

Disaster Mobilities of Climate Change Creative Project

Beyond the Plate: An Immersive Eating Experience

Essay Title:

Beyond the Plate: Conceptualising Climate Change-Induced Food Insecurity in the UK Through the Lens of a Mobility Justice Framework

Premise:

A dinner party from the future! Set in 2100 and designed to highlight the effects of a food supply crisis. A copy of the invite I sent out to my friends a few weeks in advance is attached below.



About the Event:

This event was designed in line with one of the key principles of mobility justice – epistemic justice. My main intention was to try and target a small group of western, middle-class people in the UK – which happens to be the demographic of my friendship circle of students in Manchester. I wanted people to think beyond food insecurity as a removed issue, faced only by far away countries and as only really a problem for future generations. I think it is really important for this demographic to gain an understanding of food insecurity as a social and moral issue – the people who have done the least to contribute to climate change are the most susceptible to feeling its effects and suffering as a consequence. As will be demonstrated below, I made choices in terms of seating and arbitrary division of guests to try and mimic this.

I also wanted to try and make the situation somewhat light-hearted – crisis narratives can be helpful at conveying urgency, but sometimes they actually paralyse people into inaction. My hope was thus to play some part in conceptualising a new type of knowledge/discourse/perception of climate change-induced food insecurity, where people are not scared to talk about the future, and, as a result, may be

able to proceed with a more open-mind, and the sense that their actions and choices carry meaning and power.

The planned order of events was as follows:

- Arrival of guests: A token is chosen at random to assign each person to one of two eating groups, a 'high' and a 'low' table. The guests do not yet know what this signifies.
- Drinks and nibbles: Whilst the final bits of food were being prepared, guests mingle and enjoy local drinks and a selection of future appropriate snacks.
- Seating: The guests are ushered through to the dining room, where the two tables are set out. The 'high' table is nicely decorated and fully laid for only a few guests, whilst the 'low' table – literally lower down with people seated on the floor – is cramped and crowded, with cutlery and crockery to share in the middle.
- Starter: The guests are served the same meal – again, future appropriate – but in different ways. 'High' table guests are served first and in separate bowls, whereas the 'low' table share from a bowl in the middle of the table.
- Main: The menu is annotated for the 'low' table regarding lack of availability of certain ingredients. As the 'high' table is served an extravagant platter, the 'low' table must watch on as they receive a few bowls of the ingredients that were able to be sourced in an era of dwindling food supply.
- Decision time: The 'high' table guests are prompted to discuss what they would like to do about the unfolding situation. They are allowed to keep or share the food. It is important that the 'low' table look on as their fate is decided by people who have little to do with them.
- Distribution: When the decision has been made, food will eventually be brought out for the people at the 'low' table. Hopefully, discussion will be sparked about what just occurred.
- Dessert: A dessert made to reflect positive, climate-friendly eating habits is served – e.g. vegan/local produce. As this is eaten, there is opportunity for me to explain the topic, reveal what the metaphor stands for (if people have not yet worked it out!), and ask people their thoughts.
- Questionnaire: After the meal, an online form will be distributed and filled in to gain some insight into how people reacted to the event, and what their main takeaways were!

About the Menu:

The menu was carefully selected in order to reflect some of the issues and ideas discussed in the essay. Food and drinks were chosen to try and reflect some of the things that might be eaten in the future, either due to attempts to be more climate-friendly, or simply because staple items that we have now will no longer be available, requiring alternatives. The main course was prepared using standard, familiar ingredients, but the "social experiment" aspect where the majority of the people in the room were simply not served a proper meal due to unavailable ingredients demonstrated both these supply issues and how social inequality might exacerbate this for certain groups. The menus are annotated later on in the compiled document for ease of understanding!

Interesting Links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLY4EV9Qqs8>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20211021-the-coffee-with-zero-air-miles>

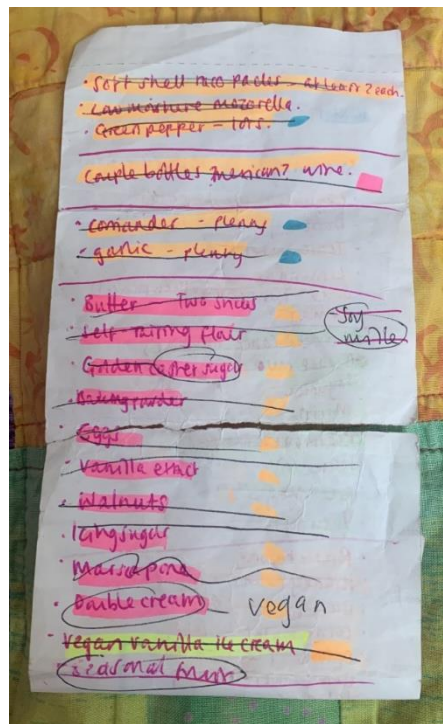
<https://theconversation.com/eating-insects-has-long-made-sense-in-africa-the-world-must-catch-up-70419>

<https://www.kew.org/about-us/press-media/future-foods>

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2014/oct/29/diet-climate-maple-syrup-coffee-global-warming>

Pictures:

Attached below are various pictures of preparation for the dinner party and the event itself. Please note that all participants have given me their permission to share these photos!



Preparations began early with a very detailed, colour-coded shopping list...

And there certainly was a lot to carry!



Dried (and then rehydrated) seaweed from the Cornish coast.



Avocados! One of the most vulnerable foods to climate change, though.



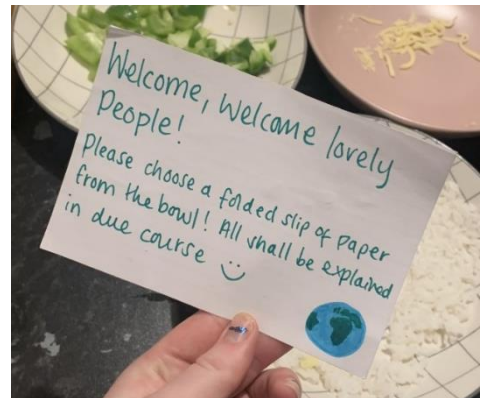
Rainbow rice salad ingredients.



Roastworks coffee – the company pioneering UK-grown coffee beans.



Vegan coffee and walnut cake ingredients – my first ever vegan bake!



And just like that, it was time for guests to arrive and take a coloured token to assign their seats.



Guests enjoying their Didsbury gin aperitif.



One of the best outfits of the evening – ‘cryogenically frozen Fidel Castro brought back from the dead to start an eco-communist revolution – because you can’t make environmental progress without a good bit of Marxism’ (disclaimer: former politics undergraduate).



Crickets... love them or hate them, they could be a viable meat option in the future.



Roasted crickets in their packets – lot of flavour options.



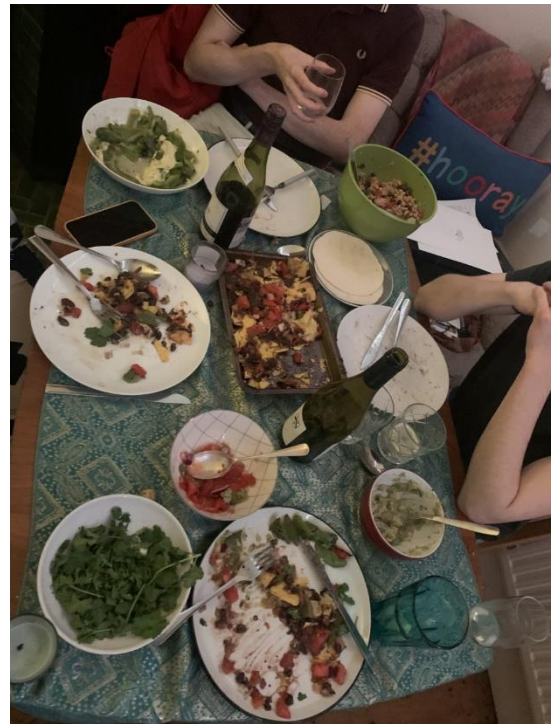
The 1% - guests lucky enough to be sat at the 'high' table.



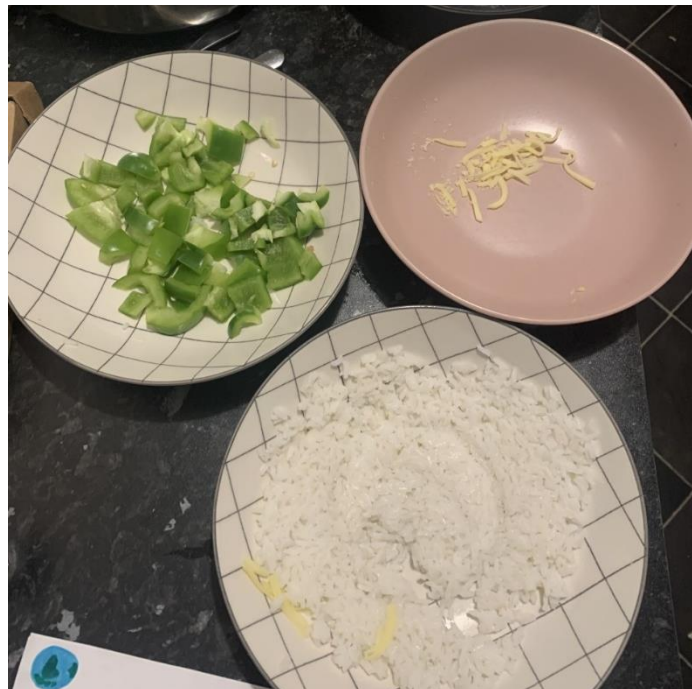
And the rest – sat on the floor and taking their cutlery and crockery from the middle of the table.



Seaweed salad for starter.



Feast at the 'high' table...



Whilst the low table got scraps.



Oh no... not a great reaction to the scraps. It seems a revolution has begun.



And it continues.



Rice everywhere.



And on the floor – can't wait to clean up.



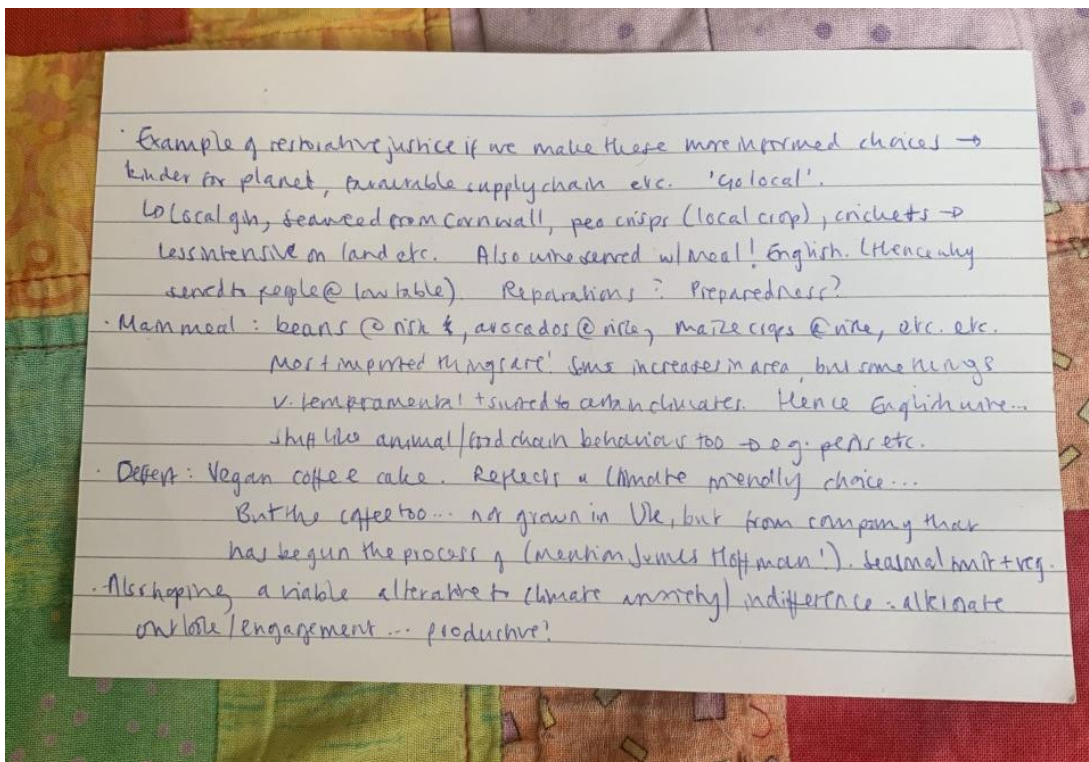
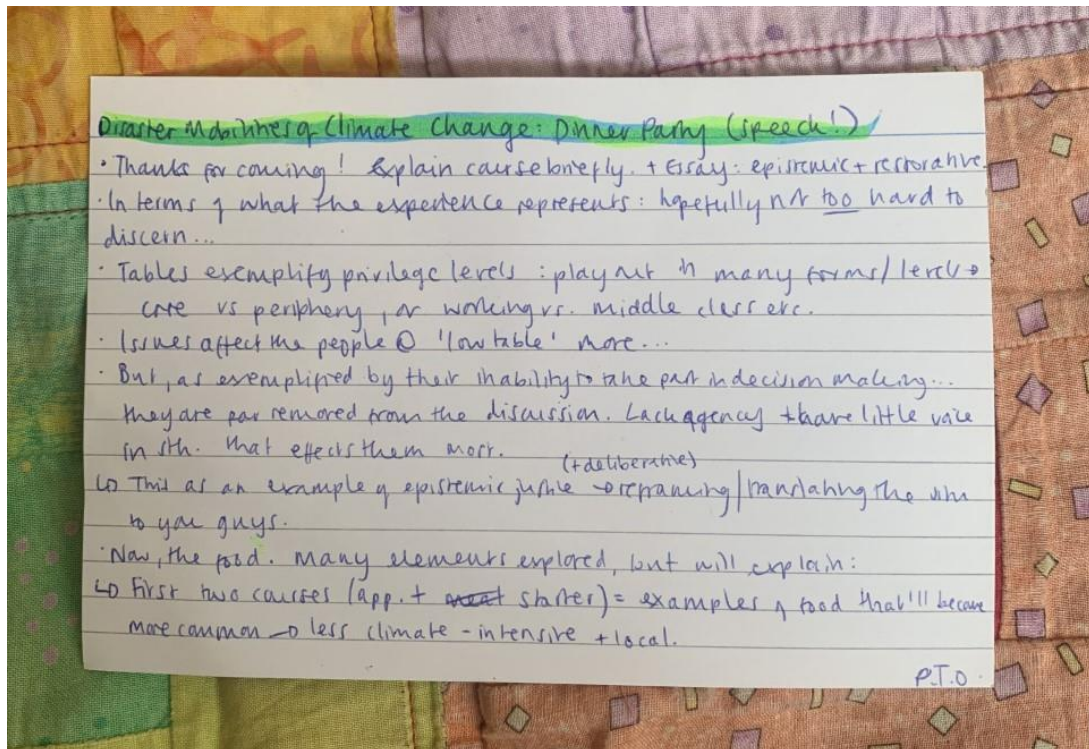
The 'high' table eventually decided to give the 'low' table food – of which there was luckily plenty!



Vegan coffee and walnut cake in all its glory.



Lots of leftovers! Don't worry, none went to waste, thanks to my hungry housemates.



And finally, here are a few notes for the little speech I gave at the end of the evening to link everything back to climate change and the related disaster of food insecurity.