

GARETH ROBERTS  
PhD RESEARCH PROPOSAL  
Interview Presentation

Food events, 'sustainability imaginaries'  
and shaping consumer perceptions and behaviour

Social and Economic Research Institute, Sheffield Hallam University  
Graduate Teaching Assistant PhD Scholarship - June 2022

# Why do this PhD?

- Covid-19 pandemic - catalyst (and time) for change...
  - managing Regather events and festivals ended
  - significant growth - Regather Box
  - accelerated set up - Regather Farm
  - realised 5 year business plan in 10 months
  - led successful Sheffield bid for SFP Bronze Award
  - won Cambridge Social Innovation Prize
  - work life balance - family and personal goals
  - career progression - artisan bakery
- always planned to undertake a PhD
- why now? right institution, right topic, right time

# What would I bring to this PhD?

- over 20 years working in events, food & sustainability
  - strategic event creation
  - social & cooperative enterprise
  - improving the sustainability of food systems
- extensive local, regional and national network of contacts
- teacher - “teaching as a more experienced learner”
- social innovator - “making models out of not knowing what we wanted to do”
- lived experience of...
  - food events - managing, trading, supplying, buying, attending
  - transformative power of events - event experience as instrument of change
  - role of events in culture / cultural change / cultural formation
  - managing and innovating with systems, networks, policy
  - creating a more resilient, localised, agroecological food system

# How would I approach this PhD?

- part time, over 6-7 years, as an opportunity to inform positive regional change
- alongside ongoing involvement in a range of food sustainability initiatives
- recognising need for support - supervision, learning, further development, piloting
- believing events are temporary spaces for collective action and agency
- capable of transformation, shaping, influencing and being influenced by, for better (and / or worse)...
  - consumer perceptions and behaviour
  - food sustainability 'imaginaries'
  - food systems, networks and policies
  - sustainability of regional food systems
- understand role, relationship, interplay / interdependence and much more...

# How would I approach this PhD?

*What role does systems thinking, policy change and organisation networks play when reimagining the transformative power of food festivals, farmers markets and agricultural shows to shape consumer perceptions and behaviour, and to improve regional food system sustainability in Yorkshire and Northern England?*

key drivers to reimagining the transformative power of food events

## systems thinking

- explore food enterprise research and innovation
- develop and apply to food events

## policy change

- +/- impact on food events
- role in facilitating change
- inform food event-based interventions

## organisation networks

- map networks
- understand relationships
- impact on resources, opportunities, influence

# How would I approach this PhD?

## Data Collection

- attend and experience the 'live' event
- engage key event stakeholders
- research case study 'dimensions'
- situate - location, context, key drivers

## Data Analysis

- comparative case studies
- across multiple years
- inform food event-based intervention
- further development to be decided

