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# A Carrier Bag Story of (waste) food, hens and the sharing economy

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between food and mobilities is so fundamental that it is easily overlooked, but when you think about it, it is remarkable that cities get fed at all. Food is being produced, transported, bought, stored, sold, cooked, eaten, enjoyed, disposed of and sent into and through bodies, ecologies and different waste, recycling and/or upcycling systems. Within these disposal systems, valuable resources are being lost. Based on empirical work from a Danish project called *Sharing City* and a local small-scale organic farm (named Hegnsholt), this article elaborates upon how particular waste food from restaurants is a valuable resource for the farm's hens, which, as a result, are so flavoursome that well-known restaurants and cafés purchase their eggs and chickens. This analysis seeks to contribute to discussions on how we are able to respond to environmental change and inspire reparative futures by showing the collaborative, compassionate, responsible qualities of the sharing economy of the exchange of waste food. With the help from The Carrier Bag Theory – an alternative, feminist narrative – and the mobilities paradigm, this article shows the transformative gestures of ethical flavourful food and the value of waste food. This argument is unfolded by looking deeper into the farm as a heterogeneous relational-material entanglement of infrastructures, non-human and human, Nordic food stories, waste, food and feed, diseases and risks and eating and tasting. Based on the food network, this article ought to inspire us to rethink *how to share* this planet with earth-others.

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## 1. Introducing a local farm, food and carrier bags to mobilities research

The relationship between food and mobilities is essential as food travels progressively longer distances, and these journeys raise several critical questions for commodity markets, health issues, farmers' well-being, infrastructure, global food policies and economies, local production, consumption, diseases and regional regulation, just to name a few. Food production, food distribution and land use accounts for 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions (C40 2016) and due to a growing urban population ensuring nutritious, healthy, fresh natural food that is sustainable in its production, transport, consumption and disposal is becoming

an urgent issue (UN 2016). In 2015, 700,000 tons of food that could have been eaten by humans or animals was thrown away in Denmark.<sup>1</sup> Food waste can be divided into (a) food that could have been eaten by humans, (b) hidden waste food, where either parts of animals or plants could have been eaten if they had been treated differently or utilised more effectively from “farm to table to disposal” and (c) bi-products that are not immediately suitable for human consumption, but could be valuable for animals and soil.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I will focus on the last category – waste of food that is valuable for animals, in this particular case, for hens: hens that incubate eggs, and chickens that are being eaten by humans. Therefore, I am here focusing on the food that was upcycled to feed. The feed includes bread from a local bakery (waste category “a”), spill over spelt shells from a local miller (waste category “b”), and the tops of carrots (waste category “c”) – just to name a few. The empirical work behind this article is based on a small-scale organic farm 45 kilometres outside of Copenhagen (DK), that primarily sell chickens and eggs to selected restaurants and cafés in Copenhagen, who moreover (wish to) return their waste of food (category “a” and “c”) to the farm and the hens. “Wish to” is in brackets, as throughout the two years I have followed the network and resource flow around the 1200 hens, chickens and eggs of Hegnsholt, the Danish Food Authority has (a number of times) closed and reopened, the exchange agreement with waste food due to administrative perceptions of risks related to different disease-outbreaks.

The mentioned waste numbers are overwhelming, nonetheless at the current time we live in, it is important not to get absorbed or paralysed by apocalyptic newspaper headlines and Facebook updates on climate change and environmental devastation. The main point of this article is to argue that we need those actors who can imagine, think and create alternatives. I will, through qualitative data, present the visions, theories and practices of the farmer from Hegnsholt. Focus is on how she (the farmer) conceptualises and works with the sharing economy, food and feed and hens, and her reasons why she does what she does. This article examines the human and more-than-human relation of food and mobilities through the focus on Hegnsholt’s exchange network with waste food that is part of the sharing economy. Hegnsholt feeds the hens with waste food (leftovers from restaurants, supermarkets, festivals, etc.), and the hens lay eggs that are considered of such a quality that award-winning restaurants (Bæst and Mirabelle, among others) purchase them. Hegnsholt is part of a heterogeneous organisation and system, a relational–material entanglement of infrastructures, materials, non-human and human, Nordic food stories, waste, diseases, eating, risks, compassion and caring. By using the mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006) and the alternative, feminist narrative, the Carrier Bag Theory (Fisher 1979; Le Guin 1986), this article aims to show how eggs, hens and waste food, can teach us about our abilities to respond to anthropogenically provoked environmental change, possible futures and coexistence.

## 2. Food, mobilities, and carrier bags

In her book *Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives* (2008), Carolyn Steel makes a historical description of how food, through its production, transport, sale, consumption and dispossession, gives shape to cities. Ten thousand years ago, agriculture and cities were clearly bound together, and until the Industrialisation Revolution ecological organisation was an essential part of city life (Steel 2008). Steel describes this through the physical outline of cities, where food used to be the spatial, material and cultural centre of the city life, and

exemplifies this by describing how the temple that distributed food supplies was the centre of Ur in Mesopotamian, for example, and how London's street names reveal the market places for food, e.g. Corn Hill, Bread Street, Fish Street, Smith Street, Meat Market. "Markets and shops, pubs and kitchens, diners and waste-dumps have always provided the backdrop to urban life. Food shapes our cities, and through them, it moulds us – along with the countryside that feeds us up". (Steel 2008, x). Additionally, sociologist Richard Sennett points towards the loss of smell, sounds, taste, craft and co-operation in cities in his books *The Fall of Public Man* ([1974] 2002) and *Flesh & Stone: The Body and the City of Western Civilization* (1994). Later, Graham and Marvin (2001) point towards urban sprawl and make an analysis of the complex interactive infrastructure networks of modern cities. In addition to this idea, Drewes Nielsen and Petersen have mapped the mobilities of food through a case study of the global supply chain of fresh salmon that travels from Norway to Japan (2004), and Jackson, Ward, and Russell (2006) have, along the same lines, also demonstrated how, as concepts, food commodity chains are considerable in contemporary food policy.

The inherent relation between food and mobility is recognised by the terms *foodways* and *foodscapes*, but as Sarah Gibson (2007) argues, the methodological and theoretical approaches behind these terms are distinctive, and by using Urry (2000), she emphasises that food demands an "intellectual mobility", which crosses disciplinary boundaries (2007, 16). In her article, "Food Mobilities: Travelling, Dwelling, and Eating Cultures", (2007) she argues:

As an object of material culture, food is produced and consumed through complex geographies of mobile people, plants, and animals that travel across increasingly global infrastructures of production, transportation, and preparation. Food's mobility becomes embedded in culinary cultures consisting of techniques, recipes, and styles of cooking and eating. Food is a highly mobile product and also has the capacity to move us as consumers. I use the term food mobilities to foreground the many different mobilities (such as corporeal, technological, virtual, imaginative, and object; see Urry [2000]) that inform or inflect *cultures of food, taste, and eating*. (2007, 16)

The relationship between food and mobilities is also elaborated upon in *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (Adey et al. 2014) where Abrahamsen and Mol (2014) examine how food travels as recipes and ingredients, pre-packaged and deep-frozen, from restaurants (in this case the Pizza Hawaii) to a person's home, while the pizza simultaneously carries many other sites and situations within it. Their analysis shows that this specific pizza is global, as the ingredients come from many places, but it has no originality at all. This finding is intriguing, because when you start to follow different varieties of so-called local meals, plants and vegetables and animal breeds, national boundaries and territories immediately disintegrate, and you find that food has travelled since humans could carry it; in that sense, the world has always been global. As a commodity – as ingredients, as meals and as recipes – food travels globally, but as S. Gibson also notes, food is also travelling through bodies as "food involves the proximate senses of taste and touch because food is incorporated into the body through the act of eating. The mobility of food into the body involves its passage through the mouth and through the body" (2007, 5).

In this article, I suggest thinking of food in its various relationships and how it is "travelled" and "carried": as a relational-material entanglement of global, local and bodily infrastructures, materials, human and non-human, Nordic food stories, waste food and leftovers, diseases, eating, risks, compassion, and caring. I do this because food is the part of the very substance of life, it connects human and non-humans, and reveals alternative ideas of sharing, as we

as a species need to eat to survive, and, as a commodity, this makes food significantly different from other consumables. In the *Politics of the Pantry*, Mikulak argues, that:

Because food exists on the boundaries between different realms of our lives, it touches on numerous tensions and anxieties. Food represents the most basic transformation of nature to culture, and culture to nature; defines and shapes social and gender relations; reveals global and local inequities; organizes entire sectors of the economy; gives focus to anxieties about family and community life; organizes and mobilizes cultural identity; and embodies the tension between public and private subjectivity within the global everyday. (2013, 6)

## 2.1. Carrier bags

When we start to wonder how we are fed, and how we will be fed in future, how food is being shared, how it travels and is distributed, and the cultures, systems, techniques, economies and ethics that follows this sharing and travelling – turning our attention towards early hunter-gatherer cultures and their inventions comes in helpful. In her book, *Woman's Creation: Sexual Evolution and the Shaping of Society* (1979) anthropologist Elizabeth Fisher produces a material, feminist, historical analysis of how (Western) society has taken shape. One of the ways she does this, is by looking at hunter-gatherer cultures and argues that the first human artefacts were women's inventions, such as containers and baby holders, and as such were key to human evolution. Fisher presents this as *The Carrier Bag Theory of Evolution*, and argues that the carrier bag is a “fundamental innovation in the evolution of a large-brained, two-legged human being. It freed the hands for gathering and provided temporary storage for food such as nuts and fruit” (Fisher 1979, 60). The suggestion is that a kind of container, receptacle or nest must have been essential to gathering in the Palaeolithic, Neolithic and pre-historical times, where there is great reason to believe that 75–80% of the food supply consisted of gathered plants, fruits and vegetables. The carrier bag is something that carries, mobilizes and frees our hands to gather food, “and in Sally Slocum's theory, the [carrier] technique was extended from carrying babies to carrying food and was followed by other cultural innovations – choppers and grinders for food preparation, and eventually weapons” (Fisher 1979, 60). The “carrier bag” therefore allowed the first systems for sharing and moving food about. The carrier bag also helped make settlement possible, because it allowed us to gather and store more food than we could hold in two hands. Fisher argues, though the evidence for early households is speculative, that there is reason to believe that “Palaeolithic women would have had control over their own bodies, sexual expression, and full economic participation in the group” (1979, 174). She also argues that it was just after the development of agriculture and domestication of animals, that women began to lose these rights. Fisher then questions whether it was “devolution in Western civilisation that we lost this cultural device [the carrier bag] after the invention of village life and agriculture, though peoples like the American Indian kept it all the time” (1979, 61).

There is a central normative dimension to this contribution, as Fisher uses the hunter-gatherer (in this article's narrative, it might be named gatherer-hunter culture) and the carrier bag as an alternative evolutionary narrative about “human nature”, to argue that it was these female inventions, initiatives and forms of cooperation that were key to human development, and, in this way, she challenges the ruling story about the hunters and their weapons, a story that glorifies competitiveness and brutality, and which is still often told today as an excuse for talking advantage of less fortunate people, of “playing the game”. Fisher argues that:

"They [social anthropologists and evolutionists] are coming to realise that co-operation, mutual aid and kindness have been more conducive to survival than the nineteenth century battle mentality projected onto nature". (1979, 54). Thinking about this artefact and its invention draws our attention to an alternative story of how our ancestors survived and developed, and thinking *with* this artefact helps us to rethink and rework single interpretations of rationality, economy, technology and science that infuse how mobilities (Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller 2014; Freudendal-Pedersen, Hannam, and Kesselring 2016) shape the current moment we live in. Moreover, I would argue that thinking with this artefact and the narrative, evoke the possibility for reparative futures in the current ecological mess we find ourselves in. Mobilities research focuses on how spaces and places are produced and reproduced through flows and fixities of diversely networked mobilities, and brings together social, spatial and cultural concerns, "while inflecting each with a relational ontology of the co-construction of subjects, spaces and meaning" (Sheller 2014, 791). In an essential article within mobilities research, Sheller and Urry (2006), write:

places are thus not so much fixed as implicated within complex networks by which hosts, guests, buildings, objects, and machines are contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times. [...] Places themselves are seen as travelling, slow or fast, greater or shorter distances, within networks of human and non-human agents. (2006, 214–15)

Therefore, the carrier bag is essential for understanding how mobilities of food move and ground societies and people, gender and cultures, and indeed animal, plants and other non-humans sharing this planet.

In *Skinning the Banana*, Mimi Sheller (2013), demonstrates the ethical and political transformative agency of food by showing how bananas are produced through via interconnected systems of global transportation, migration, bodies, popular culture, politics and regulation:

Not only is globalisation and fair trade at stake in this ethics, but also the racing of space and bodies that leaves Black Africans and their descendants in the deforested and degraded tropical Americas most vulnerable to poverty, hunger, and famine. When a global ethics turns out to be a personalized corporeal ethics that recognizes the inter-corporeality and interdependence of a more-than-human world, small gestures like ethical bananas may have some agency. (2013, 308)

These observations on the spaces and bodies that significant food production, distribution and consumptions leaves behind, is key to understanding the current situation of agribusiness (Shiva 2016a, 2016b). As I will come back to, the empirical case behind this article is to challenge the politics of agribusiness of industrially ready-made designed animal fed. The "small gestures of agency" – that Sheller point towards – is also helpful, as the transformative agency of food is becoming more of an issue, and is part of the work of the actors that I have been following. An example of this the (global) local food movement, that is practiced to stimulate the local economy, to create a healthier food culture for everyone – one that is more sustainable (in miles travelled), and to get people to appreciate the value of real food. This is also part of the appearance of New Nordic Food Culture and Cuisine, where Danish Michelin-star restaurants such as Noma, among others, has drawn attention to food that is seasonal, pure, ethical, local and regional, healthy, sustainable and of high-quality.<sup>3</sup> This story is essential for understanding the work of Hegnsholt, as it highlights the way food is carried and shared, and the transformative agency of food.



The normative dimension of the alternative, feminist narrative furthermore addresses the power of what counts and matters, and whose stories are told, and how and why. Regarding this, a question of representation, of storytelling, is therefore of significance because the way our stories are composed reflects realities. In the search for a style of representation that could hold, reflect and present the rationality, theories and practices of the sharing economy that Hegnsholt practices (and the other communal and collaborative qualities and practices of the sharing economy that emerge within the Sharing City project), I have drawn upon the before-mentioned work of Elizabeth Fisher and Ursula Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1986). According to Le Guin, the stories of the gatherers, and the invention of the carrier bag, has not been of interest, not counted as real matter, nor good existing stories, because of the power of *singular* narratives. Singular narratives are linear, and simplify complexity by using heroes, heroines and stereotypes. It is an understanding of what makes a story that draws on the Aristotelian framework with its beginnings, middles and ends, progress, climax/conflict and revelation. (Le Guin 1986, 2017). To Le Guin, it was the "Killing-Hunter" construction of stories as *single* stories, stories of Cartesian dualism that has neglected connectivity and entanglement, and demised multiple temporalities. To acknowledge another kind of storytelling, Le Guin suggests that the shape of a story might be a sack or bag. "A book holds worlds. Worlds hold things. They bear meanings. [It] hold things in a particular, powerful relation to another and to us". (Le Guin 1986, 169). Carrier Bag Stories acknowledges compassion, mutual aid, collaboration, entanglement, ongoingness and complexities. These are stories of finding edible berries and wild oats, of sowing the bags, of "sing to little Oom, and listen to Ool's joke, and watch newts, and still the story is not over. Still there are seeds to be gathered, and room in the bag of stars". (Le Guin 1986, 170). Stories matter, stories reflects and aspire our understandings and actions, our realities and possibilities for change, and therefore "what makes a story" should of be highest concern (Freudental-Pedersen and Kesselring 2016; Fjalland 2018). This is most crucial to the mobilities of (waste) food and feed exchange that this article is writing about, because finding a style and format that could hold those realities, that could make people understand and believe, has been challenging. The flows of materials, the work, the thoughts, the dreams, did not fit into a *singular* story, and therefore we need another kind of storytelling.

### 3. Gathering empirical material on Sharing City and the Hegnsholt farm

I became involved with the organic small-scale farm, Hegnsholt, through the *Sharing City* project, which was organised by the Danish Architecture Centre's Cities programme between August 2015 and November 2016. It was organised as a partnership project with municipalities, sharing economy practitioners, consultants, researchers and media, and was primarily financed by the foundation Realdania and the Danish Business Authority through the support of the Green Business Foundation. Seven Danish, mainly rural and suburban municipalities, were involved, who pointed out local, challenging issues, that were then reformulated collectively into actions: *Share Tools*, *Share Waste*, *Share Facilities & Spaces*, *Share Data*, *Share Transport*, and *Share Activities*. The conceptual and practical exploration of the sharing economy also involved 24 start-ups/organisations/businesses working with the sharing economy. Within the project these were called *innovators* and included organisations, co-ops and associations as well as businesses. The innovators were orientated towards socio-economical, environmental, and/or commercial interests, and operated locally, nationally and/or



internationally (Fjalland and Landbo 2017b). The organic farm Hegnsholt was one of those innovators.

Through ethnographic participatory observations I have been following and assisting the conversations of definitions, concepts and practices of the sharing economy within the Sharing City project (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000; Kawulich 2005; Flick 2008; Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011). These observations and dialogues were undertaken during municipal meetings, local sharing days, debates and dialogues, conferences and accelerator workshops with innovators. The participatory observations were supported by seven qualitative interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) with public servants from each participating municipality and a qualitative survey with the innovators. It also included follow-up interviews and a co-writing process. This work forms the outset of the empirical findings during the project Sharing City. Following on from this, I conducted three qualitative follow-up interviews with two of the innovators (including Hegnsholt) and one of the public servants from one of the municipalities in order to delve deeper into their work on environmental change, futures, waste and human-nature relations. Furthermore, I have been following Hegnsholt for two years using an interactive approach related to Action Research (Aagaard Nielsen and Svensson 2006). Hegnsholt forms a good example on how these innovators invite us to imagine the world and its relations differently; they invite “us to rethink what our future – a future that will require a much greater reliance on renewable resources and a much more intelligent utilization of life-giving materials – might feel like” (Vannini and Taggart 2015, 18).

#### 4. A Carrier Bag Story of the sharing economy: sharing and mobilities

Before moving on to Hegnsholt, and then hens and the waste food, I will take a quick look at how the sharing economy was conceptualised within the Sharing City project. In several ways, the “sharing economy” in the Sharing City project could be categorised as an umbrella term covering different actions and practices. When we use an umbrella, we seek to hide or protect ourselves from the rain or sun. While the sharing economy – in the form of capitalist business models – has created a lot of “noise” and been labelled as “disruptive”, I will argue that with regards to the Sharing City project, the sharing economy as a carrier bag term is challenging questions of ownership and revaluation and redistribution of resources (Rifkin 2000; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Schor 2014), and that the sharing economy also include organisations working with alternatives to capitalist economies. This conceptualisation of the sharing economy seeks also to address a struggle between capitalist and alternative thinking that was present in Sharing City project, and where the “alternative” had difficulties being accepted as real potentials and not just “nice”. Just as the partners of municipalities – and therefore the urban governance agenda – affected the ideological and overall conceptual considerations on the sharing economy, the innovators and their actions have affected how the sharing economy has been conceptualised. As it was founded under the mantra of “creating better cities”, the innovators who wanted to get involved with the Sharing City were not sharing economy businesses that were primarily motivated by high and fast profit.

The participating municipalities in the Sharing City project had different interests in the sharing economy, and the six focus areas present this: *Share Tools*, *Share Waste*, *Share Facilities & Spaces*, *Share Data*, *Share Transport*, and *Share Activities*. The municipalities’ exploration of

the sharing economy brought about reflections on the welfare state, the Danish cooperative movement with its roots in the nineteenth century farmers society, about commons and commune (municipality), public–private partnerships, community-driven projects, co-creation, and collaborative governance. In his article “The sharing economy: A pathway to sustainability or a nighmarish from of neoliberal capitalism?”, Martin (2016) has analysed the online sharing economy discourse, and has brilliantly identified six framings that described what a sharing economy is. Three are based on actors who seek to empower sharing economy and the other three are those actors critiquing and resisting the sharing economy. While I see equivalent division of framings within the Sharing City project – and the broader Danish debate on this subject – it is too limiting to place, for example, the Hegnsholt farm in one of these categories as the owner works to enhance Martin’s framing, a more sustainable form of consumption and framing, and a pathway to a decentralized, equitable and sustainable economy (2016). Furthermore, she also finds that other actors operating within the sharing economy are “creating unregulated markets” (Martin’s framing 4) and “reinforcing the neoliberal paradigm” (Martin’s framing 5). Nonetheless, Martin’s analysis is helpful in that it gives us an impression of the different and manifold streams giving shape to the phenomenon.

There has been increased focus and interest in the digital platforms and technology-driven sharing economy in public discussions, as digital platforms such as Airbnb, Uber, HomeExchange and TaskRabbit are those that have recently seemed to have moved the talk about the sharing economy forward. Lessing (2009) and Benkler (2004) suggest that the movement stems from the technological developments of the 1960s, where computers and their mathematical powers were expensive and time-sharing was a necessity. Also, Kostakis and Bauwens (2014) argue, that it is connected to the ’60s and ’70s social and environmental movements on commons and communing. In the 1990s, Lessing (2009) and Botsman and Rogers (2010) argue that the sharing economy had a revival with the expansion of the internet and its new types of business and organisations based on sharing information and data, such as eBay and Wikipedia, and later Facebook, YouTube and the concept of Creative Commons. Then came today’s developments in digital platforms for sharing underused resources and creating access, instead of ownership, to resources such as private homes, equipment, food, finance, production, music, waste – to name a few. The businesses and organisations who say they are working with the sharing economy are diverse in their thought processes, organisation and practise, and have different political goals as they cross sectors and products. (Rifkin 2000; Benkler 2004, 2006; Lessing 2009; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Kostakis and Bauwens 2014; Schor 2014; Sundararajan 2016).

For the participating municipalities, digital technology was, in general, perceived as means or mediator – a carrier bag – and not as a goal that should be achieved in itself. In common among the municipalities was an emerging rethink of increased access to public resources – e.g. opening the school kitchens after school hours, or creating access to municipal cars after certain hours, and being more of a facilitator than owner of sharing economy services, with or without digital technologies. One representative from the municipality of Sønderborg said that they found how the sharing economy was part of the community’s DNA (Fjalland and Landbo 2017a, 62). Historically then, when looking at the sharing economy as a carrier bag term for organising and mobilising resources (as Fisher (1979), Sahlin (1974), Shiva (2016a, 2016b) and Scott (2017) present), sharing has made it possible for humans to survive and develop; hunters and gathers shared the spoils and yield; sharing tools, machinery and knowledge was crucial for craftsmanship and farming. As mentioned (Fisher 1979; Le Guin

1986) sharing stories, legends, fables, information and knowledge, has been essential for building the basis for modern Western science and thinking. Furthermore, the spatial connection to the sharing economy is underlined by the fact that we share its space and resources: we share the air, the surface, the soils and the energy; we share corridors for movement (pavements, bike lanes, car lanes) and the communal institutions and services, facilitated through national taxation (significant for Scandinavia); we share public libraries, public transport, public baths, public parks; we share energy and space in apartment buildings, at cafes and laundromats etc., and then the sharing economy reopens the question of commons and rights to access. These are just a tiny proportion of what actually is being shared, but they highlight the fact that villages, cities, urban regions – human settlements in general – are fostered by the movements and sharing of materials, resources, energy, data, capital and consumption between humans and non-humans. (Graham and Marvin 2001; Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller 2014).

Water, energy and food are what “nature” shares with humans, and living in a time of environmental and ecological crisis, argued to be humanly affected, we might want to rethink and reorganise the way these resources are organised, distributed, valued and owned. The sharing economy does seem to be a reminder of how much we share and are related to each other, and it brings to light the ethical questions and politics of power, wealth, rights, and ethics as the access and rights to resources and places are far from being organised collectively or being equally distributed.

## 5. The farm: eggs with a significant taste of waste food

Next, I will move deeper into sharing, food and mobilities, and will turn my attention to the farm Hegnsholt. Hegnsholt is a small-scale organic farm with around 1200 hens that operates on the principles of a cooperative where you buy shares in a hen, chicken or lamb. The eggs and chickens are considered to be of exceptionally high quality as they are bought by fine dining restaurants mentioned in the Michelin guide a.o. The animals at Hegnsholt are raised in accordance with organic standards and with the spotlight firmly on the animals’ welfare and quality of feed. Since Hegnsholt is located in Lejre (45 km outside Copenhagen), the geographic area served by the farm is limited to Lejre, Roskilde and Copenhagen. Hegnsholt intends to operate the business in a non-profit manner, with all income to be used on the operations and farm animals. An essential part of Hegnsholt’s organisational model is that the restaurants sort out their fresh leftover vegetables (such as the top of the carrots) and leftover bread (that has never touched a plate), which then can achieve renewed value as waste feed to Hegnsholt’s hens. It is Hegnsholt’s belief that hens and animals should be fed with natural and fresh feed. In this case, “natural and fresh” means resources that, for instance, come from fresh vegetables and the living environment (e.g. earth worms and clover) and is opposed to artificially prefabricated feed.

I met Johanne, the farmer behind Hegnsholt, during the initial phases of the Sharing City project. Before the project really started, the municipality of Lejre made me aware of the farm as they became involved in the project. The city strategy for Lejre is summed up in their motto “There is a place where we share and create” (made before the Sharing City project) and in this municipality there are several small-scale businesses, organisations and farms working with sustainable food production, co-creation and the sharing economy. Johanne was quite busy running the farm mostly by herself, so many of my conversations with her took place

outside the framework of the Sharing City project. A month after the completion of the project, the national Danish Broadcasting Association (12 December 2016) broadcasted a story on Hegnholt and the exchange with waste food from restaurants as an example of the sharing economy in the Sharing City project. A few days later, the Danish Food Authority showed up at the farm and restaurants, and the exchange agreement was closed down due to a theoretical risk of foot and mouth disease, swine fever, and mad cow disease (BSE). This brought me into closer contact with Johanne and resulted in several visits and interviews about the situation, the farm, the hens, eggs, waste food, and her dreams for the future. Johanne also has other exchange agreements with other local actors such as a supermarket, mill and an organic vegetable farm, but for this article I focus on the exchange with restaurants as it is here the problem arise. According to Danish legislation, all leftovers from restaurants are considered “waste” or “garbage”, and are therefore not suited for feed. Johanne and the other actors in the food network are continuously trying to change the rules and the perception of this “waste” in ongoing dialogues with authorities, politicians and scientists.

### ***5.1. Building an organisation on sharing***

Johanne started the farm around 2012, when she chose to leave her previous position after 11 years; she felt that her career development had stopped and her responsibilities were getting smaller and smaller. Also, with one-and-a-half-hour commute, three kids and self-employed husband, life was hectic. She did not know what she wanted to do, and the choice of working with hens was a bit of a coincidence. She had a few hens herself and enjoyed how she could feed them with leftovers and how they produced eggs. Also, she lived on a defunct farm with underused land and buildings, and as her father was a farmer, she started thinking about creating a farm that primarily had hens and chickens. She began by making an agreement with the municipality of Lejre about borrowing hens for nurseries, kindergartens and nursing homes. The idea for this “was about sustainability, and animal welfare. For the kids, it was about reintroducing animal welfare, ecosystems, the process from farm to table, teaching them to be critical consumers – that’s where it started”. (own translation of interview). Johanne became more interested in the agricultural part of hens, and developed it into an organic small-scale egg and chicken production.

I wanted to challenge the traditional way of farming with mono-production with up to 20,000 hens. I wanted to explore if it was possible to build this farm without big external finance, with a manifold variety, and much more sustainable. [...] And I wanted to show that it was possible to make a production where the animals – well, all domesticated animals, animals living in captivity, are under stress whether they are fenced or caged. But then creating an environment that was as natural as possible. (Own translation of interview)

The hens at Hegnsholt are free range. Also, the chickens are not taken from their mothers: “instead, I want to show that they can be together as it lowers mortality, gives the chickens more comfort and safety [being with the mothers], and they [the mothers] can teach the chicken where to find food”. (own translation).

### ***5.2. Sharing wastefood***

Johanne has worked with exchange agreements for economic reasons, animal welfare reasons, environmentally reasons, and for reasons of taste. Economically, it was important to Johanne that Hegnsholt was economically sustainable and didn’t end up in debt to banks,

and that most of the surplus went back to farm, to the hens and chickens, and to the farm employees. To Johanne, animal welfare is about letting the chickens grow up with their mothers, having access to, and being able to move through, free outdoor spaces and eating natural food. Natural food is essential for the hens, as Johanne argues,

as industrially produced feed is designed to achieve the best combination between minerals, vitamins, protein and so on, so that the hens lay the most eggs possible, but not because of the taste. Industrial egg laying hens lay around one egg a day that weighs around 65 grams, and therefore most of what they have eaten goes directly into that egg. That also counts for the organic ones, where the feed is based on such stuff as fishbone meal and soy [...] from Brazil. Then, alternatively, when they eat grass, worms, flowers, vegetable leftovers, breadcrumbs, and that goes into the eggs, and gives a very different taste. But they [the egg laying hens] do not lay as many eggs, and therefore they are not as interesting to an industry that works on the premise of outputs and costs. (Own translation of interview)

Johanne also explains how the industrial feed is sterilised and how the industrial egg laying hens are mostly placed in sterile environments to minimise (exclude) bacteria. But in Johannes experience, that makes the animals much more vulnerable to disease. While visiting Johanne in March 2017, there was an outbreak of bird flu from Germany that required all poultry farms to keep their chickens and hens inside, and thousands of hens and chickens were culled around Europe. Based on the research Johanne has done on this, she believes that the sterile, closed, in-door environments are much more uncertain as many animals are placed closely together and with only limited access to fresh air. Also, the industrial feed is too low quality for Johanne, both for the animals and the taste of the eggs and meat. She states: "When the animals are allowed to walk freely on the fields, they become more robust, because the feel of the air, wind, rain, and sun, and the dirty water just boosts their immune systems and bodies". (own translation of interview). The local production of waste is a valuable resource for the farm and hens, and therefore the local sense and scale is a central part of the food system. Johanne is continuing to develop her farm into a small ecosystem (Shiva 2016a) with different animals, and some small crops to assist the system.

### **5.3. Diseases and risks**

Four months after the closure of the exchange agreements between the farm and the Copenhagen restaurants, it reopened in April 2017, but the conditions were still unclear. Finalising this article December 2017, the exchange agreement was closed down again, and in this following section I seek to follow the "theoretical risk" from a mobilities perspective. The exchange agreement was hindered due to several theoretical risks (understood as "what could potentially happen") of the spread of different diseases that could attack humans and animals, and could have a huge impact on export.<sup>4</sup> These theoretical risks, and the global commerce focus, draw immediate attention to Kesselring (2008), that with Bauman (2000) and Beck (1992), analyse how "the risk society is a society where social structures become instable and permeable" (Kesselring 2008, 76) partly due to the modern technological and ecological risks. Also, Kesselring argues, that "the rise of mobilities on every scale of the society – from the body to the global – radicalizes the risk society and shows the global interconnectedness and the inescapable character of the social and spatial mobilization of modernity" (2008, 92). Additionally, Abrahamsen and Mol (2014) point out that food travels fast and crosses many borders that are open to goods, while "the borders are also closed to travelling viruses and food-borne diseases" (2014, 282). Even though it is dubious whether

Hegnsholt's hens can get the diseases that is at risk according to the Danish Food Authority, it is not up to me to diagnose that, but I can respond to the idea of "theoretical risks" itself. Annemarie Mol and John Law have conducted research in relation to the "foot and mouth disease" as this is one of the theoretical risks that is at stake in the food network of Hegnsholt and the restaurants exchanging waste food. In "Globalisation in practice: On the politics of boiling pigswill" (2008) Law and Mol write:

How did the pigs on Burnside Farm catch foot and mouth disease? The evidence remains circumstantial, but the vets will argue that the virus that infected the pigs was carried in their swill. This swill consisted of waste food from catering kitchens. The waste food should have been processed but it is likely that the processing was not being done properly. In particular, it is likely that the swill had not been boiled. Thus illegal meat imports carrying living virus from a region of the world, perhaps Asia, where foot and mouth disease is endemic, were probably fed directly to the pigs which then contracted the disease. (2008, 134)

Furthermore, they point out that the feeding pigs from catering waste was made illegal in England in 2001, and puts "an end to an English history of human-pig-intimacy [...] that goes back 500 years" (Law and Mol 2008, 137). A story that is like the human-hen-intimacy of Hegnsholt, but draws on historical lines, which:

simultaneously evokes a romantic version of metabolic intimacy in which people, cottage dwellers, ideal-typical Victorian rural labourers, fed pigs with their kitchen waste, and subsequently fed on them in turn. [...] A piglet was bought in spring and lived in a sty in the garden. It was fed the family's kitchen waste and got more or less friendly with the family members. And then, as it got bigger, it was fed on potato tops, Swedes and boiled potatoes from the garden. Family members might collect other food from the lanes: sow thistles, snails, dandelions. Then the pig was fattened off with some bought-in barley meal. And finally it was slaughtered in a ceremony, usually in November, which culminated with everything, absolutely everything from the pig, being consumed. (Law and Mol 2008, 137)

Replacing pigs with hens, the story is equivalent in the Danish context, and this highlights the conflict of farming size and scale, a conflict between what Shiva (2016a, 2016b) would define as the war between agribusiness and agroecology. And furthermore, it is a conflict of food travelling through global commodity chains which has its roots in historical imperialist organisations of trade. Bringing the theoretical risk of the disease into the picture almost paralyses you. As Johanne, said: "I do not want to kill and harm anyone". Despite this, she insists on trying to find a solution to this problem, both for her mentioned reasons of animal welfare, the amounts of (natural) food/feed that is being wasted, while huge amounts of (fake) industrial, global food is being produced. The solution might not be on the horizon yet, but let us bear in mind that it was the techniques and systems of treating the feed/food that failed and led to the outbreak of diseases, as techniques often do (Graham and Marvin 2001; Kesselring 2008; Law and Mol 2008). In their article "Veterinary Realities: What is Foot and Mouth Disease?", Law and Mol (2011) outlines what the foot and mouth disease is, and how it was detected and examined during the outbreak in UK in 2001. Significantly, the article draws attention to the different veterinary traditions within veterinary science. These different traditions mean that:

drawing upon different worlds as they do, clinic, lab and epidemiology do not know the same "foot and mouth disease". Each enacts a different version. They do so by attending to and thus giving importance to different materials, fostering different qualities, staging different time lines and engaging in different spatial relation. This tells us that the ontological realm each opens up, explores and strengthens is different. (Law and Mol 2011, 13–14)



Thus, the theoretical risks are indeed real. Within these ontological lines it seems hopeless to counter-argue the “theoretical risk”, but what would the risks look like if they were carefully studied *in practice*, studied within that unique network with those unique actors within those specific spaces? Writing from the mobilities’ (risk) perspective, it could be argued, that the “theoretical risk” is a concept from the dominating modernist logic. A logic that directs and plans for stable universalities, while the world in practice is unique, local, mobile. Or as Vandana Shiva puts it:

[...] a certain *type* of science was promoted and privileged as the *only* scientific knowledge system. Two scientific theories came to dominate this new, industrial paradigm, and they continue to shape practices of food, agriculture, health, and nutrition every day. (2016b, 4)

This is not about deliberately exposing anyone – human and non-human – to dangers of infection and contamination, but rather it is about arguing for involving situated knowledge practice into decision-making.

#### **5.4. The transformative agency of Hegnsholt’s eggs: gestures and gratitude**

From following the structural and technical lines of the close down of the exchange agreement with waste food due to the risk of diseases from waste food, I will now turn to the transformative qualities of Hegnsholt’s farm. Learning about the farm was exotic to an urban dweller, and this is mentioned not to exoticise the farm, but to touch upon a central problem of modern industrial food production, urbanisation and environmental change. Anna Tsing points towards the problem of alienation that “the capitalist logics of commodification, things are torn from their life worlds to become objects of exchange” (2015, 121), including humans and non-humans. Then, among feminist theory and theory of commons, building the relationship between humans and non-humans is essential. Deborah Bird Rose puts it as: “a relation that seeks to resituate humans in the ecological system and resituate the non-humans in ethical terms to overcome the idea that the non-human world is devoid of meaning, values, and ethics” (2015, 4). This relational ontology brings along the ethical question of eating animals and other non-humans. When I asked Johanne about it, she said that it was with great satisfaction that she ate the animals she had raised, as she knew that they had lived a good, healthy, and compassionate life. Nonetheless, eating the hens is, according to Johanne, a feast, and not an everyday meal. A theoretical response to this question could also be that trying to build a more liveable future is about an ethical response that acknowledges others as mutual inhabitants, but not in itself only ethical as a higher guiding principle for how much “we” can hurt “nature”.

The logic of connection holds that the web of life is a web of mutual inter-dependencies. Human beings are enmeshed in webs of life as much as are koalas, eucalyptus, flying foxes, coral, vultures and bacteria. [...] It is an ethics that brings gratitude for the gifts of life into dialogue with our responsibilities within a wider web of life. (Rose 2015, 5)

This would entail a question of sharing – of giving as much back as one takes – but also encompasses not only the egg and chickens as commodities, but the whole organisation – human and non-human – working and living together. Those kinds of organisations retell the stories of the hens, eggs and chickens; learning about these more-than-humans creates an embodied experience, “the gratitude for the gifts”, as Rose writes in the quote above, where it is difficult to go back. Central to Johannes work are the narratives that talk about



the hens, eggs and chickens at Hegnsholt, and as argued earlier, these narratives hold a transformative agency (Fisher 1979; Le Guin 1986; Mikulak 2013).

Johanne said, “an egg is not just an egg”. At first this struck me as corny, but when you realise the work, time and effort, and resources from both humans and non-humans to make that egg possible for you to eat, it elicits nothing but gratitude and respect. Also, Hegnsholt eggs come from modern and heritage breeds – Danish landrace, Barnevelder, Easteregger, Italians, and Marans, just to name a few. The eggs vary in colour, taste, size of yolk, and structure of egg white. Furthermore, the stories are central to the experience, but do not work alone, because my experience is that once you have tasted the eggs, you will never forget. This experience is what van de Port and Mol (2015) describes in their article “Chupar Frutas in Salvador da Bahia: a case of practice-specific alterities”. Here, they outline the difference between *chupar* and *comer* mango’s, because those two different ways of eating are defined by the mango’s themselves. *Chupar*, is Spanish for “to suck”, and *comer* is Spanish for to eat, and when you have tried eating (*chupar*) a mature small mango where the juice drips down your chin, fingers and arms, you know the very difference from eating (*comer*) a hard mango with a knife. These kind of embodied experiences are similar to eating an egg from an industrial egg-laying hen and a free-range egg, and related to the aforementioned work of Sarah Gibson, who highlights the affective experiences of eating and the “emotional mobilities of desire and disgust” (2007, 5). In addition to this, Mimi Sheller shows how the emotional and cultural practice of eating [bananas], can affect politics; altogether, it shows the interlinked relation of how we, as omnivorous humans, change food while realising that food changes us.

Summing up, this article suggests that finding solutions to the issues of feeding animals with wastefood, the carrier bag of *food mobilities* (as the “metabolic intimacy”, the social, corporeal, technological, cultural, gendered, more-than-human, economical aspects of food production) must be brought into the discussion. To a great extent, this is a political discussion about how to design and organise food production, distribution and consumption of the future, dominated by export and competitiveness of nation states and corporations (Jackson, Ward, and Russell 2006; Gibson 2007; Law and Mol 2008; Mikulak 2013; Shiva 2016a, 2016b).

## 5. Where to take the carrier bag?

This article has looked at the relationship between food, waste food and the sharing economy, through the Carrier Bag Theory and the mobilities paradigm. The article elaborates on why it is good to think about food in terms of understanding both sharing and mobilities, and how food is shaping urban–rural, global–local landscapes and affective bodies. This work is undergone in relation to a larger project, that seeks to contribute to discussions on how we, as humans, are able to respond to environmental change, and how we, as researchers, use the knowledge we gather to inspire reparative futures and planetary becoming. From following the food mobilities of the farm and the other actors in the local food network, this article shows the collaborative, compassionate, responsible qualities of the sharing economy, and how this might be useful for reparative futures. The article unfolds this argument further by looking deeper into the farm as a heterogeneous relational-material entanglement of infrastructures, non-human and human, Nordic food stories, waste, food and feed, eating and tasting, diseases and risks, compassion and caring. It unfolds what the food mobilities of the Hegnsholt could teach us about the sharing economy, food, ethics and mobilities. The

Carrier Bag Stories will never be as enriching or enlivening as becoming engaged with hens, waste food and eggs, but maybe the next time you eat an egg or chuck away the top of a carrot, you might think a bit differently. Thinking about carrier bags is to study human relations with the surroundings that we are part of and live in, and, together, the farm, the network, and the stories, ought to inspire us to rethink *how to share* this planet with earth-others.

## Notes

1. Miljøministeriet, Regeringens Strategi for affaldsforebyggelse “Danmark uden affald II”. Numbers are from 2015.
2. CONCITO (2011) Rapport: Det skjulte madspild. (Report: The hidden waste of food). CONCITO is “Denmarks Green Think Tank”, and the referred report is based on two analyses conducted by Aarhus University (DK) and Copenhagen University (DK). Link: [https://concito.dk/files/dokumenter/artikler/madspild\\_-\\_kortlaegning\\_\\_handlingskatalog\\_juni2011\\_pressemeddelelser---18-bud-p--mindre-madspild-i-f-devaresektoren\\_2\\_1038998358.pdf](https://concito.dk/files/dokumenter/artikler/madspild_-_kortlaegning__handlingskatalog_juni2011_pressemeddelelser---18-bud-p--mindre-madspild-i-f-devaresektoren_2_1038998358.pdf).
3. These were listed in the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto in 2004 by 12 visionary chefs: <http://www.newnordicfood.org/>.
4. The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration under the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark, explicate the arguments on this website by drawing on EU legislation and regulation: [https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Leksikon/Sider/Fodring\\_af\\_dyr\\_med\\_rester\\_fra\\_fodevareproduktion.aspx](https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Leksikon/Sider/Fodring_af_dyr_med_rester_fra_fodevareproduktion.aspx).

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