNA 2012; Mandard & Rivaïs 2009; Grzybowski 2010; Stuart 2009).

The aforementioned discrepancy between the number of food insecure individuals and the number of food aid beneficiaries in France, is explained by social isolation, issues of dignity and a lack of information (Rollet 2013). Moreover, Olivier et al. (2010) argues that scavenging constitutes an act of empowerment and autonomy for individuals as it asserts their ability to cope independently in the face of precarity. This argument reflects Eighner's (1991) personal experience of homelessness and food scavenging to survive as he states: "I think of scavenging as a modern form of self-reliance". The phenomenon of people scavenging for food as a result of their food insecurity has received a lot of media attention since the crisis (Rollet 2013; Mandard & Rivaïs 2009; Grzybowski 2010). This has led to the revelation of the quantities of food being wasted, and has raised public awareness on the paradoxical juxtaposition of food insecurity and food waste.

ETHICAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SCAVENGING

The crisis context has arguably enhanced the moral dimension of the anti-food waste sentiment. Poppendieck's (2013) critical article on the commodification of hunger in American campaigns notably stresses that food waste reveals fundamental social inequalities by highlighting the tension between a society of abundance and individuals in

¹³ In France poverty increased by 0.5 points between 2008 and 2009, which is explained by the rise in unemployment caused by the crisis; in addition to this, the latter caused a 12.5% increase in food aid beneficiaries (CNA 2012).

that society who find themselves in need. Moreover, the ethical significance of food waste prevention is highlighted by the French *Pacte*:

“there is something scandalous and profoundly unjust in the fact that food is being wasted whilst so many French citizens depend on food aid to survive, or whilst millions of men, women and children do not have enough to eat.”(Ministère de l’AAF 2013)

This moral appeal is echoed in the discourse of social movements and citizen-led anti-food waste campaign groups that have emerged following the EU’s focus on the issue of food waste. Notable groups include Feeding the 5000¹⁴, Disco Soupe¹⁵, and Les Gars’Pilleurs¹⁶, who share common campaigning strategies such as scavenging for food that is then distributed for free. Feeding the 5000 and Disco Soupe, in particular, engage in gleaning: this practice has been in existence in France, and across Europe since the Middle Ages, where it constituted a right of use over farmers’ leftover crops for individuals deemed ‘in need’ (Barnard 2011; Breault 2011). Gleaning in fields still takes place, as illustrated by Varda (2000), and also occurs at markets¹⁷; nowadays the practise remains associated with poverty, and is stigmatised to an extent (Tyrer 2014). The groups’ use of scavenging as a campaigning strategy enables them to raise awareness about food

¹⁴ Feeding the 5000 was launched in England by Tristram Stuart in 2009. After organizing ‘banquets to feed 5000’ with scavenged food, and donated food waste, in different cities across Europe (including London, Edinburgh, Bristol, Manchester, Dublin, Amsterdam, Paris, Marseille, and Nantes), the campaign has now expanded and organizes events worldwide (past events have taken place in Sydney, Nairobi and New York) - <http://www.feeding5k.org/>.

¹⁵ Disco Soupe was inspired by ‘Schnippel Disko’ events organized in Germany by the Slow Food Movement, which are open collective fruit and vegetable peeling and cooking sessions undertaken in a festive and musical atmosphere. The fruit and vegetables are collected as donations from supermarket food waste, or from market gleaning undertaken by participants prior to the events, and are then transformed into smoothies, soups and fruit salads that are distributed for free to passer-bys. Disco Soupe was established in Paris in 2012, and local groups in cities around France, including Lyon, have been set up since 2013 - <http://discosoupe.org/>.

¹⁶ Formerly « Les Gars’Pilleurs Lyon », Les Gars’Pilleurs was initiated by two young men from Lyon in February 2013. They describe themselves as a “citizen movement” whose purpose is to denounce food waste by distributing scavenged food (found in supermarket and bakery bins) for free in the street. Initially limited to Lyon, the duo’s food distributions currently also take place in Paris - <http://lesgarspilleurs.blogspot.fr/>.

¹⁷ Due to the urban focus of this dissertation, the gleaning discussed hereafter refers to market gleaning.

waste, and contribute to the spread of food scavenging as an alternative method of subsistence and consumption by divesting it of some of its pejorative connotations (Barnard & Mourad 2010). Groups such as these highlight another dimension of the practice that moves away from subsistence, and instead focuses on its political implications and its subversive quality.

Acting as a bridge between discussions on food scavenging as a mode of subsistence and or subversion, Guillard & Roux (2013) highlight the difficulties in distinguishing between people who are scavenging out of necessity or by choice. Breault (2011) develops this dichotomy by focusing on the two categories, and concludes that regardless of this distinction, food scavenging operates as a refusal of the established social order by drawing a line between the masses and people at the margins. Guillard & Roux (2013) argue that the food scavenger enacts a movement away from the mainstream “market system”, and that their consequent “eccentricity” reveals a critical perspective on conventional consumption and consumerist society. Aligning with this position, Silvestro (2007) reaches the conclusion that food scavenging and free food distribution¹⁸ is a political act performed in the public sphere with the aim to provoke “a radical transformation of food consumption and production habits”.

However, in his seminal study Barnard (2011) argues that food scavenging and the serving of free food performed by activist groups are not in themselves “particularly ‘political’” acts, but rather form part of the “prefigurative model for society”¹⁹ that the groups claim to be. Furthermore, Edwards & Mercer's (2012) argue that these groups provide a “counter-institutional response” to the issue of food waste, but that their anti-

¹⁸ As performed by Feeding the 5000, Disco Soupe and Les Gars’Pilleurs, amongst others.

¹⁹ “Prefigurative politics”, coined by Carl Boggs, constitutes the desire to embody “within the ongoing political practice of a movement [...] those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal” (Boggs 1977). Pickerill & Chatterton (2006) clarify this term by replacing it with the maxim “be the change you want to see” and highlighting that “part of this is the belief in ‘doing it yourself’”.

consumerist beliefs go beyond the scavenging and redistribution of food waste. Effectively the subversive nature of food scavenging as shown by these examples lies in the “legally marginal” nature of this activity, and the accessing of a “controversial food source”, as well as in the wider political ideology and ethical stance adopted by these groups and individuals who identify with them (Edwards & Mercer 2012; Barnard & Mourad 2010; Gross 2009). Finally, these studies present limits in their focus on the street-level act of food scavenging, and its public dimensions, and do not venture into analysing the everyday presence of food scavenging in individuals’ and community lives. Indeed, Barnard (2011) touches upon this by referring to squatting as a freegan ideal, difficult to fulfil due to New York’s legal restrictions, and hence a dimension of food scavenging – as an inherent part of a community’s everyday life – that could not be thoroughly explored.

SQUATTING AND FOOD SCAVENGING

Like food scavenging, squatting also presents a dichotomy between need and choice, subsistence and subversion. Squatting is the reclaiming of wasted space; as Bouillon (2011) notes: squats (in rich Western countries) have in common the fact that they are originally vacant spaces – ranging from sheds or warehouses to offices or housing buildings. Furthermore, “squat situations are very heterogeneous”:

“seen as a permanent residence for some, a temporary place of settlement for migrants, a location for political and artistic activities [...] squats can be collective, familial, individual, open to the outside, or not, seeking visibility, or on the other hand striving for discretion, insalubrious or comfortable, in the city centre or in the suburbs”(Bouillon 2002)

As Coutant (2001) explains, from the perspective of French law²⁰, a squatter is the occupant, “without rights, nor titles”, of a public or private property²¹; if the squatter can prove that he/she has been living in the property for more than 48 hours, then the squat is officially recognised as his/her home. Squatting is inherently a form of subversion as it transgresses legally defined boundaries, such as that of private property, and embodies the solution to the precarity of living and housing conditions that it denounces (Péchu 2010; Bouillon 2003). Although literature on the topic tends to offer a categorisation of squats according to their degree of activism and/or their occupants, the squat invariably represents a form of ‘direct action’²² in the sense that it bypasses the legal pathways in order to achieve the social change and solution it seeks²³ (Péchu 2010; Dällenbach 2012; Pickerill & Chatterton 2006).

In the same way that squatting is ‘scavenging for space’ in response to wasted or ‘discarded space’, and a challenge to order, food has also gained this quality and “is increasingly the subject and site of political and social transformation[...] discussed through a discourse of alternative versus conventional, where conventional represents a capitalist corporate model of food production”(Péchu 2010; Wilson 2013). Likewise, Ferrell (2006), in general reference to scavenging states that it “undermines the existing order of things [and subverts] all manner of neatly dualistic categories: commodity versus trash, public versus private, possession versus dispossession”. Finally, in line with Wilson (2013), Bey (1991) connects squatting and food in his essay on ‘temporary autonomous

²⁰ Different legislation applies to squatting across Europe.

²¹ “[if the property] is vacant, then there is no property infringement, and so penal sanction is applied, unless breaking and entering is proven. Even in this case, there is the possibility for the squatter to invoke the ‘act of necessity’²¹. The eviction that follows is the result of a civil procedure at court [...]”(Coutant 2001)

²² Direct action is one element, alongside propaganda of the deed, and illegal action, that forms the ideological context of anarchism in France to which Péchu makes extensive reference in retracing squatting history and its political tenets and effects (Péchu 2010).

²³ Due to lack of space as well as the emphasis of this dissertation on food scavenging within one squatting community I will not be developing the ideological dimensions, and the practical applications, of squatting, in detail.

zones’²⁴, by evoking food’s potential within this transgressive framework: “food belongs to the realm of everyday life, the primary arena for all insurrectionary self-empowerment”.

The ‘recycling’ dimension of squatting as well as its operation within the margins of the law is linked to food scavenging practically, as squatters’ main source of sustenance (Bouillon 2002; Péchu 2010; Dällenbach 2012). Aside from the notion of subversion that links them, both practices are tied, in their concrete application, to the common need of a certain *savoir-faire*²⁵ (Bouillon 2002; Barnard 2011; Mourad 2012). The skills required for finding a place to squat safely and stably, and for finding the right bins to scavenge from, and determining what food is safe to eat, rely on the same two interrelated elements: a network, and knowledge accumulated over time, and crucially, through personal experience (Bouillon 2002; Barnard 2011; Eighner 1991). Bouillon (2002) explains that squatting requires an acute awareness of the city and its inhabitants, and an ability to “decipher” them. In parallel, Barnard (2011) outlines the constitution of a “freegan body” through a perpetual mobilisation of the senses to “[find] food but also [to separate] out the genuine garbage”. Eighner (1991) notes:

“Eating safely from the dumpsters involves three principles: using the senses and common sense to evaluate the condition of the found materials, knowing the dumpsters of a given area and checking them regularly, and seeking always to answer the question ‘why was this discarded?’”

²⁴ Squats are examples of these ‘temporary autonomous zones’.

²⁵ ‘know-how’.

Finally, the literature reviewed ascertains that subsistence and subversion are prevalent themes in the contexts of food scavenging and squatting, respectively. However, there appears to be a lack of research regarding the conflation of these two contexts, in other words the analysis of the implications of food scavenging within the squatting context, and whether it is carried out as a method of subsistence or subversion. My dissertation aims to address this gap by questioning whether urban practices of food scavenging are methods of subsistence or subversion within the context of one squatting community in Lyon, France.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Research Question:

Are the urban practices of salvaging food waste methods of subsistence or subversion?

Subset of Questions:

1. Through what specific practices do participants salvage food to feed themselves and others?
2. Why is discarded food salvaged, consumed and/or shared? And who is it salvaged, consumed and/or shared by?
3. What are the challenges posed by food salvaging? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this practice for different individuals or categories of people?
4. How do these practices affect participants' relationship and behaviour towards food?
5. How does scavenging for food interact with daily life and social relationships within the squat – itself a 'scavenged' shelter?

Lyon is situated in the Rhône-Alpes region and is France's third largest city, with a population of around 500 000, and the second largest metropolitan area in the country with around 2 200 000 living in the Greater Lyon²⁶ (INSEE 2011). The city is divided into 9 municipal arrondissements, 4 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site perimeter, which extends over 427 hectares (Ville de Lyon 2007; UNESCO 2014).

As an urban centre Lyon is a major immigration hub²⁷ (Delage et al. 2008). This has been particularly visible since 2012 as Lyon has recurrently made news headlines as the stage for the concrete application of the government's policies on migrants, in particular mass evictions of Roma camps and an Albanian asylum-seekers' camp under a bridge in the city centre (Bevand 2013; Sixou & Chardonnet 2013). Amongst the main vulnerable groups identified in Lyon are Albanian, sub-Saharan and Roma asylum-seekers, and homeless nationals. Although shelter is available, notably through local charities, it is increasingly common that migrants resort to squatting in an attempt to avoid rough sleeping (Bouillon 2003; Martinez et al. 2013; Delage et al. 2008)²⁸.

²⁶ The Greater Lyon includes Lyon, its suburban area and satellite towns.

²⁷ In 2007 France ranked second out of all European countries with regards to the reception of asylum-seekers (Sweden was in first position), the Rhône department has consistently ranked between third and fifth place since 1995 regarding national-level reception of asylum-seekers (Delage et al. 2008).

²⁸ The '115' is an emergency telephone number for people seeking shelter managed by the SAMU Social (Service d'Aide Médicale Urgente, transl. urgent medical help service), a municipal humanitarian emergency service that exists in cities across France. However, this service has reached a constant saturation point over the past decade, for instance in 2004, for 3937 asylum-seeker arrivals recorded in the Rhône region, only 2631 places were available if considering all housing services managed by the Rhône's Department of Sanitary and Social affairs (Delage et al. 2008; Cours des Comptes 2011). The saturation of these official services, as well as fear of the authorities in the case of one's illegal situation, has led many migrants to resort to squats in insalubrious conditions and often without access to running water and electricity (Bouillon 2003).

The Radar, as it has been named by its occupants, is a squat located in the 5th arrondissement²⁹ of Lyon, within the historic centre. The Radar is an old office building³⁰ spanning approximately 2500 m² of floor space set across seven floors; having been left vacant for two years it was first occupied by squatters at the beginning of March 2014, and will be facing eviction in early October 2014 (Tribunal d'Instance de Lyon 2014).

The Radar squat counts twenty-five permanent inhabitants, including four children aged between 6 years old and 9 months old; adults range in age from 23 to 46 years old. Out of the Radar's inhabitants:

- 8 hold university degrees
- 6 post-secondary school qualifications
- 3 are members of an artists' collective
- 5 had part-time jobs during the course of my fieldwork
- 7 are asylum-seekers

The Radar community is part of a larger network of squatting groups, this larger network is referred to as the 'intersquat' throughout this dissertation as the name given by the squatters to their own network³¹. The intersquat's main characteristic is that it coordinates the running of pay-as-you-can art, language, sport and practical skills workshops, alongside film-screening evenings and collective meals, with the intention of welcoming participants from all walks of life to engage in these activities. Moreover, the intersquat brings together environmental, housing and social activists, notably engaged in nation-wide causes on nuclear issues, as well as on the fate of migrants in France.

²⁹ The exact location of the Radar within the 5th arrondissement has been omitted in order to preserve anonymity.

³⁰ The nature of the building has been changed to preserve anonymity.

³¹ According to older members of the Radar there are several more similar networks in Lyon but most have received less exposure, out of the squatters' choice, or out of dissolution following squat evictions.



FIGURE 3: MAP OF FRANCE INDICATING LYON (CREDIT: GOOGLE MAPS)

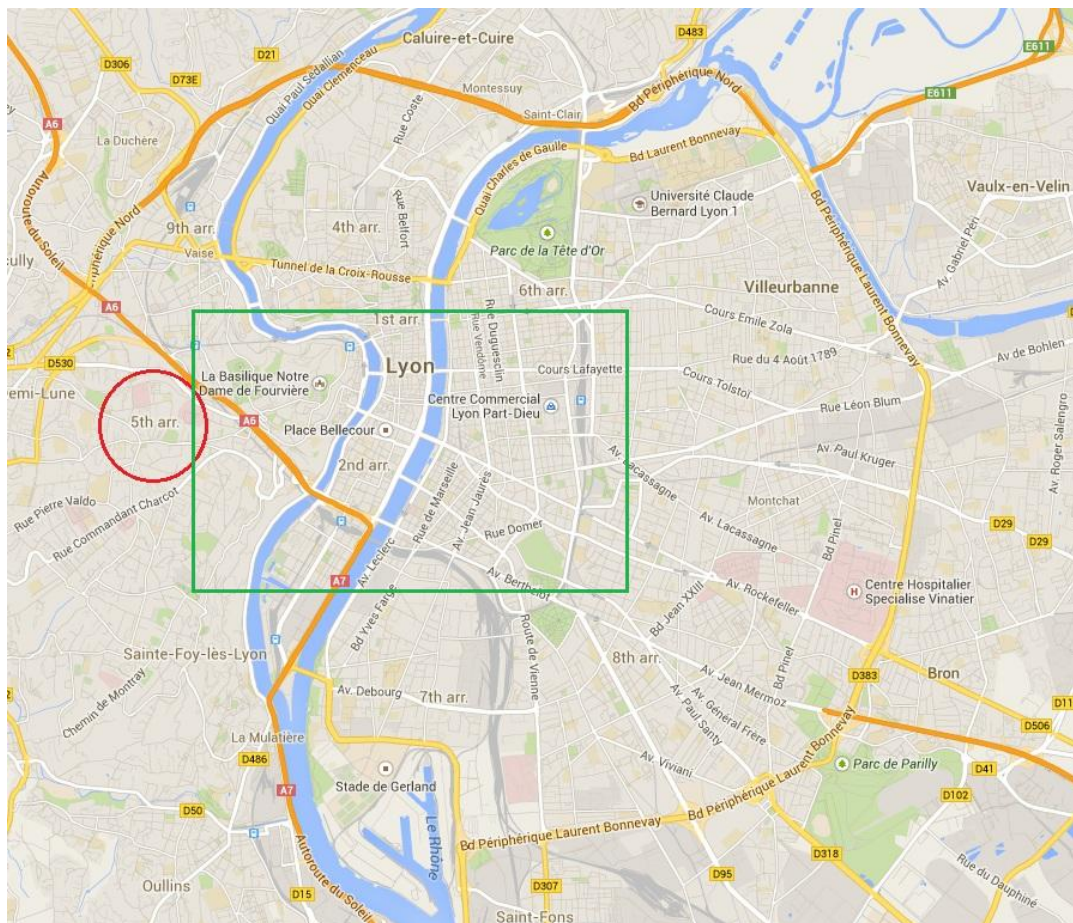


FIGURE4: MAP OF LYON AND ITS SUBURBS. (CREDIT: GOOGLE MAPS)

IN RED: APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE RADAR SQUAT IN THE 5TH ARRONDISSEMENT. IN GREEN: APPROXIMATE OUTLINE OF THE CITY CENTRE.

2 - METHODOLOGY

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

To formulate my research proposal and make contact with potential informants in Lyon, I conducted two semi-structured interviews in person and via Skype in January 2014 with the representative of the anti-food waste campaign Disco Soupe in Lyon, and activist duo, Les Gars'Pilleurs.

In order to gain a preliminary understanding of squatting culture and food scavenging I undertook two days of preparatory fieldwork at Grow Heathrow³² in London in February 2014. I arranged to be at the site on the weekly activity day, and went bin-diving on the first day and market gleaning the following morning. In addition to this, I was able to attend a community meeting, which gave me insight into anarchist consensus-decision making processes, which I encountered again at the Radar.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Data on the Radar squatting community of Lyon was collected through the use of various ethnographic methods over an eighteen-week period of immersive fieldwork and constant participant observation from early April to mid-July 2014. The use of multiple methods was necessary to triangulate information as well as to push inquiry further in order to gather an in-depth understanding of the different dynamics and factors at play in the community's food scavenging practices. These methods included informal group discussions, semi-structured interviews, informal individual discussions, and transect

³² Grow Heathrow is a community established on squatted land to protest the construction of a third runway at Heathrow Airport. For more information, c.f. <http://www.transitionheathrow.com/about-us/>.

interviews. Following a reflection on this research's methodological approach in the course of fieldwork, I decided to test an alternative to the pile sorts interview method.

In addition to primary data collected through fieldwork, secondary data were collected through a review of literature on the topics addressed. All informants have given their verbal consent to the provision of personal data for the purpose of this research project.

NETWORK OF INFORMANTS

As the biggest squat in Lyon, a central activity hub, and my place of residence for the duration of fieldwork, the Radar constituted my principal frame of reference and its twenty inhabitants my main informants. I adapted the snowball technique in the context of informal discussions to identify who I could approach regarding a specific research question within the Radar as well as within the larger intersquat network. Once a week, on average, I would accompany several Radar residents to informal visits or events taking place within the intersquat. This offered me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the network and to conduct two semi-structured interviews and participant observation with intersquat informants.

METHODS

Participant Observation

Participant observation was my main method of enquiry. I was constantly present at the Radar; I slept, ate and showered there throughout the duration of my fieldwork. I was allowed to sit in on exclusive inhabitant-only meetings, and was privy to the residents' meeting with their lawyer in advance of their court hearing, which I also attended. My integration into the community was very rapid, and culminated in my being granted the status of official resident of the Radar.

Informal Group Discussions

This method helped to “[reveal] variations in perspective and attitude” between respondents and allowed me to distinguish “between shared and variable perspectives”, whilst equally taking the opportunity to evaluate group dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the community (Frey & Fontana 1991). The discussions revealed certain issues that I could address and explore in depth during semi-structured interviews, and were also an important basis for triangulation. Most group discussions lasted up to two hours and took place in the mornings at breakfast, or late at night. Exceptionally, I was granted permission to attend the Radar's residents-only meetings, held almost every fortnight. Although these were formally organised by the respondents, their nature was informal, and as certain discussions were centred on food scavenging notably, I have chosen to consider these as informal group discussions. I took notes during meetings, and wrote ethnographic accounts of the discussions; on several occasions I was also able to record these.

Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews at the Radar, and two with intersquat informants and an interview with supermarket owners. My approach for the semi-structured interviews conducted at the Radar was to prepare a set of questions organised by thematic heading corresponding to the themes I used to classify my research questions³³. At the beginning of each interview I presented my topic to the informant and explained the thematic order in which I had organised my questions. I used a voice recorder for thirteen out of the fifteen interviews, giving the respondent the option to

³³ Namely, 'knowledge economy', 'sociopolitical positioning', 'perceived versus actual sustainability', 'relations to/and representation of food waste'.

turn it off at their convenience (Bernard, 2006). For the semi-structured interviews with intersquat informants, I reviewed my original set of questions and tailored it specifically to the two individuals in question. A completely different approach and set of questions was required for the semi-structured interview I conducted with the couple of supermarket owners. I recorded all these interviews, in addition to note-taking.

Informal Individual Discussions

I used informal individual discussions principally as a rapport-building method that marked a halfway point between informal group discussions and semi-structured interviews, particularly in the case of gathering personal alternative opinions following group discussions and prior to semi-structured interviews. This permitted triangulation as well as a more thorough analysis of informal group discussions due to the reflexive and personal nature of individual discussions. I recorded my observations alongside respondent quotations following the discussions.

Transect Interviews

I conducted two transect interviews. For the first transect interview I went on a cycling tour of the city, to all of the bin-diving *spots* frequented by the intersquat, with two Radar informants. The tour lasted approximately three hours during which time I was in a constant interview. For the second transect interview I followed Les Gars'Pilleurs, along with two journalists, on one of their pre-food distribution scavenging outings. This tour involved driving to the different bin-diving *spots*, in Greater Lyon. I was able to record the latter of these transect interviews, and wrote an account of both.

Pile Sorts

In order to formulate a better understanding of the social structure and functioning of the Radar I decided to experiment with the pile sorts method. I adapted the method as it is described by Bernard (2006) to “produce a wealth of information about the cognitively defined social structure” of the group. I followed his use of the method by handing a pile of names of every inhabitant of the Radar to each respondent and asking them to tell me “who goes with whom” and then asking “informants to tell me *why* people appear in the same pile” (Bernard, 2006). The slight variation I brought to this take on the pile sorts method was to provide more flexibility in the carrying out of the task by telling respondents that they could do what they wanted with the names rather than instructing them to make piles. I also provided the respondents with the option to add or remove names from the pile, and gave them the freedom to rearrange the names as often as they wanted. Observations were taken in note-form, alongside drawings of the names laid out with annotations. All pile sorts interviews were recorded, but only three out of the five were recorded entirely, according to the respondent's choice. In order to preserve anonymity I chose not to take photographs of these interviews, but for ease of visualisation, data analysis and discussion, I have recreated the piles using pseudonyms.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fieldwork approach was unfamiliar to most Radar informants who expressed surprise that I would be researching and living in the squat. This unfamiliarity was helpful insofar as I was treated as a temporary inhabitant, rather than a complete outsider. I was apprehensive that my focus on food scavenging would influence the Café Crise project, launched shortly after my arrival, however, this was not the case, and I took necessary distance to avoid being solicited in decision-making regarding this project.

ANTIFORMALISM AND CONSENT-GIVING

The majority of Radar respondents explicitly stated their rejection of administrative and institutional ‘filing’ due to their concern for anonymity but particularly due to their political orientation and consequently refused to sign consent forms but were happy to give verbal consent. In line with this antiformalist position, respondents challenged me on my methodological approach. Continuous participant observation and rapport-building enabled me to win over the respondents’ trust and mitigate reticence towards the methods I implemented.

POLICE PARANOIA AND ANONYMITY

The fact that squatting and food scavenging are illegal activities meant that there was a general anti-police sentiment. This was made clear to me in the initial questions I was asked upon my arrival, including whether I worked for the police, how I would ensure the anonymity of the data, and how I had heard about the intersquat network and the Radar, specifically. These questions indicate the slight undercurrent of paranoia that was palpable in the squat. This police paranoia is justified by the presence of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers with children on site, the squatters’ political activism, and certain respondents’ criminal histories. The multifaceted and secretive nature of the respondents’ situation presented an ethical dilemma insofar as I agreed to keep silent about the presence of children and migrants in the squat, and to adopt the squatters’ stance with regard to the police in the event of a confrontation. My commitment to protecting this sort of detail proved my trustworthiness and was a condition for undertaking certain activities.

Moreover, I was told that researchers coming to the squat were seen in a quite critical light, mainly due to experiences with certain undergraduate students who would visit the

squat to conduct interviews and then leave with no further contact with informants. The main issue for informants was the feeling that they had been used for information and that there was no real exchange between informants and researchers. Once again, my constant presence at the Radar was critical in enabling me to overcome informants' fears.

SPONTANEITY: VARYING AND VARIABLE SCHEDULES

The variety and variability of respective respondents' schedules made planning interviews relatively difficult. Most methods' scheduling and interview reminders were carried out in person or via phone contact. This was complicated by the fact that certain informants would go on spontaneous trips out of Lyon, and some did not own mobile phones. As a consequence of this, I deviated from my timetable and was obliged to spread the semi-structured interview period out over the course of my fieldwork, rather than concentrating it within a period of two weeks early on, as I had originally planned. The main disadvantage to conducting semi-structured interviews up until the end of my fieldwork was my personal apprehension with regard to the redundancy of questions, as well as respondent weariness. However, this was counter-balanced by the fact that I had time to reformulate certain questions to gather more in-depth information. Furthermore, another advantage was more informed triangulation, as well as reflexivity and reassessment of the research project more globally.

3 – WHAT IS FOOD WASTE, AND FOR WHOM?

Food waste is food that has been discarded, and which can be interpreted through this act as having been ascribed the ‘value’ of ‘having no more value’ (Hetherington 2004; Pardo 2006). From a young age, most of us are taught that what goes into a bin should not be taken out, in particular food that is thrown away tends to be considered disgusting, “dirty” (Douglas 1966; Barnard 2011). Food scavenging challenges the implied valuelessness of food waste, conventional perceptions of hygiene, as well as institutional norms and standards applied to food to determine whether it is safe to eat, and its quality as a marketed product (Stuart 2009; Mourad 2012). By finding “treasure in the dumpster”, scavengers underline the element of cultural and individual subjectivity involved in formulating our relationship to, and definition of, food waste.

This chapter will address the question of how food waste is defined, perceived and interacted with by two supermarkets, anti-food waste groups, and the Radar inhabitants who depend on it as their primary food source.

SUPERMARKET SELF-SUBVERSION

BINGO SUPERMARKET CHAIN³⁴

The Bingo supermarket group is one of the biggest in France. I attempted to secure an interview with supermarkets in this chain six times and was turned away each time³⁵ until

³⁴ The supermarket chain has been given a different name in order to preserve anonymity, and protect the supermarket managers.

³⁵ The main reason put forward by supermarket managers for declining my offer to interview them related to the sensitivity of data on food waste emitted by their particular supermarket.

I encountered Jean-Claude and Yvette, a couple of co-managers who agreed to talk to me. Firstly, they explained how they electronically recorded food to be discarded, and stored it for a week in case of inspections. Then, Yvette highlighted the fact that the couple salvage food from their own waste, although this is strictly forbidden by the supermarket chain. When rescuing food the couple ensures to keep the packaging, as it serves as evidence during surprise inspections. These have been implemented to address suspected fraudulent activity among supermarket managers. Indeed, each supermarket benefits from subsidies from food that is not sold because it has to be discarded following its expiry dates – no subsidies are received, however, if food has been discarded because it has been damaged in the shop. Yvette explained that the supermarket chain had claimed that some of the managers had been abusing the subsidy system by claiming for the same products more than once, so the chain had decided to enforce an inspection system whereby managers would be obliged to store their food waste for a week as physical evidence in addition to electronic records. Jean-Claude stated that he did not take kindly to this measure, and felt “policed” by the chain; furthermore, he said that he felt efforts to save money would be better spent focusing on “the actual food that is being wasted.”

When I asked them how they felt about throwing food out, Jean-Claude explained that on a professional level he felt it was normal, that the products had shelf life and expiration dates that had been determined to protect the consumer, and make sure the product was safe to eat. However, he also pointed out that he felt this system was flawed because from his own experience, a lot of the food was still good to eat weeks after their dates had passed, he cited yoghurts as an example. Discussing their experience with food scavengers, Yvette said that on an ethical level she felt very concerned that they would fall ill:

“We store all the food we discard in our cold room because we want it to keep so that we can consume it later on. But the scavengers need to realise that most supermarkets in the chain don’t have the space to store the food there [...] so the food in our bins is a week-old.”

Finally, Yvette highlighted that she had been approached by several organisations, and students, asking whether they could collect food intended for the bin, she said that she would have wanted to help them but due to the chain’s policies, could not.

‘EPICERIE SOLIDAIRE’³⁶

Towards the end of my fieldwork Radar inhabitants were invited by an épicerie solidaire³⁷ to collect their discarded food once a week. Rather than disposing of the food and allowing the squatters to scavenge their bins, the épicerie preferred giving the food waste away in person, although the employees had to do so with extreme caution due to the illegal nature of this donation. Employees explained that if they were caught donating the food waste the supermarket could be shut down. Enquiring as to why the employees were taking such risks, I was told that the employees felt it was an ethical duty for them to make sure that the food would not go to waste, and that it “pained them” to throw food away. Furthermore, the fact that the épicerie exists to benefit people in precarious, often food insecure, situations, carried all the more weight in the employees’ decision to ensure the food could be salvaged.

³⁶ Also known as « épicerie sociale et solidaire » (transl. ‘social and solidarity stores’). According to the ANDES (Association Nationale de Développement des Epicerie Solidaire), épicerie solidaire are « local convenience stores where people with low income can buy everyday goods for about 10 or 20% of their regular price. This form of food aid was created in France in the 1980s as an addition to a system of free distribution [...] Solidarity stores are aimed at people who are reluctant to benefit from charity.” (A.N.D.E.S. 2014)

³⁷ Its name has been excluded here in order to preserve anonymity.

Regarding why the squatters were contacted, a shop supervisor explained that the épicerie had previously allowed their customers to collect some of the to-be-discarded products but that this had led to tensions between customers and employees as some of the former stopped purchasing products and instead queued outside at closing time expecting to collect free food, of which there was never enough for everyone. Consequently, one of the employees who had attended free workshops at the Radar and knew of the inhabitants' food scavenging practices decided that they were in need of this additional food source. Moreover, due to the aforementioned tensions, it was made clear between the épicerie and the squatters that the latter could not register to become customers at the shop as long as they were accepting the food donations. Finally, for the épicerie, food waste predominantly constitutes an ethical burden, partially reconcilable through the act of donating to-be-discarded food to those in need.

FOOD WASTE: A TOOL AND TARGET FOR ACTIVISM

DISCO SOUPE LYON: CREATING THE "CONSO'ACTEUR"

Disco Soupe Lyon gleans food from markets that is then transformed into soups, smoothies and salads by volunteers who distribute it to passer-bys for free. According to my interview with one of the founders of Disco Soupe Lyon, the movement is not intended as a means to "guilt-trip" the consumer into realising "how they are contributing to a wasteful system", on the contrary "the aim is to raise awareness on food waste, and offer solutions on how to address it on a small-scale and practical level." Furthermore, the group highlights the general impression that consumers are passive participants in the food system who are dependent upon labelling to determine whether food is safe, or "at its best", for them to eat, and who are, by extension, far removed from the products they

consume. Hence, Disco Soupe Lyon conveys the need for “conso’acteurs”³⁸, in other words consumers who are active participants in the food system by firstly being informed of the waste that occurs, where their food comes from, and secondly by making responsible choices about the products they purchase. To promote this, the group provides a wide array of information at their events, often collaborating with local organic producers, and other organisations promoting sustainable eating.

For Disco Soupe Lyon, food waste is a social and political problem. The group’s co-founder states that government policies should be targeting supermarkets to ensure the reduction of food waste and taking appropriate measures to “abolish the aesthetic standards”³⁹ and “confusing best-before dates” currently applied to food. Socially, the group is concerned with ‘responsible consumerism’ and clarifies that they are not targeting those most in need, but rather the “average consumer”. For the group, changing people’s perception on what should and should not be considered ‘waste’ (such as overripe fruit, or damaged vegetables: the majority of what the group gleans from markets), and collaborating with policymakers, will contribute to the resolution of food insecurity issues further down the line. By distributing transformed food that was originally considered ‘waste’ in the public sphere, Disco Soupe Lyon demonstrates that “there is a problem of wastefulness”, that conventional perceptions of “safe” and “good quality” food are misleading, and that consumers can “take action against this” by reducing their waste and opting for shorter food supply chains by purchasing locally. Ultimately, beyond representing the group’s primary target, food waste, in its salvaged and transformed state, is used as a

³⁸ The term « conso’acteurs » is a combination of the words « consommateurs » (consumers) and « acteurs » (actors).

³⁹ This has begun to take shape, firstly in the UK (Vidal 2012), and more recently in France (The Huffington Post UK 2014).

communication tool, and as a way to directly (through volunteer participation in food preparation, for instance) engage with the public on the issue.

LES GARS’PILLEURS: “AT NIGHT, WE DIVE INTO BINS...”⁴⁰

Whereas Disco Soupe Lyon stays within the realm of legality with regards to their activism, Les Gars’Pilleurs adopts more transgressive strategies to denounce food waste by bin-diving, which often involves trespassing⁴¹. In addition to staging unauthorised free food distribution events in the city, the group takes photographs of their findings captioned with the name of the supermarket from which the food was retrieved, as well as the estimated value and quantity of the salvaged products. In addition to this, some products are photographed in a studio setting in a bid to undermine conventional advertising and denounce the environmental consequences of food waste by highlighting the distance travelled by a given product, only to end up discarded. The photographic evidence of the group’s bin-diving actions is shared online via their blog and their Facebook page, which has an increasing amount of followers (currently over 5000).

⁴⁰ Quotation from one of the members of the group at a food distribution, describing Les Gars’Pilleurs food scavenging strategy.

⁴¹ Food scavengers in France have been known to encounter problems with the police whilst bin-diving – mainly resulting in a warning, or the confiscation of the scavenged goods – but the law is not clear in stating that the practice of salvaging food from bins is illegal; trespassing, however, is considered an offense.



PHOTO 1: SALVAGED ORGANIC PAPAYA AND ORGANIC PINEAPPLE PRESENTED IN A STUDIO SETTING. (CREDIT: LGP)



PHOTO 2: FOOD SALVAGED FROM A SUPERMARKET'S BINS LAID OUT IN FRONT OF THE SHOP'S SLOGAN, WHICH READS "THE MORE I BUY THE CHEAPER IT IS!" (CREDIT: LGP)

Les Gars’Pilleurs range of methods for conveying their message equally attests to their focus on the multiple dimensions of food waste. Like Disco Soupe they emphasise that they are not “trying to act as ‘Robin Hoods’ of food waste”, nor are they “seeking to help the most vulnerable”, their existence is demonstrative and offers an insight into alternative methods of consumption and food acquisition. On the other hand, Les Gars’Pilleurs differs from Disco Soupe Lyon insofar as their approach is more focused on revealing the food waste caused by supermarkets. Indeed, their distributions of food consist in setting up a table in an open square and piling the scavenged food on top of it, leaving it freely accessible to interested members of the public. The unceremonious presentation of the scavenged goods and their lack of transformation serve as a realistic representation of the food waste as it is found in supermarket bins, and as the basis for Les Gars’Pilleurs criticism of capitalism – which they see as a vehicle of wastefulness. The aim here is consequently to engage with the public on a moral and political level, rather than on the practical and social level offered by the Disco Soupe’s collective cooking events. Finally, Les Gars’Pilleurs’ connection to the intersquat network in Lyon, and their own reliance on waste as a food source – contrary to most members of Disco Soupe Lyon – also implies that there is a conflation between their political positioning against food waste and their personal experiences in relation to it.

“ONE PERSON’S GARBAGE...ANOTHER PERSON’S TREASURE”

For inhabitants of the Radar food waste constitutes their primary source of food. During food scavenging outings the squatters will refer to the food found in supermarket bins or at the end of markets as “treasure”. Food waste is therefore ascribed a lot of value, both in and of itself as salvageable goods, but also due to its quality as nourishment for the community, consequently, the food is no longer ‘waste’ but a source of potential. As a

method of subsistence, the act of food scavenging is likened to “doing one’s shopping”, but for free:

“If an average consumer’s purchasing power can be estimated from how much food this consumer piles into his/her supermarket trolley, then the squat’s measuring unit is its vehicle: how much we take is not necessarily equivalent to how much we really need, we take as much as is required to fill the car, or the truck...” (Roger, Radar resident)

This comment points to the problem of gratuity. In an interview it was highlighted that gratuity might undermine the food’s value, especially in periods when food scavenging is easy and food abundant. Certain informants evoked the fragile balance between active engagement against consumerism and overconsumption due to the gratuity and availability of the scavenged food. However, balancing this perception was the view that the general unpredictability of bins’ contents led to a liberating “cancellation of ‘choice’”, seen as a source of pressure in conventional consumption. Nevertheless, I witnessed several occasions on which too much food was scavenged and led to waste within the squat itself. Informants deplored this waste, and several stated that they felt that they had wasted less before moving to the squat and living in a community setting.



PHOTO 3: SPOILT TO-BE-DISCARDED FOOD IN THE RADAR'S KITCHEN,

(FOOD WASTED INCLUDED LETTUCE, BROCCOLI, EGGS, BREAD AS SHOWN) (CREDIT: CM)

A general observation was that Radar residents felt that food scavenging enabled them to gain a better awareness of the city, which they repeatedly referred to as their own personal “giant playground”. Indeed, food scavenging was described to me as “an urban form of hunger-gathering”, leading to the discovery of new areas in the city and the development of the squatters’ senses. The act of having to seek food out meant a greater proximity to the food consumed. However, being seen scavenging by passer-bys often led to discomfort at being potentially stigmatised, or judged⁴².

⁴² On one occasion that I was scavenging with Roger at a service station, we were approached by a man in his mid-30s who asked us what we were doing and whether we were looking for food. Roger replied that we were not *looking*, but *finding* food. The men held out a 10€ note to me, then to Roger after I declined. Roger insisted that we did not want the money, but the man said that if we did not take it from him, he would leave it in front of us and walk away, so Roger finally relented.

CONCLUSION

In general, from the examples discussed above, food waste is considered as something to be opposed and strived against. It represents an ethical burden, and underlines the flaws in the current food production system. In line with this, food waste encapsulates an array of different issues across environmental, social and political spectrums. Moreover, it is a target of activist campaigns that use it as a communication and practical tool to demonstrate the excesses they denounce. Although food waste is considered problematic by squatters, it is also a source of value, of sustenance, and a means by which to acquire practical skills and an enhanced knowledge of one's environment. Effectively, food scavenging disrupts a linear perception of consumption by demonstrating the recursivity of food waste: in a linear model, food waste comes at the end, and is placed "out of sight, and out of mind", by contrast, food scavenging leads to its revaluation and a circularity of the model.

As shown, food scavenging is not immune to wastefulness in itself. The problematic of gratuity has implications for the squatters' consumption, and over-consumption of food that was deemed valueless by a wasteful system. Although this may denote a contradiction, it mainly underlines that relationships to, and definitions of, food waste are relative, and numerous within the framework of the squat. Moreover, as this chapter has demonstrated, food waste, and food scavenging, has different levels of meaning at the Radar: for some it is a method of subsistence that has become politicised, and for others it is a method of subversion that has become part of everyday subsistence. The following chapters will in turn address both of these views.

4 - SUBVERSION: SQUATTING AND THE POLITICS OF FOOD MANAGEMENT

Building on the connection between the activist anti-food waste campaign groups mentioned in the previous chapter and the Radar, it can be argued that food scavenging as an act of subversion operates on two principal levels. Firstly, the squat constitutes a spatial reappropriation, the reclaiming of wasted space through transgression and hence a subversive 'theatre' for the subversive 'act' of food scavenging. Food scavenging practices such as bin-diving and market gleaning pertain to alternative methods of consumption that align with anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist ethos that fit the Radar inhabitants' ideological principles (Barnard 2011; Edwards & Mercer 2012; Mourad 2012).

On a second level, the Radar's main⁴³, if at times only, source of food originates from supermarket and market bins; one of the reasons put forward to explain why food scavenging is practised in the squat is to do with the practice's subversive connotations. In this respect and with a concern for ideological coherence, everyday actions such as eating and gathering food appear to be geared towards maintaining the general militant spirit of the squat. Through the analysis of the Café Crise project⁴⁴ and the Radar's food management, this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which food scavenging is imbued with a subversive quality within the squatting context, whilst exploring the extent to which this quality prevails.

⁴³ The exceptions include the purchasing of certain food products that are rarely found in supermarket bins, for instance: pasta, rice, sugar, cooking oil and coffee. These items are purchased on a voluntary basis by residents who have access to an income.

⁴⁴ The project's name has been changed to preserve anonymity.

The Café Crise's webpage⁴⁵ describes it as:

“a ‘pay-what-you-can’⁴⁶ project taking place every Sunday, which aims to: fight against food waste, raise awareness on the subjects of food waste, alternative-living and *autogestion*, touch a wide public outside squats (including neighbours, families and students) and serve vegetarian (and when possible organic) food”

In addition to this, the project aimed to facilitate social mingling and introduce principles of ‘autogestion’⁴⁷ with those unfamiliar to it, notably by encouraging volunteering with food preparation, and requiring attendees to do their own washing up⁴⁸. I arrived at the Radar several days before the inauguration of the Café Crise and assisted in the preparation of the event by undertaking market gleanings and food preparation, alongside four of the Café Crise's initiators, Annabelle, Janet, Genevieve and Tony, and volunteers from the intersquat network. Seventy people attended the first event, and feedback, which I gathered through informal discussion whilst serving food, was very positive.

⁴⁵ The link to the webpage has been omitted to preserve anonymity.

⁴⁶ Hereafter ‘PWYC’.

⁴⁷ Literally “autogestion” means “dealing with oneself”, figuratively it is a principle closely relatable to the principle of « do-it-yourself » 'DIY' which formed the basis of the development of punk culture in the 1970s (Ferrell 2001).

⁴⁸ This is referred to as “autowash” by the squatters.



PHOTO 4: MARKET GLEANING WITH INFORMANTS (CREDIT: RC)



PHOTO 5: CAFE CRISE FOOD PREPARATION (CREDIT: RC)



PHOTO 6: CAFE CRISE FOOD SERVICE (CREDIT: RC)

Following the first instalment of the event, I attended a meeting between Annabelle, Janet, Genevieve, Tony and Roger regarding ways to improve the Café Crise. It was stressed that logistics were problematic considering the need for a large amount of volunteers and the food preparation time required to cook for more than fifty people. In addition to this, a debate began regarding the purchasing of pasta and rice: on the one hand, Tony argued that he felt these items were necessary in order to add “substance” to the meals, essentially composed of market gleaned fruit and vegetables, on the other hand, Roger defended the view that this went against the project’s message. Annabelle agreed with the latter point and stated the importance of “remaining consistent with the anti-food waste message”. However, it became clear that Tony disagreed with having this as the focus of the Café Crise, and explained that he would rather see the project as a “people’s kitchen” dedicated to providing a free meal for anyone in the intersquat or “off the street”. This remark sparked an argument as all disagreed with Tony, and several informants highlighted that the project had been defined this way and validated at a residents’ meeting, and could not be redefined on Tony’s “whim”. The meeting was civilly ended by Janet, who commented that the Café Crise’s anti-food-waste message was not at odds with the idea of a “people’s kitchen”, and that the purchasing of staple foods would need to be reconsidered at a future meeting.

The following Café Crise events sustained the anti-food-waste message, information flyers, including a gleaning guide to all of Lyon’s markets, were displayed in the refectory, and more Radar residents participated, notably by donating artwork to the make refectory more appealing, and helping with serving and cooking on the day of the event. However, after seven occurrences of the Café Crise, the event was cancelled due to internal conflicts and a summer intersquat trip.

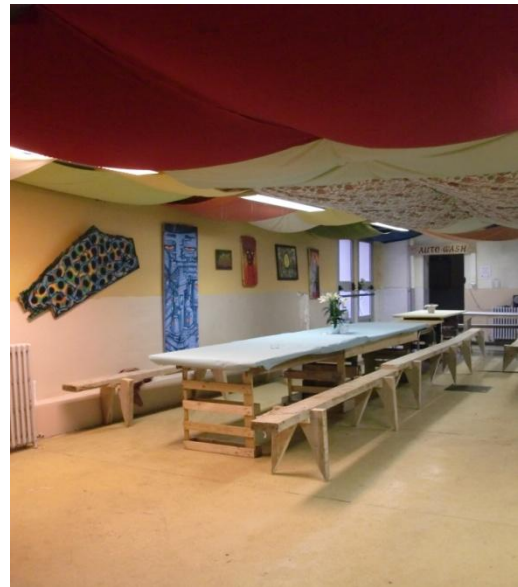


PHOTO 7&8: BEFORE AND AFTER SHOTS OF THE CAFE CRISE (CREDIT: CM)

ANALYSIS

Café Crise exemplifies the connection between food scavenging practices as a necessary practice to feed the squat, and the desire to politicise and publicise everyday actions such as this, in order to denounce food waste, and find coherence with the larger political project of the squat as a whole. On a theoretical level the Café Crise presents food scavenging as a subversive act imbued with the desire to engage the wider public in its fight against food waste. However, on a practical level, the logistical difficulties in the way of the project's sustained implementation week-after-week, as well as the disagreements related to the project's true "message" and coherence, highlights the challenges faced any activity focused around food scavenging as a means to both raise public awareness, and subvert the 'mainstream system' by demonstrating the potential of an alternative type of consumption and food provision.

More particularly, the Café Crise constitutes a ‘mise-en-abyme’⁴⁹ within the framework of the squat – in other words subversion through food scavenging *within* subversion through squatting – which can be argued as a possible explanation for the challenges faced by the project. In a first instance, food scavenging is viewed by most Radar informants, and intersquat volunteers who participated in the project, as a commonality, an essential part of their everyday life, rather than a special occasion for making a statement. Informal discussions with intersquat volunteers during the Café Crise cooking sessions revealed that on the whole they believed that the project was good and important to be involved in. However, they felt that it was ‘preaching to the converted’ as its main public was essentially composed of approximately 70% of intersquat members, and 30% of members from the general public who either had a connection to the intersquat network through friends and acquaintances, or had stumbled upon the event⁵⁰. On this note, the project’s weakness was also felt with regard to the lack of internal cohesion. Certain Radar residents confided that although they knew that a wider public would attend in time, they felt that not enough effort was being put into publicising the event⁵¹, or making it more accessible and welcoming to non-intersquat members.

According to interviews with three informants who indirectly participated in some aspects of the Café Crise, the anarchist context and the presence of other projects at the Radar detracted from the possibility of sustained support from Radar inhabitants for the Café Crise. As Roger expressed:

⁴⁹ Literary term referred to the recursive representation of an object within itself, in other words defined as “self-reflexive embedding”, (Whatling 2009).

⁵⁰ Newcomers were a rare minority, but I noticed new faces each week that I pointed out to Radar inhabitants and intersquat members for confirmation that they had not attended previous events.

⁵¹ Apart from the intersquat website, the Café Crise’s organising members undertook one afternoon of street flyering before the second Café Crise. Street flyering was not repeated thereafter.

“Everyone said it was a good idea when it was brought up at the meeting, but that does not mean that everyone wants to take part, they have their own projects...”

Furthermore, Rose, who attended the Café Crise and helped with clearing up at the end of the event on intermittent occasions, judged the project to be “helpful in raising awareness” and was enabling the Radar to move in a “more political” direction with regards to food. Indeed, she highlighted that prior to the Café Crise she felt that the squat’s food scavenging lacked a political dimension.

The opinion voiced by Rose during our interview presents a useful stepping stone towards a broader analysis of the Café Crise within the context of the Radar’s food scavenging in more general terms. Rose said:

“Honestly, I don’t think that our food scavenging is political. If it were, a lot of things would be different. For instance, I don’t think that eating their [the supermarkets’] shit [...] the ready-made meals that we get [...] is political: it isn’t at all. However, if we were to campaign for awareness, then we would be acting more politically. Before the Café Crise there was no awareness-raising at the Radar.”

Rose’s ready-meal example is the ‘crêpes aux lardons’⁵², collected in bulk almost weekly from the go-to supermarket bins. The fact that the crêpes were quick to prepare meant that they were often eaten on the night that the food arrived at the Radar, and never lasted more than a day in the fridge. In the continuity of Rose’s reasoning, this highly processed product epitomises some of the food industry’s key detrimental effects that should be fought against through food scavenging, notably its unhealthiness, environmental harmfulness and the wastefulness of the system.

⁵² Savoury crêpes with béchamel sauce and bacon filling.

The 'crêpes aux lardons' example echoes two conflicting freegan positions discussed by Barnard (2011): freegans who are devoutly vegan, and freegans who practice 'meaganism', "eating animal products if they come from the trash". The argument put forward by 'meagans' is ethical insofar that eating meat from bins "does not funnel money towards animal exploitation", on the other hand vegan freegans in Barnard's study saw their dietary choice as "not just one part of their political identities, but central to it"(Barnard 2011). Similarly, at the Radar these two positions could be articulated as on the one hand the position adopted by those who will eat everything that comes from bins as it does not contribute to the industry, and on the other hand, the position of those who will favour market-gleaned fruit and vegetables and least-processed goods. Although from Rose's perspective the more engaged position would be the latter, this opinion was evoked but not universally shared by other Radar residents. Indeed, for Max bin-diving, gleaning, in addition to the more radical 'table-diving'⁵³ - which he and Genevieve were the few to practice - are subversive acts insofar as they are essentially anti-consumerist actions performed by actively anti-capitalist individuals. Likewise, Genevieve evoked the fact that she felt like she was contributing to the solution to food waste rather than the problem by food scavenging.

For Andrew food scavenging is a perfect fit for a squatting lifestyle. "As with squatting," he says, "to bin-dive you need a network, you need to be informed [...]The moment you join the 'alternative' world you're flirting with illegality, and you begin to adopt a strange behaviour on the streets, your thinking changes, you act as if you are in a jungle". Andrew sees that beyond the ideological food scavenging in practice is a concretely subversive undertaking that has a lasting behavioural impact. Furthermore, he underlines another key characteristic of food scavenging as a subversive act: it is a group-undertaking that is

⁵³ 'Table-diving', also known as 'plate-scraping' consists in "sitting at a restaurant (sometimes with staff permission) and finishing the food on people's plates after they leave"(Moré 2011).

reliant on a network of people. Seen from a certain angle it can be said that the group, or the network, ascribes a certain meaning to the act of food scavenging that is then assimilated through practice. This process is very pragmatic insofar as for the Café Crise Annabelle, Genevieve, Janet and Tony presented the project at an inhabitants-only meeting, to gain feedback, but also to legitimise the event within the squat. Nevertheless, in my observations of these meetings I noted that several strong voices stood out, notably Roger, Genevieve, Janet, Max and Andrew's, whereas other inhabitants were quieter, and some did not voice their opinions at all, such as Gareth and Annabelle, but went along with what was voted. Thus, although there might be a common understanding that food scavenging should – in accordance with the squat's ideological terms – be a political act, it is not always considered so, and loses part of this subversiveness through its daily routine and necessity.

KITCHEN CRISIS

When I first arrived at the Radar there was one communal kitchen in the squat. The Radar inhabitants ate their meals at the living room coffee table, and often did so collectively. Andrew and Vanessa sparked the move to a new kitchen with the desire for a larger and cleaner space with more shelving and access to the garden come summertime. This new kitchen was used constantly, which had the downside of leading to the accumulation of unwashed dishes, rotting food that had not been cleared out and full bin bags left to one side of the kitchen. However, on top of the issue of hygiene pointed out to me by many an unhappy Radar resident, the main problem was the fact that very few people were partaking in the food scavenging, and that consequently a couple of weeks had gone by with the stores of food rapidly diminishing and no restocking prospects in view. Every

night for that past week I had been cycling around Lyon with Roger and Gareth to bin-dive, although we were often lucky and were able to fill three rucksacks full of food, the majority of these findings were bakery products, with the rare lot of yoghurts, and lettuces. What we brought back to the Radar was often finished by the next day, and continued this way for another week until the following meeting. Despite the fact that Roger and Gareth enjoyed these outings, they shared their frustration with me regarding the fact that they felt like the Radar residents were relying on them for food and consuming everything with a lack of consideration for who would need to scavenge for more and how much time that person would be dedicating to do so day after day.

At the meeting Andrew led the discussion by stating that he was disappointed by the lack of cleanliness of the new kitchen he had established, and that he was consequently creating a kitchen on the 6th floor, next to his room, to be used only by people in his “affinity” group. Janet brought up the fact that she had noticed that only Gareth, Roger and I were bringing food into the squat, and that this needed to be remedied with other people volunteering to go out. A debate was henceforth engaged about the passive versus active members of the squat. When asked to define who was included in the “affinity” group, Andrew replied that all who had contributed to food scavenging, and who were helping with the upkeep of the squat would be welcome. This caused uproar as certain members argued that this new kitchen was dictatorial and exclusive and that was effectively a “privatisation of space” within the squat.

The 6th floor kitchen continued to operate for a month and a half after this. At its beginnings all food that was scavenged was kept there, but progressively, as tensions died down, the food scavenging rhythm returned to normal, and food was distributed evenly between the garden kitchen and the 6th floor kitchen. In the last week of my fieldwork,

the Radar re-established one central communal kitchen, and decided to stop using the garden and 6th floor kitchens.



PHOTO 9: FINDINGS FROM TWO BINS OUTSIDE AN ORGANIC SUPERMARKET CHAIN ON ONE OF GARETH, ROGER AND I'S NIGHTTIME BIN-DIVING OUTINGS (CREDIT: CM).

ANALYSIS

As a constantly evolving context, the Radar faces the challenge of establishing communal-living systems that, firstly, everyone agrees to, and secondly that everyone is actively involved in maintaining. On numerous occasions during informal group discussions, Radar informants recounted the pinnacle of organisation they had reached at a previous squat, whence came most Radar inhabitants came, whereby the kitchen and eating areas were always clean, and there was never any lack of food as inhabitants took it in turns as groups to go bin-diving or market gleaning. This contrast between the previous squat and the Radar was mainly explained as being down to three reasons: the people, the projects, and the time of year.

The creation of the 6th floor kitchen highlighted a division⁵⁴ between the resident artist collective, and the political activists in the squat who constituted Andrew's "affinity group"⁵⁵. This distinction consequently sheds light on who might consider food scavenging subversive and who might first consider food scavenging as a means to get food on a day-to-day basis, before acknowledging its political quality. Moreover, the Kitchen Crisis demonstrates a certain level of 'crisis' with regards to food management at the Radar. The criticism made by the 'active' food scavenging participants against their 'passive' counterparts highlighted their lack of political engagement that extended to disengagement with the squat's daily running and a counterproductive dependence on the more willing members of the group. In sum, the criticism was framed by the vision of food scavenging as a coherent part of the squat's ideology, and hence its subversive nature. In addition to revealing the dependence dynamics at play at the Radar in relation to food provision, the Kitchen Crisis also unveiled simpler fears related to the potential for lacking food as a consequence of this imbalance in task undertaking – although admittedly any fears could be offset by one going out to scavenge for themselves. Furthermore, the challenges related to food management at the Radar evoked by this example underscore the least subversive dimensions of food scavenging and shift the focus back to the practice's role as the squat's method of subsistence.

⁵⁴ Although not a clear cut division as some members of the squat were not self-proclaimed artists or activists. (reformulate? Explain within the body of the analysis?)

⁵⁵ N.B. the Albanian family cooked in their room on portable electric hobs, and from time to time would eat or bake their bread (as they didn't have an oven in their room) in the garden kitchen. Thiero cooked his meals in the garden kitchen, but would use the 6th floor kitchen when it became too crowded.

5 - SUBSISTENCE: EATING AT THE MARGINS

In the same way that necessity drove certain Radar inhabitants' to take up living in squats after having struggled on the streets, food scavenging equally presents this dimension of 'subsistence' over 'subversion'. The bridge established by food waste literature, campaigns and policies between food waste and poverty and food insecurity is redefined in practice by certain Radar inhabitants who scavenge, and have scavenged for food in the past out of need. It may seem surprising that food scavenging is the option some of these individuals have resorted to in France, and in Lyon in particular, an urban centre where there is an extensive food support system, in the form of soup kitchens, food banks such as the Restaurants du Cœur⁵⁶, and mobile food donations from organisations such as the French Red Cross. However, these organisations carry with them a certain administrative burden, notably requiring proof of address – a flagrant obstacle for the homeless and squatters⁵⁷ – that may drive people away. Moreover, there are also those who, following a situation of prolonged marginalisation, choose to reject the official

⁵⁶ Restaurants du Cœur (transl. "restaurants of the heart", "restaurants of love"), more generally referred to as the Restos' du Cœur, is one of France's most famous national food aid charities founded in 1985 by the comedian Coluche. Trying to gain support for his idea on the radio channel Europe 1, on 26 September 1985, Coluche notably put forward the idea of redistributing food normally destined to be discarded to those in need: "When there are food surpluses and we destroy them to maintain prices on the market, we could be recuperating these and trying to make a big canteen to feed all of those who are hungry" [*sic.*] [my own translation].

⁵⁷ In French terms, 'sans domicile fixe' applies to squatters as squats are temporary. As such squatters are not 'homeless' as they have a roof over their heads, but only for a short period of time, and often in vulnerable conditions, furthermore the squat is not 'legally' defined as their home. For differences in homeless household statuses, c.f. Coast et al. 2012)

Aside: in England you can have homeless households whereas you can't in France because a household by law has a fixed address. Similarly those who live in caravans or barges in England constitute households whereas they don't in France..... same sort of issue (reference Ielieuvre, Coast, Fanghanel and Randall 2013)!

support routes, following repeated failures at benefitting from aid, or due to difficulties in community reintegration⁵⁸.

With the aim to demonstrate how food scavenging constitutes a method of subsistence for some, this chapter will present and four cases of Radar informants identified, as the most 'in need' at the time of fieldwork, or having experienced precarity in the past.

HUNGER AND 'THE STREET'

Two Radar inhabitants, Luke, 28, and Baptiste, 32, had both scavenged food as a means of survival and subsistence⁵⁹. Luke was homeless after leaving prison at 18 years old, and quickly found his way into a squat in Lyon. Struggling to get by with money earned from begging on the street, desperation led him to explore the inside of a bakery's bin one night. He had been eating very little for the past few weeks as he had been caught shoplifting several times, and had to wait before returning to the supermarkets, but he was making too little to get by. Food at the squat that he lived in at the time was an individual affair, and food scavenging was not undertaken until the day that Luke returned to the squat with his bag of sandwiches and pastries. Baptiste similarly learnt to bin-dive whilst begging when he was homeless aged 16 after having left his former foster home. However, his scavenging was very different from the organised bin-diving outings he later discovered when he began squatting. Whereas Baptiste used to look through bins hoping to find anything to eat, a "half-eaten hamburger, the ends of a kebab, or perhaps

⁵⁸ (réinsertion sociale) > used mainly for people who were in prison, as some of the Radar inhabitants were.

⁵⁹ The distinction I make here between survival and subsistence is to do with the fact that Luke and Baptiste have examples of scavenging for food as a matter of urgency, to 'survive', and scavenging for food to survive but over a few more days by selling some of their bin findings.

soggy fries”, the squat he lived in undertook larger-scale bin-diving excursions to feed dozens of people.

After securing stable scavenging ‘spots’ Luke shared his knowledge with a struggling Roma family at his squat, and with whom he undertook bin-diving outings and shared scavenged food. With an increased number of people depending on his spots, Luke became very protective of them, wary that despite the temporary security they offered him and the family, the bins would likely be discovered by other scavengers. His fears were concretised when he discovered a man tearing through the bins at one of the spots. Luke was fervently careful to keep the areas he scavenged tidy to not attract attention and as respect for the employees who would need to tidy up after him. After repeatedly asking the man to help clean up, Luke got into a fight with him. Fearing police investigation or reprisals after leaving the man severely injured, Luke never returned to the spot.

Conflict at the bins was characteristic of squatters’ bin-diving accounts. Informal discussions revealed that the violence recurrently took place between homeless French males or between the latter and Roma men and women living in shanty towns across the city. Due to the fear of going hungry through the loss of food scavenging spots, and of the occasional conflicts, Luke admitted that he found scavenging to be a mentally and physically exhausting practice, albeit rewarding⁶⁰. Compared to the relative security associated with collective bin-diving at the Radar, Luke and Baptiste’s experiences are

⁶⁰ Luke: “You have to wander, if your usual spot has failed you that day, it may take you hours to find another bin with food in it, and whilst you’re looking in one part of the city, somewhere else a bin with food in it is being emptied, so you might come home with nothing to eat that night [...] When you step out of the squat to look for food you feel terrible, you’re hungry and you’re not sure that you’ll find something to eat, but when you do find something, you’re so proud of yourself...all that resentment you felt just goes away...”

characteristic scavenging-for-subsistence stories insofar as they were bin-diving alone, and out of need. Despite their squat lives, both informants highlighted the isolating aspect of their situation: not only were they living on the streets or in squats, they were also begging, and hence were in the most vulnerable position on the social spectrum of their respective squats.

The importance of the 'collective' – and the support a group provides – when food scavenging gradually became apparent to me after having interviewed several informants' who had experienced stigma, or at the very least felt as if they were being looked down upon during their bin-diving outings or when gleaning at the markets. Baptiste was particularly sensitive to this dimension of food scavenging as he was used to the stigma of living on the streets and begging. For him food scavenging was adding to this already heavy load. Similarly, Luke told me about how worthless he felt when he reflected on his situation in his first squatting experiences:

"I realized that I had become everything that was bad. When I was a child and I got into trouble my father would say, 'Don't do that or you'll end up on living the street eating out of bins'. It's something that I think a lot of parents say, and I'd become that."

The stigma experienced by Luke and Baptiste from begging extended to food scavenging, which as their method of subsistence, led them to what can be considered a deeper contact with "the world of the street" and inevitably greater marginalization. Luke and Baptiste both progressed away from this through finding accommodation in squats, but mainly through their efforts to find employment. Like Baptiste, Luke stopped food

scavenging when he was earning money. In fact, Luke is famous at the Radar for no longer eating scavenged food. He has his own separate kitchen in his bedroom, purchases his food and cooks all of his meals. He has been doing so for three years and explained to me that this was because of health problems linked to the fact that he had a very imbalanced diet when he was unemployed, begging and scavenging⁶¹.

MIGRANTS AND LEGALITY

300 asylum-seekers from Albania, including 90 children spent four and a half months living in tents under a bridge in central Lyon waiting to be granted asylum and housing by the French government⁶². Amongst them were Elken, his wife Mal and their four children⁶³, whom I met at the Radar following the rejection of their first housing request after their eviction from under the bridge. For this family, food scavenging was a desperate practice associated with their time on the street. Charities frequently visited the camp and through them the family obtained food aid from the Restaurants du Coeur. Elken and Mal explained to me that they relied on this food aid as a “safer food option” for their children and in particular their 9 month old son. Despite consuming some scavenged food for themselves from time to time, Elken and Mal did not cook with scavenged food and did not participate in bin-diving outings.

⁶¹ Luke : “Eating was never a pleasure for me before. I ate because I was hungry, and I ate what I could find in bins, or what I could steal... I also went to food donation centres, but when I started working, I couldn’t make it in time; they have strict opening and closing times. Nowadays I really enjoy cooking for myself, I can’t cook very well, but I’m happy to be able to choose what I eat.”

⁶² (Blanchard 2013).

⁶³ Their exile was provoked by a mafia-led vendetta against Elken’s family, which escalated into the assault of his father, his brother’s death and the murder of his brother-in-law.

“We don’t get a lot of food from the Restaurants du Coeur, so some times we go to the kitchen and take a few things like potatoes and other vegetables. We will eat food from the market, but we won’t get food from bins. I see a lot of Roma looking through bins. We are not Roma, but maybe if we looked through bins people would see us and think that we are.”

As for Luke and Baptiste stigma casts a shadow on the practice of food scavenging for subsistence. It can be argued that Luke and Baptiste’s French nationality alleviates part of the negativity cast in their direction, in some ways they are “the country’s poor”. However, from Elken and Mal’s perspective food scavenging would have a twofold effect, not only would they be seen as “poor” they would be “another country’s poor in this country”. Indeed, this is precisely how, when still living in Albania, they perceived the Roma. Placed in the same position as the latter nowadays, their reluctance to scavenge food may be a survival in its own right: a ‘social survival’, a desire to progress out of marginality rather than engage further into it. In addition to this, Luke and Baptiste’s cultural framework of reference is one in which marginalisation through politicisation is acknowledged.

Elken and Mal explained that they had not resorted to scavenging for food in Albania as they were both in employment at the time; a situation they were aspiring to in France, but that was being hindered by their lack of documentation. The question of employment and of legal status is another dimension of the analysis of the subversive nature of scavenging. Few squatters had jobs, but very few did not get from unemployment benefits. Whereas the majority of squatters at the Radar were actively seeking a deliberate form of marginalization, this is the exact opposite of what Elken, Mal and Thiero (below) were hoping to achieve.

Thiero fled his country aged 10 during civil conflict. After years of travelling through different countries in West Africa, he illegally immigrated to Europe via Italy where he was detained. Escaping detention, he sought asylum in Germany, and after being rejected, travelled to Lyon in May 2013. Thiero's first experience in a squat was in Lyon living in a building with no electricity or running water, occupied by other migrants. The absence of French citizens in the squat led to an illegal eviction by the police a month later. Through word of mouth, Thiero managed to encounter another squat, where the Radar's Roger and Andrew were living.

Other residents had told me that Thiero never ate scavenged food, and had never managed to find out why. In our interview, Thiero told me first of all that he did not like French food, and that consequently, he did not like the scavenged food. Cooking enabled him to eat what was culturally familiar to him. As with the notion of Elken and Mal's "social survival", for Thiero it seems that cooking his own food was linked to preserving his cultural identity. This aside, there were practical and longer-term reasons behind his refusal to eat scavenged food. Indeed, Thiero was required by the refugee charity dealing with his asylum request to eat at a homeless canteen every day. It took him half an hour to travel there, and he had to go twice a day, he explained that if he missed a meal this would be recorded and that the charity would assume he was receiving help from a French acquaintance and relinquish his case. More specifically, if Thiero failed to show he would be disqualified from the charity's financial aid services. His commitment enabled him to be granted a monthly stipend of 340€, which he spent on food (approximately 10€ per week), his phone and clothing.

CONCLUSION

Thiero's situation is comparable to the Albanian family's in the way that he negotiated his subsistence and survival through official routes, rather than resorting to food scavenging as an immediate way to guarantee his survival. Furthermore, like Elken and Mal, Thiero's long-term project was to find a job and start a family, hence gain a legal status in France. The precarity of these different situations once again challenges the notion of food scavenging as subsistence for those most in need. Their self assessments suggested they were all in considerable need – a view that was confirmed by pile sorts where they were highlighted as the most vulnerable people in the squat.

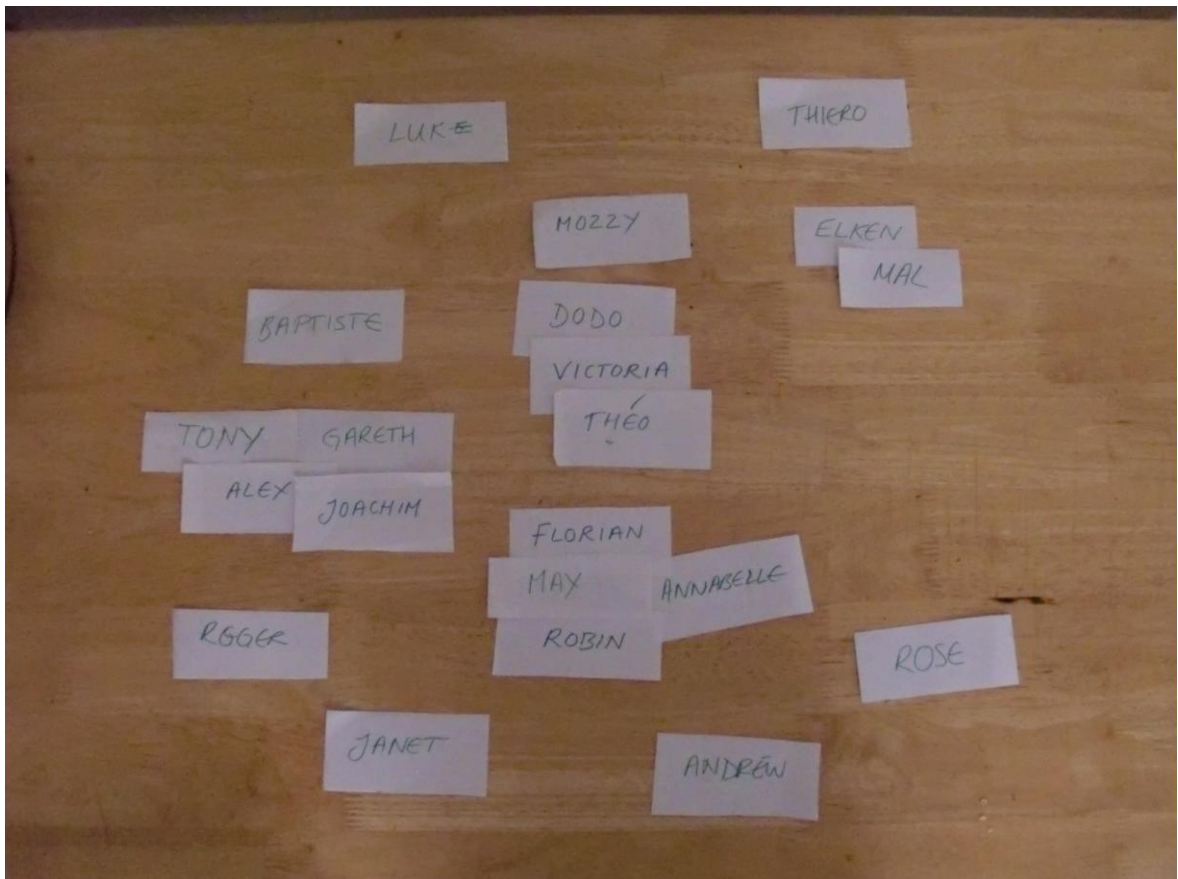


PHOTO 8: MAX'S PILE SORTS

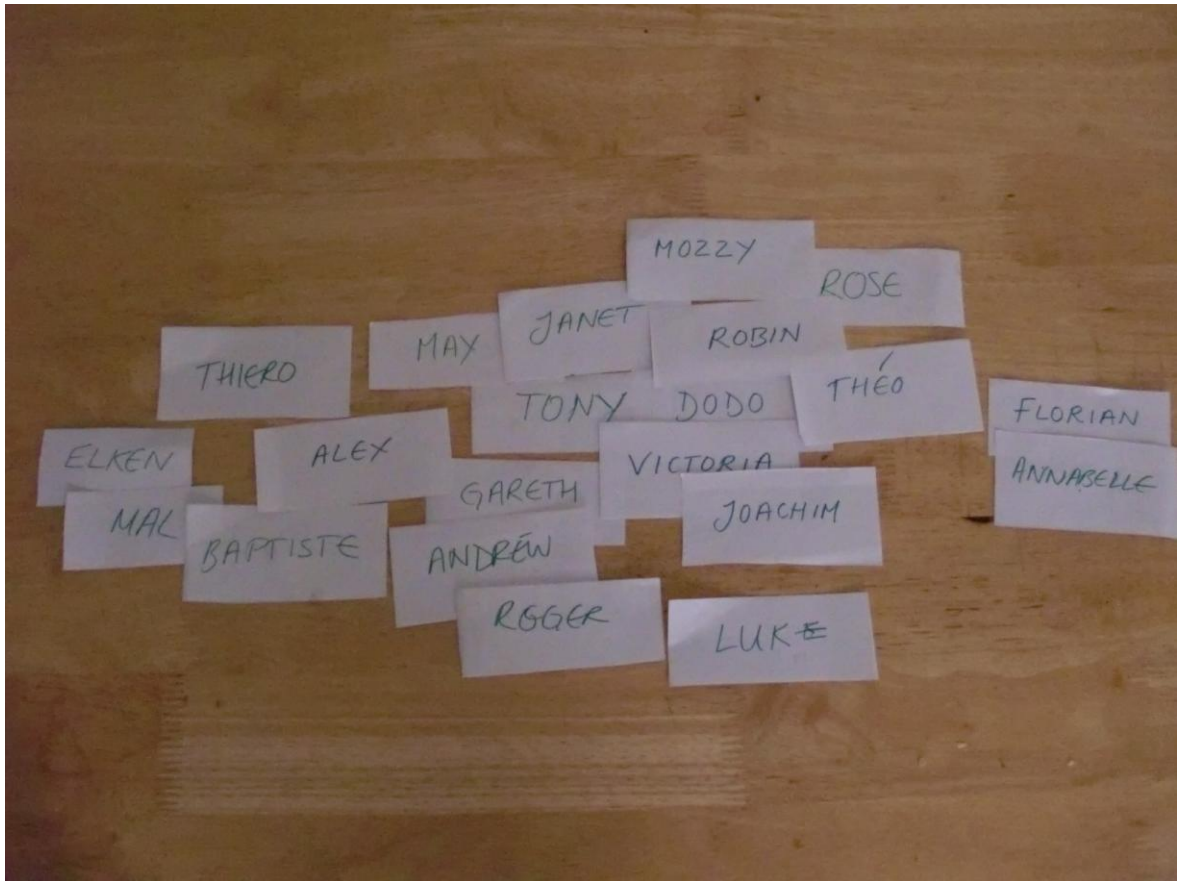


PHOTO 9: GARETH'S PILE SORTS

The Radar residents were ranked in terms of perceived wealth (in Photo 9). Elken, Mal and Thiero are placed at the very bottom of the spectrum, and during the interview Gareth commented on their lack of participation in most events at the Radar, and that few people interacted with them due to language barriers⁶⁴. Max's pile sorts (Photo 8) reflects the marginality of those already 'most marginalised' in the squat. He formed what he called a "concentric circle" and reflected on the notions of "interiority and exteriority at play in the Radar". He felt that Elken, Mal and Thiero belonged on the outside of the circle; he saw them as an inherent part of the squat, but equally units of their own, "communities within the community". Luke was placed at the edges due to his lack of

⁶⁴ I personally did not encounter such barriers.

involvement with food scavenging, but retained a central importance due to his seniority and squatting experience.

6 - DISCUSSION

As findings show, scavenging for food as a method of subversion and subsistence presents different challenges, and meanings for the individuals concerned. On the one hand, food scavenging as a method of subversion is ascertained by anti-food waste campaigning groups, for which scavenging forms part of a communication strategy aimed at engaging the public and addressing the issue of food waste. Within the context of the Radar, food scavenging as a method of subversion finds its defined as such by virtue of being the main source of sustenance for its inhabitants. It can be said that the squat informs the subversive dimension of the food scavenging that occurs. On the other hand, food scavenging as subversion finds limits in its commonality and redundancy as an inherent part of the Radar's everyday life, as well as informants' unequal engagements with regards to committing to food scavenging primarily as a political act. On another level, the subversion exists because of the existence of a norm, from which it is excluded. The reproduction of the 'system' within the squat, in terms of adopting conventional consumption practices, for example, and the 'settlement' into order that this implies, threatens to undermine the subversive quality of food scavenging. The Kitchen Crisis exemplifies the constant evolution of the community and by extension a constant voluntary renewal of disequilibrium that reaffirms disorder (Martinez et al. 2013).

Moreover, the consumption of food waste is effectively the consumption of something that has become unwanted, rejected, and made invisible. The act of food scavenging renders visible the waste, but in doing so, and particularly through the symbolic dimensions of consumption, threatens "social stability", according to Douglas' (1966) theory of pollution, excluded to preserve established order. The more politically active

members of the Radar who identified as anarchists, stated a clear desire to “destroy the system from within”; by feeding themselves from the wastefulness, they literalise this aspiration but also take risks. Indeed, Les Gars’Pilleurs evoked the increasing burden of the awareness of food waste, the progressive addiction to scavenging, and ultimately the sensation of becoming ill (symbolically) by “feeding oneself from society’s sickness”. Furthermore, beyond the subversion of a wasteful system is the destruction of the cause of that subversion in the first place, more eloquently expressed: “the logical telos of freeganism [is] to bring an end to itself by encouraging businesses to do something more sensible with their surplus than throwing it in the bin” (Whatling 2009).

As discussed, subversion was certainly not a universal priority at the Radar. As homeless and migrant informants’ experiences show, food scavenging was a symptom of their precarious condition, rather than a voluntary undertaking, or a conscious marginalisation, as it is enacted by more privileged members of the Radar. Indeed, this echoes Barnard's (2011) summary of encounters between freegans and homeless individuals during food scavenging outings: “What seems empowering to freegans is a mark of extreme disempowerment for others.” Within the confines of the squat’s walls, the interaction between those who choose to scavenge for food and those who must scavenge for food to survive is blurred and bridged by the collective act of food scavenging, more accurately, the availability of the scavenged food for all, without discrimination, even for those who choose not to consume it. Furthermore, my research confirmed that to a certain extent food scavenging engages already politicised individuals into a process of marginalisation, which the squat also leads to, and on the other hand, politicises already marginalised individuals. Indeed, despite the heterogeneity of the community, I felt that food scavenging had an equalising force and value, as previously mentioned, and enabled the residents to challenge some of their own political positioning, ideals and practical

applications of these stances, particularly regarding overconsumption and/or the consumption of processed goods (as evoked in Rose's interview referenced in Chapter 4).

Furthermore, the subsistence dimension of food scavenging revealed power dynamics at play within the community. However, rather than stemming from a tension between passive and active, political or apolitical members of the squat with regards to food scavenging (as evoked in the Kitchen Crisis), I believe these dynamics were the result of a third dimension to food scavenging. Indeed, I found that aside from the subsistence and subversion dichotomy, the economic implications of not having to buy food was crucial to Radar informants insofar as those not 'in need' still had precarious situations and risked becoming more so with a lack of income and other support. In this way food scavenging provided a way for these individuals to balance between momentarily being able to *choose* to scavenge, and *having* to scavenge. This is therefore a nuance with regards to the term "subsistence". Moreover, the possible nuance to the term "subversion", is the fact that another aspect of this third dimension is the moral disgust and ethical positioning with regards to the food waste, particularly in the squat setting where those better-off cohabitate with those 'most in need' on a regular basis. This ethical stance was equally demonstrated by the supermarket managers and anti-food waste campaigns discussed in Chapter 3, and consequently seems to be a universally valid reaction to the paradox of hunger in a society of abundance.

Ultimately, I believe my findings regarding the question of whether urban practices of food scavenging are methods of subsistence or subversion are applicable to other squatting communities that fit the heterogeneous model of the Radar's group of residents. In particular, these findings are applicable to squatting communities due to the fact that subversion is a function of squat culture, in general, and not limited to France. Moreover, my observations and analyses regarding varying relationships to, and

perceptions of, food waste, are more universally valid, and engage with issues brought to light by a long line of anthropological theory regarding the questions of waste, pollution and food's role within communities, that due to a lack of space and scope I have not been able to fully develop in this present dissertation.

Finally, food scavenging has been demonstrated as a powerful visual, practical, social and communication tool in raising awareness about food waste, but also highlighting the problem of this waste with regards to the prevalence of food insecurity in developed countries. Furthermore, the increase in academic research and focus on the issue not only of food waste, but of alternative methods of consumption and subsistence that relate to it, as well as the current reforms carried out by EU governments with regards to shelf life and use-by dates, in addition to aesthetic standards, and most importantly the redistribution of discarded food to charitable organisations, highlight a wave of change with regards to the issue of food waste.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: 11 KEY MEASURES OF THE *PACTE*

1. Un signe de ralliement manifestant la mobilisation de chacun pour lutter contre le gaspillage.
2. Une journée nationale de lutte contre le gaspillage, d'un prix « anti-gaspi ». des pratiques vertueuses et d'une labellisation de ces pratiques.
3. Des formations sur ce thème dans les lycées agricoles et les écoles hôtelières.
4. Des clauses relatives à la lutte contre le gaspillage dans les marchés publics de la restauration collective.
5. Une meilleure connaissance du cadre législatif et réglementaire sur la propriété et la responsabilité lors d'un don alimentaire.
6. La lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire dans les plans relatifs à la prévention des déchets.
7. La mesure de la lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire dans la responsabilité sociale des entreprises.
8. Remplacement systématique de la mention dlou par « à consommer de préférence avant... ».
9. Une campagne de communication sur la lutte contre le gaspillage.
10. Une nouvelle version du site dédié : www.gaspillagealimentaire.fr
11. Expérimentation, sur un an, du don alimentaire par les citoyens via une plate-forme numérique.

APPENDIX 2: SUPPLEMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHS



PHOTO 10: UNLOADING THE VAN AFTER A BIN-DIVING OUTING (CREDIT: RC)



PHOTO 11: PUTTING THE FOOD AWAY (CREDIT: RC)



PHOTO 12: PUTTING THE FOOD AWAY (CREDIT: RC)



PHOTO 13: PUTTING THE FOOD AWAY (CREDIT: RC)