

<b>Institution:</b> University of Sunderland		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Creative writing practice and theory underpins national and grassroots animal advocacy strategies		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2016-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Alex Lockwood	Senior Lecturer in Creative and Professional Writing	2008-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2019-December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</b></p> <p>Lockwood's research on how creative writing can shape strategies for animal protection has influenced the policies and approach of UK-wide organisations. His work underpins the Vegan Society's political strategy and has enabled 'a leap forward' in their policy by outlining the first practical and reasonable legislative pathway to securing a plant-based food system. He developed a new communications and campaign strategy based on his research for grassroots organisation Animal Rebellion. This has reshaped public and industry opinion, forcing national and international media to move away from the 'angry vegan' stereotype and reframe how they present the campaign. Notably, his approach persuaded Europe's oldest meat market to allow a peaceful occupation by the plant-based movement.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</b></p> <p>Lockwood's research explores how creative writing has shaped narratives around global animal protection, tracing how writers and other communicators engage in representing human-animal relations and the natural world. Conducting original interviews and engaging in novel textual analysis as well as the production of new creative non-fiction, this research responds to the industrialisation of our relationships with the nonhuman. It offers novel approaches for how writers can craft more responsible and intersectional narratives.</p> <p><i>The Pig in Thin Air</i> [R1] is a work of creative non-fiction that explores participation in contemporary animal advocacy, produced through a process of embodied investigation. This includes a record of Lockwood's involvement in slaughterhouse vigils and a restaurant 'die-in', as well as a consultation to Farm Sanctuary, one of America's oldest and largest farm animal advocacy organisations. His insights into the role of embodied encounters are woven into explorations of new craft techniques; how the writing of these encounters can shape our ability to respond to and absorb different narratives about those relationships. <i>The Pig in Thin Air</i> has become a primary point of reference for animal protection organisations thinking strategically about their uses of creativity in storytelling.</p> <p><i>H is for Hypocrite</i> [R2] is a critique of new nature writing, arguing that most nature writing remains mired in anthropocentric practices of domination, even as it demands people to 'love' the natural world, and so reinforces those destructive modes of cultural behaviour. <i>The Collaborative Craft of Creatural Writing</i> [R3] provides original research through interviews with writers and editors engaging in innovative rhetorical practices in ecological writing. It demonstrates that many writers are drawing upon indigenous cultures and spiritual practices to restore relationships in and through their creative outputs with nonhuman life.</p> <p><i>Shift &amp; Signal</i> [R4], Lockwood's major commission from Newcastle-based arts agency The New Bridge Project, resulted in eight aural narratives that were both creative personal responses to the</p>		

commission's theme of climate breakdown and a rigorous study conducted through 85 interviews with experts, practitioners and affected communities. Each was mapped as a walk through the urban spaces of Newcastle and Gateshead, connecting with local people, major organisations and civic institutions, raising awareness of the need to shift towards more sustainable human–nonhuman relationships within municipal spheres – especially around food practices – in the context of their environmental footprint.

The *Food Systems Report* [R5] commissioned by the Vegan Society is based on interviews with over 30 farmers, food producers and food policy experts, and synthesis of the most up-to-date food systems research. This research creates a robust environmental case for veganism and builds a novel argument for national food policy, calling for multi-criteria principles for the UK food system across health, economy and just work, environment and climate, and social and cultural values. It proposes legislative instruments which, for the first time, provide a practical and reasonable pathway to securing a plant-based food system.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

**R1** Alex Lockwood, *The Pig in Thin Air*, Lantern Books: New York. (2016).

**R2** Alex Lockwood, 'H is for Hypocrite: Reading the "New Nature Writing" Through a Vegan Lens' in *Doing Vegan Studies*, ed. Laura Wright. University of Nevada Press. (2018) **Quality indicators:** Peer-reviewed book chapter.

**R3** Alex Lockwood, 'The Collaborative Craft of Creatural Writing' in *Beyond the Creaturely Divide*, ed. Dominik Ohrem and Roman Bartosch. Palgrave Macmillan (2018). **Quality indicators:** Peer-reviewed book chapter.

**R4** Lockwood, Alex (2017) *Shift and Signal*. New Bridge Project. **Quality indicators:** Commissioned by the Arts Council England-funded New Bridge Project. In its evaluation ACE praised the work, describing it as "well researched and rich in contemporary theory and science."

**R5** Alex Lockwood, *Food Systems Report*. Report commissioned by the Vegan Society. (2020). **Quality indicators:** The Vegan Society describe it as "visionary" and "original". It has been endorsed by CEOs of the Food Ethics Committee and the Eating Better Alliance.

#### Research funding

UnLtd Social Enterprise grant for working in communities, 2012, £2,000, PI: Lockwood

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travel Fellowship, 2014, £6,000, PI: Lockwood

The Mercers' Company, 2016-17, £23,800, PI: Lockwood

AHRC Connected Communities: Lived Practices of Anger, 2015-16, £33,655, Co-I: Lockwood

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

#### Setting the Vegan Society's strategic direction

The Vegan Society (VS) is a major UK charity with over 8,000 members and income of over £3 million in 2019. In 2019 The VS set themselves the strategic goal of bringing about "a more favourable legal and policy framework for veganism and vegan products and services" [S1]. They commissioned Lockwood to write a strong environmental case for veganism that would shape their policy work in the medium and long term. The VS's Interim CEO [S2] says Lockwood was commissioned due to his "skills in creatively shaping that narrative so that it is read, accepted and acted upon," as demonstrated in **R1** and **R2**.

In the resulting *Food Systems Report* [R5] Lockwood articulated for the first time what is practically and specifically possible in bringing about a plant-based food system. In the words of their Interim CEO, "What [Lockwood] has laid out for us here is the visionary, practical steps to get us to a plant-based food system and a vegan UK....It is no exaggeration to say that Alex's involvement has directly informed the strategic direction of The Vegan Society, and helped us make better informed decisions on achieving our organisational vision of the end of animal exploitation, both in the UK and globally" [S2].

Currently the transition to a vegan world is framed as an individual lifestyle change at a mass scale, resulting in lower demand for animal products, and greater demand for plant-based food

and other products. As these social changes gather momentum a shift in public behaviours and attitudes is expected to lead to a tipping point in public consensus. To date no legislation has been proposed that anticipates and accommodates this change. The *Food Systems Report* plugs that gap in the form of three proposed Bills that are ready to enact when that tipping point is reached. The VS describe their approval and adoption of the report as a “*leap forward in specific VS policy, advocating for actual UK-wide legislation.*”

In addition to this impact on their strategy, the VS credit the research process itself with benefitting the organisation by forging stronger relationships across the sector. “*Through the research interviews [Lockwood] undertook he has helped us build connections with a range of stakeholders. This has also improved our ability to communicate effectively with other organisations and stakeholders by fostering understanding and improving our knowledge of their different priorities.*” For example, farmers and farming stakeholders were key informants in the research, and thus the report is designed *for* farmers, not against them. For the first time, vegan-oriented research amplifies their experiences of the complexity of systems involved in sustainable food, and their demands for policies to be matched in their complexity rather than over-simplified.

The VS acknowledge the report’s positive impact on their profile and reputation. It “*continue[s] to benefit our credibility with other food policy organisations ... and provides evidence that The Vegan Society is recognised as an effective and innovative player in the global vegan movement. ... No other major national organisation, charity or animal protection group has advocated for the environmental case for veganism through such a robust, research-led project.*” The report and its recommendations have been endorsed by the CEO of the Food Ethics Committee, the CEO of the Eating Better Alliance and member of the Climate Change Committee, and the author of *Feeding Britain*, a pivotal study of British food systems.

The organisation intended to launch the *Food Systems Report* at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November 2020. COVID-19 restrictions meant the launch was postponed to Spring 2021, curtailing the expected impact. However, the report has already impacted on the VS, with the organisation committing to invest at least £20,000 (plus significant staff time) in disseminating the report. It will underpin the VS’s work at the rescheduled COP26.

### **Guiding Animal Rebellion’s campaign and media strategies**

Lockwood’s research shaped campaign and media strategies adopted by Animal Rebellion (AR), a grassroots animal and climate justice movement affiliated with Extinction Rebellion. Lockwood was appointed as Advisor to the group’s Media and Messaging, Political Strategy and Dialogue teams prior to and during their 2019 campaign, which demanded a transition towards a plant-based food system by 2025. His involvement meant that AR took a different, more strategic approach to communicating with the public and animal food system stakeholders. The lead organiser says that Lockwood “*translat(ed) his research knowledge into outcomes ... to shape the internal policies, strategic direction and narrative materials used in our campaigns. ... Without [Lockwood’s] skills and research, we would not have had the impact that we did across the media or in shifting the Overton Window around the possibility of a plant-based food system.*” Since Lockwood was appointed, the group has grown from an organisation with 10 members, to a global action. Now over 20,000 activists in over 25 countries are members of local AR groups [S3].

Lockwood’s expertise in storytelling enabled AR to influence major food systems institutions and their engagement with and buy-in to a plant-based food system. On the strength of his argument, AR sidelined their plan to launch their campaign with a nonviolent civil disobedience action in favour of a ‘framing action’ at Smithfield Market in London, Europe’s largest and oldest meat market. AR say Lockwood’s “*research and arguments convinced us ... to use the activity as a ‘framing action’ that creatively reshaped public attitudes ... by securing an agreement ... to peacefully and legally occupy its iconic Grand Avenue*” [S3]. Lockwood brokered the agreement using his strategic understanding of storytelling to convince the Smithfield Market Tenants’ Association of the scale of the climate crisis and the inevitability of switching to a plant-based

food system. So convincing was he that one of Smithfield's traders announced they would be selling plant-based burgers. This is the first time in the market's 800 years of trading that such a product will be on sale in the market [S4]. The occupation took place on 7-8 October 2019, attracting approximately 400 participants. Lockwood's involvement in the protest extended to framing and communicating the occupation, helping AR in *"deciding upon creative direction for the language we used, the framing of the messages we put into the public domain. ... This shift in direction meant that we significantly outflanked standard media representations of 'angry vegans' vs. 'ordinary workers' forcing the national and international media to reconfigure the frame in which they presented the issues."* The Times reported the protest under the headline "Traders welcome vegan activists occupying Smithfield Market" [S5].

Lockwood's skill in constructing engaging narratives enabled AR to benefit from both strategic media planning and responsive actions. AR credit Lockwood with 1) *developing a strategy for exclusive coverage for our launch, via an initial Guardian exclusive...;* (2) *boosting our legitimacy with his Opinion piece on the Amazon fires in the Independent...;* (3) *liaising with press, which ensured we were able to reach dozens upon dozens of local papers around the country,*" as well as national and international media. He managed media attention towards "Mr Broccoli", an activist arrested at an AR protest, by brokering an interview with Susanna Reid and Piers Morgan on Good Morning Britain (16/10/19). The interview and subsequent reaction brought attention to the group's campaign; a Reuters video of the arrest accumulated 3.5 million views, and extensive coverage in local and regional papers meant that the group's message reached audiences rarely touched by animal justice groups. The *Daily Star* encouraged its primarily working-class male readers to take a stand, a tone unheard of in the paper. Mr Broccoli was the second most discussed topic on Twitter on the day of the interview [S5, S6].

The lead organiser attributes the group's better understanding of creating communications that shift public attitudes to Lockwood's research. *"With the knowledge and experience [Lockwood] afforded to us in the planning and running of our public campaigns, we created a range of media messages that consistently focused on keywords picked up on by the media and public... With [his] knowledge around the nature of affective embodied reception of messages of human-animal encounter, we were better informed to make decisions about the kinds of narratives and story that ... engage and shift public attitudes towards animals used for food."* AR credit Lockwood's knowledge and expertise in the field of shaping narrative and storytelling as *"directly impactful on the ways in which we campaigned, and our success in having our story spread so far through the media. ... We achieved over 300 mentions, stories and appearances across the media, many of which were positive in their coverage"* [S3]. Over 40 of these media appearances were made in the mainstream conservative press, whose readership AR were particularly keen to reach [S5].

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1 Vegan Society Annual Report for the year ended 31 Dec 2019

S2 Written testimonial from Interim CEO, Vegan Society

S3 Written testimonial from Lead Organiser, Animal Rebellion

S4 [London's Smithfield Market to Offer Plantbased Meat For First Time in 800 Years Following Animal Rebellion Protests](#). *Vegconomist*, 11 Nov 2019

S5 Animal Rebellion Press Roundup Aug-Oct 2019

S6 Twitter trending topics, 16/10/19