

# Markets4People Laidlaw Scholarship review 2019

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## Reflections on the first year of the Laidlaw Scholarship

Working with the Markets4People team in the School of Geography at the University of Leeds as a research scholar for 6 weeks over summer has been quite the journey. I have been involved in different aspects of the project, both working in a team and through my own individual observations and analysis. I have been able to go to each of the markets and meet the actual traders and customers, to discuss what the community and social value means to them. I have also been able to listen to interviews being conducted with policymakers, and their role of managing the market as a space and how their interests/priorities can often juxtapose the interests of traders. This summary is simply to show a quick overview of my journey through the 6 weeks experience I had, and what I learnt from my experience.



Sketch made during observations at case study markets. M. Worcester, 2019.

It has been a valuable experience to work with academics so closely and understand how the entire research process works, both in terms of qualitative and quantitative data and how many people are involved in the project (including individuals who are not University of Leeds staff). Before this project, I was not aware of how many different organisations and individuals were needed to conduct research at this scale. My naivety was quickly shaken and transformed after attending the first meeting in the summer and meeting a representative from the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) and another academic from the sociology department at the Open University towards the end of the project. It was also interesting to learn about other bodies that were involved in the project, including the Economic and Social Research Council and the New Economics Foundation. During the meetings I was able to see how academics conduct a meeting using an agenda, keeping minutes of the session and then scheduling the next meeting towards the end. I was also able to see how different ideas were

being suggested in the first meeting, and then become finalised as an output towards the last few meetings over the 6 weeks.

The focus groups (discussed in greater detail below) were one of the highlights of the research period I was involved in. I was able help in each stage, including recruitment, creating focus group materials and taking notes/setting up the focus groups at each city near each market case study. This was one of the most interesting parts of the research I was involved in, as I was able to see how difficult it can be to not only manage to recruit participants over the phone or by text message, but also how conversation between the facilitator and the participants had to be kept on topic, especially when certain participants would move the conversation to something less relevant to the project. Another aspect that was interesting to observe during the focus groups was how the facilitator had to make sure everyone in the room was able to voice their opinion during the conversation, as some participants were more comfortable to talk than others, or there would be a clear power dynamic of which voice was being heard more often than others. As we only had 90 minutes for each focus group, it was vital that each question was covered, but also keeping in mind that if the conversation did wander off into a topic we previously did not question before, to then let this conversation unfold between the participants. We wanted to keep the conversation as fluid as possible, and the facilitator's role was to keep track of time and make sure the conversation was relevant to the overall research question. My role was to take notes during the session to observe non-verbal communication (see 'Focus groups with market users', below).

Following on from this, I was also given the task to come up with ways of observing each of the markets. These observations were to be done on the same day or in the day before/after the focus groups. Eventually after considering various ways of observing the markets, I decided to observe the markets by taking photos, notes and then creating sketches to highlight the community and social value of each space. This experience was quite different to the other roles I had during the research period, as I was working independently in these markets on my own time schedule and interest of what to note down/explore further throughout a day dedicated to the observation. It definitely brought me out of my comfort zone and made me realise how these spaces are genuinely a place for many people to come and either have a chat with their friends or a place to communicate to traders about the quality or price of produce on sale. It was equally as interesting to see how the space changes throughout the day, from how the market begins to open at the start of the day with all the traders setting up their stalls, to peak time when the market is absolutely packed with people bustling to get the best deal for their lunch time meal. To see how the customers change throughout the day, across all walks of life including different ages, ethnicities and (dis)abilities was intriguing, as it opened my eyes to how this social space allows accessibility to allow various social groups to intertwine and collectively enjoy what the market has to offer.

The sketches and paintings I took during these observations were then later made into more elaborate and experimental pieces, to show the various ways community and social value is embedded throughout the market. I wanted to use colour and shape to visually represent how the market is a dynamic space for all, and how the relationships between the traders and customers is unique to any other retail space. Notes were also taken throughout the day to then be written into blog posts of what I observed for [Grainger Market](#), [Queens Market](#) and [Bury Market](#) (hyperlinks for each market underlined).

After finalising the observations and focus groups, I began working on the coding list for the 3 open ended questions for the '[Community Value TRM – Market Users' Questionnaire 2019](#)'. This was completed by 500 market customers at each market, with 1500 answers in total to then be coded on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Overall, it was a very arduous process, but also very fulfilling, as I have

always wanted to code before this project, and it was interesting to work with quantitative data and see how the information could be used to correlate to the qualitative data outputs. I enjoyed the process of working through each of the codes manually, and being critical when making decisions, like how to title a code, which codes titles may have similar definitions to each other, which codes to remove and which codes to add to the code list. This made me think in a completely different way to when I was in the actual markets observing traders and customers and taking down detailed and descriptive notes.



Shoppers at Queen's Market taking part in the community value survey

As well as working on the actual research project, I was able to attend the Royal Geographical Society Conference 2019 in London, hosted at Imperial College. During this conference, I saw different academics across the world present their findings about market spaces and the community value of these spaces. Many interesting studies were discussed, such as the *fripe* economy in Tunis, the capital city of Tunisia (by Katharina Grueneis at Durham University, UK) and the forced relocation and reordering of urban space in Ghana's capital city, Accra (by Amandine Spire at University Paris Diderot, France). As a first-year student, I was not aware of the scale of academia and this topic in general, bringing into context how many marketplaces there are across the world, and not just in the UK. It might be naïve to say, but I didn't realise how contested these spaces are, and how cultural, historical, environmental and political attributes can shape the dynamics of how a marketplace operates overtime, and how this can have changing effects for both customers and traders. It was interesting to see how different academics approach marketspaces both similarly and differently, and how methodologies are conducted to get their final outputs, and then be presented to an audience of people in a conference room. After leaving the conference, I was interested in learning more about the way marketplaces (and community spaces in general) are shaped overtime, and how communities themselves also change as a result.

Overall, my time as a Laidlaw scholar on the Markets4People project this year has been eye-opening, as I have seen the other side of university life that many students do not get to witness. I was able to form working relationships with academics over 6 weeks of attending meetings and going to the 'field' itself, and it has shaped the way I now view academia and the role of a researcher. I have now finished

by first period of research this summer and will continue to carry out my second and last period of research next summer in 2020 for another 6 weeks.

### Focus groups with market users

Through my time working with the Markets4People team as a Laidlaw Research and Leadership Scholar over summer, I have been involved in many parts of the project, including the focus groups at each of the market case studies. I was able to see how the sample size of all the respondents across each of the markets that responded to the survey was narrowed to select key demographic areas which are of interest for the project, such as disadvantaged, marginalised, hard-to-reach or vulnerable groups. For example, in Bury Market in Manchester, a large proportion of customers are 60+ years in age and the team also decided to focus on market users living in deprived neighbourhoods. Similarly, at Grainger Market in Newcastle, the project team decided to recruit market users over the age of 60 or living in deprived neighbourhoods for the two focus groups held there.. At Queens Market in London, the two focus groups were focussed on Asian/British-Asian women and Black/Black-British market users. In this blog post, I will break down the different stages of planning I was involved in, including preparing the focus group materials, recruitment, contacting the participants and the actual focus groups themselves.



Photographs, maps and other visual aids set out for the focus groups

Prior to each of the focus groups, I was involved in researching, preparing and finalising focus group materials to be used in each session. At the beginning of this process, I researched what types of focus group materials are commonly used to start an initial conversation about the topic (in this case the community and social value of markets), as well as activities which could be used to fluidly move in between the session to discuss the wider consensus of the market's community value and specific questions like 'what impact it would have on you if the market wasn't here?'. Initially, I researched activities which could be adapted to the different questions and areas of interest about the community value of markets, like using flipchart paper divided into two columns, one labelled 'Traders' and the other 'Customers', which could be used to discuss how each participant interacts with these groups and how these relationships differ. Other focus materials included using photos of other types of community spaces in relation to the market, which were then asked to be rated by importance of

community value compared to the market, using handmade numbered lollipop sticks numbered from 1 to 5. I also created maps of the markets which could then be used in the focus groups, with the initial idea of an accessible way for the participants to be able to identify different areas in the market and possibly show whereabouts they shop in the market or meet their friends. This process was interesting, as I was able to see how initial ideas were discussed in a group of academics to either accept and adapt the materials for the session or be rejected altogether because of how they may not work for the session itself.

After the materials were finalised, I moved onto recruitment for the focus groups for each of the markets. Before recruitment officially started, we had to complete a few documents, such as letters which would be sent out to the participants who agreed to attend the focus groups, such as consent forms, a general overview of the project and a letter containing all the dates, times and location of the focus group in the run-up to the session. I was given the task to create a list of potential questions participants may ask during the phone calls about whether they could attend the focus groups, such as 'what would happen to my personal information after the focus group?' or 'should I arrive early?' These questions allowed us to create a recruitment script, which basically had a word-for-word document of how we would introduce ourselves to the participant and record down whether they were able to attend the focus group or not. I helped to call the participants on a mobile phone owned by the university, which was used to specifically call or text the participants.

At the beginning, I found calling the participants to be quite difficult, as I am not very comfortable talking to strangers on the phone. However, the script was very helpful to have, as it reminded me exactly what to say in stages, and for me to remember simple details, like mentioning travel costs would be compensated at the start of the focus group. If for whatever reason the participant couldn't attend, we would then ask if we could take down their email address to send out future information about the project. Otherwise, if the participant agreed to attend the event, we would then send out follow-up information, either through post or email, of the consent form, general information about the research project, and a document containing details about where and when the focus group would be taking place. My role was to create simple maps of how to get to the location of where the focus group was taking place and then fold these three documents into envelopes to be sent to the participants, using the address details on our protected excel spreadsheet. I wasn't aware how much preparation went into recruiting participants for a focus group, but this was so insightful to have, as many people wouldn't know the different stages and how difficult it can be. Although we had many participants who originally said they would be interested in a focus group prior to recruitment, only a small percentage from each market agreed to attend or were even available to attend that day.



Taking notes at a focus group with customers of Queen's Market, London

At the focus groups themselves, my role was to help set up and take notes during the session. Setting up the focus group involved getting to the location and then laying out all the focus group materials on the table provided by the venue. The materials we ended up taking to each of the focus groups were printed photos of maps of the markets, photos of the market, heat scale of importance, flipchart paper and lollipop sticks number 1 to 5 for each participant. I also helped lay out consent forms and information about the research in front of each chair around the table, to remind the participants what the project was about. Also, in Queens Market in London, we had a separate table in the room for some of the participants' children, which had different types of toys like puzzles, colouring books and card games. This was because a few of the participants were only able to come to the focus group if we allowed them to bring their children. We managed to cater for the children, who seemed quite focussed on the activities on their table, and by the end of the session, there was a bit of mess after everyone left (which we then cleaned up before leaving the venue).

Another role I had was to direct the participants into the room and look out for anyone who seemed lost outside the room we were holding the focus group in. This didn't seem to be a problem though, as I was holding a sign labelled 'The University of Leeds Markets4People Research'. During the focus group, I was assigned the role of note-taker, which basically means what it says. I had to observe the participants throughout the 90 minute session, and note down any non-verbal communication, such as if one participant was nodding in agreement to another participants' point, or if any of the participants used the focus group materials to express their answer further (such as using the lollipop sticks to express the level of importance for each community space mentioned in relation to the market). This required me to be quite fast and able to sustain concentration for a straight 90 minutes. The role made me realise that although recording the answers of the participants is very valuable, it is also important to note down the way participants are responding to each other to various topics that are brought up through simple gestures, like rolling of the eyes or shaking the head in disagreement. This provides a greater dynamic to how the participants worked and reacted to each other that day and could emphasise the answers logged on the transcript from the recording.

Each of the focus groups were focussed on asking the customers about what they value in the market. This involved asking customers questions such as how long they have been coming to the market, what they buy at the market, how they spend their time there and how important the market is to them in relation to other community spaces where they live. The focus groups lasted around 90 minutes, with refreshments provided by the venue which could be accessed throughout the session. Although there was much preparation put into researching, finalising and creating the materials to be used in the sessions, they weren't used as often as we expected during the session by any of the participants for each of the markets. Although, it could be worth noting that the materials may have set the tone for the session as the participants walked through the doors, and materials as simple as photos of the market area and the stalls sparked conversations about certain traders/experiences they had in the past in relation to the questions asked by the facilitator(s).

The session was carefully planned to have certain time allocated for each question, so that we didn't go over time, as well as providing enough time for participants to talk about a certain topic. It was specifically interesting to see how each of the focus groups differed, as the types of customers were completely different. For example, in Queens Market, there were some conversations about the safety of the market in terms of security, the importance of traditional food and reliance on low prices and high-quality produce. Whereas in Grainger Market, the conversations focussed on the future of the market, like possibly becoming a market consisting primarily of food stalls, about bringing and engaging young people with the market and the challenges of the city's separate Christmas market in December. This was interesting to compare, as it highlighted the different priorities of market users across different markets, but also how they had the same community and social value of these spaces being a place to have relationships with traders, as well as meet friends and family on a regular basis.

As a young researcher, it was interesting to see how everyday people interact with a space (especially one they visit quite frequently, and where some have been visiting for decades), as well as how important the space is to them and their families. Talking first hand to the very people I helped to recruit and contact over phone and email was quite interesting, as I was able to see how a name on an Excel spreadsheet would then transform into a real-life market customer/person only a few weeks later. This whole process was very satisfying to have been a part of. Additionally, it was equally as satisfying to have been involved in the entire process, from researching focus group materials to recruitment and then to being part of each of the focus groups in three different locations spread across the country. Overall, this was an insightful experience to be a part of and working with the Markets4People team from beginning to end has definitely shaped how I view the entire process (and difficulty) of how focus groups are initially conceived, refined and successfully executed.

### **Bury Market Observations**

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, I went to Bury Market, located in the Greater Manchester, to hold observations throughout the day, particularly about the social and community value of this dynamic space. However, I was aware beforehand that the complete community/social value cannot be determined solely through one day of observations. Rather, these observations are an add-on and a basic approach to observe how the traders and customers interact, what sort of people come to this market throughout the day, and how the stalls vary in the wider retail area of surrounding shops and shopping centres. Ultimately, these observations are part of the ongoing Markets4People research, which supports the idea that markets are a dynamic space for social interaction and community connection.



Shoppers at Bury Market

Only a half hour journey on the local tram service from the central Manchester train station, the market is easily accessible, with only a short walk away for the tram stop. I noticed on my journey there, the majority of people who were on the tram with me were mainly elderly Caucasian men and women, already holding 'bag for life' bags and their trolleys between their feet, each eagerly waiting to be filled with whatever market deals were available that day. Although this is quite simple, I noticed the signs leading to the market itself isn't very clear, with the first visible sign seen after the tram line crossing outside the actual station towards Millgate shopping centre. There didn't seem to be signs from Millgate to Bury Market, as it already appeared to be a smooth transition from the shopping centre to the market, so possibly no signs are necessary for locals/tourists to find the market. Or perhaps, the coach service which is active on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays is the main way of bringing in tourists around the country, so the tram signs aren't a priority. Either way, the walk leading to the market was very interesting, as I walked past higher retail shops which then slowly transitioned to 350 stalls congregated in an indoor/outdoor market space.

It could be because, when I went, school children had just started their summer holidays, but there was a small bouncy castle and a miniature carousel/small fair rides placed in the middle of the open space, right in front of the well-known café Katsouris. Children were playing all around the open space, as parents appeared to be sitting on nearby seating areas or in the nearby overlooking cafes. As I arrived around 11am, it was absolutely ram-packed with people everywhere, especially in Katsouris with orders being shouted from the cashier to the kitchen and most of the seats taken by groups of elderly people and families with young children. I sat down with my tea and noticed that opposite the café, along the roofs of the stalls, were many banners and signs advertising the 'Famous Bury Black Pudding', a noticeably popular product this market seems to be known for. Another advertisement I saw in this market was how Bury Market is named 'Britain's Favourite' in bold white writing, stating that the market's main priority is 'putting the customers first'. This common phrase used in businesses

across the world made me suspect whether the market operations team chose this as an almost transactional statement, whereby the relationship between traders and customers within this space is purely to profit, and maybe not for the social and community value.

Also, next to Katsouris was a Kids Corner selling children's clothes, uniforms, toys and other kids-related products. Nearby were a few stalls selling lunch items like 'pies, all homemade', with a very noticeable kids' menu of meals at reduced prices. This could suggest that this area caters towards the younger demographic, especially since the kids' fair rides were only located just around the corner. Shortly after this, I went to have some lunch at Mrs Ogden's Tea Room, located in a little enclave in the indoor space of the market. On the aerial view of the market, the stall is positioned on the right of the Meat and Fish Hall in the larger indoor area of the market. When I entered the small, but quaint café, I noticed the prime customer base was elderly Caucasian ladies, where, in contrast, younger women who dressed more alternatively with coloured dyed hair with piercings and tattoos were serving. When I was sat down, it became apparent this is where older ladies come together to meet and have a little catch-up/gossip between themselves. I noticed as well, that many of the ladies requested specific changes to the menu items and both of the servers were more than happy to accommodate, which made the café feel very relaxed.

That being said, I didn't see a diverse customer base at the market, even though it is overtly advertised as 'Britain's favourite', a slogan which was not just pasted onto most of the stalls and banners, but also on the bright yellow vests the security guards were wearing when walking through the alleys. Although the market title has been awarded, I feel as though there can be some nuance as to what 'Britain' is nowadays. I would agree that the market holds space for many traditionally British stalls, however, it could be argued that the diverse range of not just customers, but also the stalls available are limited, which may not reflect what modern Britain looks like today. Although, when walking through the market I came across some stalls that were less 'traditional', including a vegetarian Indian food stall, a Greek stall selling olives and different pastes/cooking oils, as well as a Syrian stall selling wraps.



The falafel stall in Bury Market provides an alternative to traditional, local fare, such as Bury Black Pudding

I decided to sit down at the falafel stall during lunchtime and noticed that the stall was based in one of the most primary locations in the market; just opposite the busy Meat and Fish Hall entrance and next to a quite packed fruit and veg stall. However, it seemed that although I was very much looking forward to enjoying a Syrian wrap, not many other customers were being similarly attracted. Although after about 10 minutes, the server decided to play traditional Arabic music from a set of speakers, which looked to attract two Western men to the stall. One of the men was very eager to tell the server he had been to Syria back in the day and enjoyed his visit (including the traditional Arabic food compared to traditional British food). He then went on to mention he had been to Egypt twice, suggesting his familiarity and interest with foreign foods had been a factor of his decision-making to come to this stall for his lunchtime meal. Could this mean that this stall may not be a market favourite for most customers due to having less experience/familiarity of foreign foods compared to this well-travelled man? Or perhaps my visit was an anomaly to observe the market, as possibly on other days in the market, the stall attracts a larger proportion of customers? Meanwhile, I noticed that the fruit and veg stall next door was getting steadily more crammed with customers, and it appeared that the stall was staffed by 3 teenage boys, which was an interesting dynamic as most stalls in comparison were staffed by middle aged/elderly traders.

After the lunch time period I noticed more people of colour (specifically women) were making their way around the market to do their shopping, carrying full shopping bags and trolleys pulled behind them. Rather unexpectedly, the server behind me offered me a traditional Syrian sweet on a little plate after seeing what I was doing, free of charge! It was a lovely surprise to encounter through the day, and the sugar provided me with the energy I needed to journey further into the market to continue with my observations. I went into the Market Parade area and overheard what could best be

described as a 'jingle' on the local Bury Market radio show. The tune was very catchy and featured interesting lyrics similar to 'Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, Burys a world-famous market', before a man on the pre-recorded set came on to ask customers why this market is their favourite. Following this, I heard clips of customers stating their reasons why, including one man declaring "it's the Bury black pudding!".



Bury Market sketch. M Worcester, 2019.

After I had been around the entire market, I decided it would be interesting to venture further afield and see what the nearby retail landscape was like. I noticed there were many signs pointing towards The Rock, a contemporary outdoor shopping centre. This area was clearly designed to house more high-end retail stores like H&M, Topshop and M&S. This felt like a complete contrast to the market, as the customer base seemed to be the exact opposite, with mostly younger people, ranging from around 12-18 years old. I noticed many elderly people were making use of the seating in the open spaces outside The Rock, as the younger people in the space were very much moving around excitedly from store to store. Likewise, in the Millgate Shopping Centre located closer to the market, older people tended to use the seating spaces more, as large chain stores, like Greggs and The Body Shop, were filled with younger customers. Interestingly, there were high-end stalls positioned in the middle walking-space alley, including an eyebrow threading stall and a stall selling freshly made smoothies and juices. The signs in Millgate were also very helpful, including directions towards the Kay Gardens and where the metro/bus/taxi ranks and stops were. Comparatively, the signs in the market were not as helpful, as they were less consistent/not available, apart from the large map within the tram stop which was not very well labelled.

Towards the end of my stay, I noticed the coaches being filled with tourists ready to make their way home with all the shopping they had purchased at the various stalls Bury Market had to offer. It was interesting to see how this space is used not just by locals who travelled by tram, but also by many people willing to travel further afield instead of going to their local Tesco or Sainsbury. However, I would argue it's not just the shopping experience people travel miles and miles for. The general consensus I got from the day was that many people came to converse with the traders and their

friends throughout the day, as many people were shopping in small groups or in pairs, and when purchasing products from the stalls, the customers weren't too quick to exchange their money and then leave straight away. Instead I recognised that many of the customers I walked by were very enthusiastically speaking to the traders and sharing a meaningful conversation. Otherwise, customers would talk to each other in groups over a meal they purchased at a nearby stall or simply browsing the products together as they made their way through the market.

### **Grainger Market Observations**

Between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, I went to Grainger Market, located in the heart of Newcastle, to hold observations throughout the day, particularly about the social and community value of this dynamic space. I arrived around 10:30, so I was able to observe the market in the morning, as traders began setting up stalls with different products on display. I immediately noticed how easily accessible the space was, with multiple entrances along each of the sides of the building, which then opened into a wide hall with an impressively curved roof (which was under maintenance with scaffolding). As I walked in, I sat down at one of the main cafés in the open seating area opposite Alley No. 4, with a cup of tea. I noticed as the traders were busy setting up their stalls, the café was already up and running, serving a range of customers; a group of middle-aged men in the far corner catching up before heading to their 9-to-5s, an Asian family eagerly listening to the server talking about the reason for the scaffolding along the roof of the building, and in front of me was a young girl with what looked like her grandmother, busy reading a children's book over breakfast. After about 10 minutes, a man in a wheelchair came and sat near another man reading his newspaper on one of the smaller tables across me. This observation was important, as it allowed me to recognise the different social groups that interact with this space, including the differences in age, ethnicity, gender and disability. I decided to explore the rest of the market, particularly the alleys, and see what the other traders were doing as they were setting up.



Olivers Café, Grainger Market

I decided to continue my tea-drinking in Oliver's Café, located just on the other side of this top section of the market. I noticed the advertisements leading to the café were specifically targeted at elderly people, particularly charities providing services for different care systems and providing support for diseases related to memory loss. These charities had their own stalls located in the area, which is just one sign that the market is looking to cater for one of their larger demographics in the market. As I was about to sit down with my cup of tea, I noticed a trader from a butcher stall in front of me in alley 4 came onto the alleyway to gladly direct a customer to where the toilets were. This small interaction made me notice how particularly friendly the traders are and how welcoming they are to new visitors.

Meanwhile, I overheard the couple to my right speaking to each other in German and the bark of a guide dog owned by another man eating his meal on my left. Interestingly, I began to discover how diverse the customer base (at least for the last two cafes I visited) is, as before coming to the market, I assumed I would only acknowledge mostly elderly Caucasian customers. In front of me, a statue of a vintage caricature of an older trader leaned forward with a crate of his products in both hands, looking as though he was enthusiastically inviting customers walking by with what he had on offer. This 'mascot' seemed to encompass the traditional dimension of what the market originally was in the past, whilst embracing the changing purchasing habits and interests of its customers, with a stall selling fresh French pastries just further down and a stall selling Chinese dumplings on Alley 2.

On the menu placed on the table in front of me, food items like 'sausage stottie' or 'bacon stottie' seemed to highlight the traditionally named food and Geordie idioms. Just behind me, there was a stall selling perfumes and cosmetics with pride flags proudly displayed on the front window for everyone to see. I am unsure whether these are displayed all year, but this small detail shows how this stall in particular extends their public acceptance for social groups (like LGBTQ+) which may not feel comfortable to come into a traditional setting like this market. I can only presume the market itself is encouraging traders to welcome people of not just different ethnicities and abilities, but sexualities as well, which was exciting to see.



Sketch made in Grainger Market Arcade. M. Worcester, 2019.

I decided to leave the Arcade area and observe Alley 4, specifically a Turkish restaurant with a woven material sign on one of the side walls reading 'Ferit Özdemir'. Originally, I thought it was a simple welcome sign in Turkish reading something familiar to 'welcome' or 'come inside'. However, I learnt later this 'phrase' was actually about the trader himself, which I discovered in an article online. The article mentioned he was homeless as a child back in Turkey and came to Grainger Market in Britain to start his new life, gaining much success for his original jewellery stall and then, later, his café. The article also discussed how the unknown effects of Brexit may greatly affect his livelihood. As I accidentally stumbled across this article, it brought into focus how, although this space can bring in new traders from different cultures, the current conflicts in modern British politics can threaten the livelihoods of traders, and this will inevitably affect the long-term social and community value. Likewise, the French crepe stall located just further down the alley could be similarly affected, as I overheard the trader speaking French to his family back home through FaceTime before starting his work shift, which could suggest his possible European status could become similarly threatened.

Surprisingly, I noticed that the words 'VEGAN' and 'GLUTEN FREE' options were written in big bold capitals above the cashier as I walked by the stall. Possibly the choice to make these products noticeable could suggest this trader is thinking about catering towards a younger, environmentally and ethically conscious customer base as well as customers with specific dietary requirements. This small decision to stock these types of products could encourage younger people to come into this space and, as a result, interact with the other more 'traditional' stalls.

Just opposite the café, was a larger clothing stall, with many rails of clothes positioned just outside to be touched and looked at by customers walking by. Typically, it looked as though the clothes were attracting mainly elderly Caucasian women. This was a noticeable contrast of cultures between this stall and the Turkish café I was sat in. As the day approached peak time, around 12pm, the women looking idly at the clothing rails would glance curiously over to the menu items above me and walk on by to go to a nearby café for tea. Obviously, the type of customers this café attracts cannot be limited to just the singular day I conducted my observations, but it seemed as though the older demographic of the market wasn't compelled to try the food in this café. There was however a young mother breastfeeding her child on the bench opposite me, having a catch up with her friend whilst speaking in Spanish. This showed how perhaps the market provides a safe space for a mother like herself to openly breastfeed in public without getting criticised.

Around this time, more people were steadily making their way through the market, including two women dressed in bright pink T-shirts pushing a double pram and carrying protective leashes with young toddlers trying to scurry away on the other ends. This appeared to be a daycare activity provided by two childminders. As well as this, I saw many people riding in mobility scooters, individuals being pushed in wheelchairs, and elderly people using walking canes. As the alleyways are quite wide and there were not any stairs (or I didn't happen to see any), this space seems very accessible for customers of all abilities to get to any part of the market.

Interestingly, younger people seemed to walk through the market around peak time, including teenagers. I noticed a small group of teenagers approached a stall selling pastries and were picking up a cheap deal to have for lunch. It could again, be another anomaly as the observation was recorded only in one day, but the teenagers seemed as though they knew the stalls and where to grab the best bargain. Along the alley I noticed there was a stall specifically selling Geordie products; cards, paintings, antiques and signs reading sayings unique to Newcastle like 'areet pet' and 'why aye man'. This specialisation separates Grainger Market, as it keeps to traditional customs and language, making it easily acceptable for people who may be new to the area to learn a bit more about Newcastle's culture.

Alley 1 was particularly interesting, as it is located furthest away from the Arcade and it had many shops that were of national franchises such as Betfred, Timpson and Shoe Zone. As I observed the nearby buildings outside the entrance leading onto Grainger Street, it was interesting to see whereabouts the market is located. The nearby large shopping centre Intu Eldon Square is just located down the street, alongside major company chains like Tesco Metro, Poundland and Topshop. This suggests that year-round, the market is susceptible to large footfall, especially being in a prime location opposite major retailers, and assumedly even more inside the large Intu Eldon Square centre.

Towards the end of the day, as all the traders were setting down, I went into a stall selling unique and handmade Asian gift items. Walking in, I was immediately greeted by the trader, a young Asian woman, who was more than happy to help me. We started to have a conversation about the stall and the products she had to offer. I asked her about the customers who come to her stall and the relationships she has with them. She was very honest and said she has many regulars who come in to have a chat, and she receives small gifts often and unexpectedly from her customers, like written cards and confectionary items. She commented that she feels comfortable and well supported in this market, and all the traders and customers have been kind to her since she opened.

### **Queens Market Observations**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2019, I went to Queens Market, located in the London Borough of Newham, with the nearest tube stations of Upton Park and Green Street. I held my own observations throughout the day, particularly about the social and community value of this dynamic space.

Immediately exiting the Upton Park Tube Station, I noticed how close the market was, located on the same side of the road, right next door. This clearly affects the accessibility of the market for customers who live in the areas nearby, as the underground trains are quite frequent and easy to get to. The market itself is quite unique, as when I entered I was instantly greeted with the diverse range of stalls in all different categories including food, clothing, textiles and specialty items. At the main entrance there appeared to be drawn/painted international flags of many countries hung right across the roof of the main building. These looked to have been made in collaboration with local school children, bringing an almost instantaneous welcoming feel to the space. The implied diversity of the market space from the flags on the entrance roof was very relevant to the actual stalls, traders and customers themselves.

Although the main walking space within the middle of the market was allocated to stalls on segmented pitches, indicated with white outlines on the floor, there were also stalls built within the edges of the market itself. These looked more permanent, as they appeared to be just like any other shops you would see in a shopping centre. These consisted of a range of different establishments, including a laundromat, cafes, fishmongers and halal butchers.

Interestingly, during lunchtime I was walking around the market with another researcher on the project, Myfanwy Taylor, and we were able to go into one of the fishmongers and speak to a trader more directly. He was very kind and offered to host us for a meal with himself and one of his colleagues behind the cashier, to eat a home-cooked Afghani meal of potato curry and bread. This was rather unexpected, but lovely hospitality nonetheless, so we decided to take up the offer and sat and enjoyed the meal with them. We were able to get a better insight into what it is like to be a long-term trader at this market, both through conversation and being in the same shoes as the traders themselves –

right behind the till watching all the action upfront! It was exciting to actually see the operations from the forefront and how the stall is managed, including the backroom where all the stock is kept to be replenished and the cleaning supplies are stored to be used at the end of the day.

Additionally, I noticed that there were a few stalls in the open market space which appeared to be managed for a temporary period of time rather than permanently. Indications of this were that the stall didn't seem to have many products or signs to indicate prices or the name of the stall itself compared to the other stalls in the area. It could be that these stalls are just start-ups and starting to break into Queens Market and simply trying out their stall idea to look at potential customer interest. Or perhaps these stalls are just set up for one day in the market. Whatever the reason, it added a different dynamic to the market and how stalls can be operated and run in different ways, which can affect how customers interact with the space and the traders. Nearby, however, I noticed many of the stalls were completely packed with customers coming in and out of the space. Particularly, I noticed that compared to the stalls in Bury Market in Manchester and Grainger Market in Newcastle, the stalls were completely different, at least the ones in the open market space. In Bury and Grainger, all the stalls were enclosed, with a barrier of the products between the trader and the customer. However, in Queens, for some of the stalls (like a large fruit and veg stall in the middle of the market), the barrier between traders and customers was indistinguishable, as customers had easy access to both the products and the trader. In some cases there appeared to be helpers along the edges of the stalls, working with the main trader of the stalls, and their job was to collect money, provide change and hand over the product to the customer. In a way, this made it easier to interact with the trader as it felt more personal to be able to talk to the trader face-to-face rather than at a distance, with a barrier of products or the cashier in the way.



Fruit and vegetables on display in Queen's Market

The market itself appeared to get busier the further in you explored, as right at the back of the market were a row of fruit and veg stalls operating in a small cluster. I was informed that these stalls provide typically cheaper fruit and veg in comparison to the fruit and veg sold in the middle of the market. This appeared to be where all the deals were, and many customers seemed to know this fact, everyone

analysing the skin of the fruit and the cheapness of the veg before coming to a decision on what to purchase and pack away in their trolleys.

Overall, the community and social value of the space could be observed in multiple ways throughout the market. Many languages could be overheard throughout the space between traders and customers, all interacting with each other in this very diverse space. Similarly, many people were wearing their traditional dress, hairstyles and headdresses. This had a completely unique dynamic, as it was a very visual representation of how people from completely contrasting cultures could interact and operate in the same space. For example, I saw a traditional African women's clothing stall only a few metres away from a Middle Eastern food stall. It seems to be a place where everyone is welcome, and traders are encouraged to share their cultural products with customers who may actively seek them or for customers (like myself) who are new to the market.