

With Pots and Pens to Parliament: Understanding and Responding to Crises through a Critical Feminist Lens in Cape Town, South Africa

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For decades, South Africa has been battered by crises and its people, tired and bruised, are raising their fists in resistance. The country continues to wrestle with the impact of decades of institutionalized racism, sexism, exclusion, structural violence, and other factors that undermine human development and social cohesion. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns were associated with a spike in gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide. Power, patriarchy, and a lack of participation in decision-making processes and structures remain the most significant obstacles to the realization of food security. Here, hunger is a driver of social unrest and violence. It is a slow violence that eats away at the fibres of Cape Town's social fabric. In a national multiwave study to document the impact of lockdowns, 47 per cent of the respondents indicated not having money to purchase food in April 2020 and, of those living in urban spaces, shack dwellers in informal or marginalized areas were most vulnerable (Spaull et al, 2020; Van der Berg, 2021). In early 2020, the state temporarily closed informal trade and, with it, the main food sources for vast swathes of the population. People lost their jobs and their access to cash to purchase what little food there was. Urban farmers were banned from travelling to their gardens (Buthelezi et al, 2020). Yet, women played a major role in spearheading change and re-establishing hope. Their networks braided together to set up makeshift kitchens in private spaces where hot food was served daily, conversations

bloomed, the shame of hunger began to dissolve, and dreams bigger than just bowls of soup took shape.

This chapter shares the perspectives of four of the women (co-authors of this chapter) who established networks of women running community kitchens during the pandemic. We use the term ‘community kitchen’ in this chapter as an overall description for local structures such as soup kitchens or communal feeding schemes that provide free meals in their immediate neighbourhoods. The kitchens we write about are situated across the low-income areas of the Cape Flats area of Cape Town, a city that maintains the blueprint of its apartheid history within its spatial framework, infrastructure, and political ecology; it is a city of contrasts, inequality, and a deeply contested food system.

All the community kitchens involved in this research are run by women of colour, most of whom have experienced food insecurity and many of whom have experienced or been exposed to GBV. These women were raised in the context of a racist, sexist post-apartheid South Africa, were burdened with intergenerational poverty, and continue to speak and act from a place of lacking. For them, sharing a slice of bread with a sibling for dinner is not unusual, yet we fed thousands during the pandemic and created safer spaces offering sisterhood and support. Their community kitchens were of paramount importance to their communities during the COVID-19 crisis and continue to provide unique insights into very particular places where food injustice is challenged through feminist activism and community-centred research aiming at destigmatizing hunger. Despite the heaviness of this work, we continue to emerge through the thick of crises at home and in their communities to serve those in need, often grappling with the lack of boundaries between their roles as community members feeding their families and kitchen managers feeding their communities. These challenges evoke the feminist perspective that ‘the personal is political’ and call upon resistance and reorganization in times of social injustice and crisis (see [Figure 3.1](#)).

The authors of this chapter have collaborated in community-led research on food security since 2020 ([Paganini and Weigelt, 2023](#)). Two authors form part of the community kitchen network; two authors steered the research with the co-researchers. We ground our writings in a critical feminist research framework in the context of power, oppression, and patriarchal capitalism, while remaining cognizant of power relationships among ourselves as a dual-heritage research team. This chapter provides a snapshot of a five-year research project led by TMG Research, a Nairobi and Berlin-based thinktank that cooperates with Food Agency Cape Town (FACT).

In this chapter, we build on the three key principles of radical food geographies (RFG) presented by Levkoe et al ([Chapter 1](#)) and [Hammelman et al \(2020\)](#). In the first section, we respond to RFG’s call to action on historical and structural challenges and how those relate to power by

Figure 3.1: The personal is political: by unpacking the political reason for women's personal challenges, the community kitchens empowered women to become activists who championed women's causes (such as the 16 Days campaign) across Cape Town.



Source: Nyaba, 2022.

presenting our community kitchen case study from low-income areas in Cape Town where food insecurity continues to threaten communities oppressed by historic marginalization and power dynamics within current food systems. In the second section, we address RFG's call for action by highlighting the methodological process that led to this chapter. Then, we present two short stories that were written as part of a participatory process and speak to the importance of space and place in food justice processes. Throughout we demonstrate how feeding people at an individual scale is conditioned by systems of marginalization and disempowerment yet also contributes to broader impacts at the scale of food justice movements and anti-violence campaigns.

Community kitchens in Cape Town and the social capital of networks during crises

The community kitchens of Cape Town are as diverse as the neighbourhoods they serve. Community kitchens operate in neighbourhoods of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and are often connected to mosques or churches, schools or early childhood development centres, community centres, and private homes. Often, these kitchens are run by volunteers (mainly women) and receive food donations through faith-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, the private sector, or governmental social development support (see [Figure 3.2](#)). The donations

Figure 3.2: The community kitchen of the Callas Foundation operates in a private home.



Source: Nyaba, 2022.

are sourced mainly via Cape Town's food retail market or, occasionally, large- or medium-scale farmers from the Philippi Horticulture Area, a vegetable production site in the peri-urban Cape Flats (Paganini et al, 2021b).

The economic landscape in Cape Town is characterized by a high-skill, formal economy, with 75 per cent of grocery trade dominated by large supermarket chains and an increasing presence of fast-food establishments in low-income neighbourhoods. This economic structure intersects with a concerning issue as household food insecurity is prevalent, reaching 55 per cent citywide and potentially soaring to 80 per cent in specific areas such as the Cape Flats. Notably, residents in these low-income regions heavily rely on social grants for food security, creating a paradox where nutritional compromises are made in the face of hunger (Paganini and Weigelt, 2023). Our research zoomed in on the community kitchen networks in the Cape Flat area of Cape Town: a peri-urban, low-income, high-density area shaped by apartheid and post-apartheid spatial policies that created and perpetuated segregation based on race and economic status. This urban geography reinforces social, economic, and political marginalization and creates conditions of social isolation in many communities. The state has not adequately addressed these challenges and has failed to act on food insecurity. The fragility of current systems leave those who live along the fault lines or at the intersections of vulnerabilities destitute (for example, women during the pandemic) (Bam and Humphreys, 2022; Groenmeyer, 2022). Even though the root cause of hunger in these areas clearly rests in segregation, marginalization, disempowerment, and lack of state intervention, food

insecurity is understood by the communities we work with as their personal failures to attain liveable wages and budget sensibly. Their sense of shame around poverty and hunger spurred soup kitchen patrons to walk to distant kitchens to avoid their neighbours' stares (Paganini et al, 2021a) and erupted as a dominant theme in women's written reflections on their participation in community kitchens.

Yet, by unpacking hunger and its root causes in the Cape Flats' urban geography, community kitchen volunteers and patrons began shedding their sense of shame over intergenerational poverty and hunger and replacing it with a shared sense of resistance, hope, and change through social cohesion. Community kitchens can play a multifunctional role and enhance social cohesion among those who run them. Herein, in this sense of sisterhood, lies an opportunity for destigmatizing and reimagining community kitchens, replacing the conventional view of community kitchens as feeding schemes for the destitute.

Through women's work in networking, resourcing, and repairing, their community kitchens became places of learning, communication, sharing, healing, and recreation, and where the social challenges of our cities, our histories, and our future are explored through food. A look beyond the horizon to Latin America provides examples of how this vision may come into reality. There, soup kitchens are communal centres where community and solidarity come to the fore (see also, García et al, Chapter 6). Often these kitchens are embedded in municipal structures and supported by women's networks (Kogan, 1998; Immiink, 2001; Hartley, 2020). As Gennari and Tornaghi (2020: 86) suggest, 'The reasons for implementing community kitchens—and making food production and consumption a collective responsibility today still have characteristics in common with the past experiences but also depend on the new needs of contemporary cities in times of austerity, overcrowded cities, climate and environmental crisis'.

Mixing critical feminism and radical food geographies

Our research in community kitchens was conducted from a feminist research philosophy and methodology. Feminist research punctuates questions of power, not only in terms of gender, but also class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, geographical location, and disability (Andrews, Smith, and Morena, 2019). An intersectional analysis of inequality and social injustice helps to understand how interlocking forms of oppression and privilege are experienced and reproduced daily and supported by broader structural inequalities and systems (Davis and Hattery, 2018; Kiguwa, 2019). It requires a move away from 'single truth' objectivity towards understanding knowledge as situated and embodied (Haraway, 1988), affording new value to experiential knowledge and feelings. This includes a focus on researchers' reflexivity on their role and

positionality, including making explicit the power complexities inherent in the research process (Kiguwa, 2019; Paganini et al, 2021b). RFG integrates radical geography with critical food system research by providing theoretical and activist contributions (Levkoe et al, Chapter 1; Hammelman et al, 2020). Reynolds, Block, and Bradley (2018) reflect on this growing body of work, in which activist-scholars collaborate with community-led organizations to include different voices into theory while acknowledging the difficulties behind these approaches – namely, power relations among author teams, lack of time to build trust, and the structural challenges of academic conventions in acknowledging different styles of writing and articulating. This is also a question that concerns us and poses challenges such as converting differing narrative styles into scientific text, without losing the character of multiple voices through editing.

Donna Andrew and Desiree Lewis' (2017) work significantly shaped our research approach. They encourage feminist and participatory approaches in food research to unpack root causes of hunger and women's daily struggles while drawing attention to the perceptions, voices, and feelings of marginalized groups. The visceral lived experience of hunger, which has been the lifelong reality of many of the women who actively contribute to the research project, is this research's thematic entry point. Thus, the concept of having voice has been a cornerstone for our work as well as the work of our partners including the FACT network, a community-based research network of community activists who often do not see themselves represented in research or discourse. Through integrative methodologies agreed upon by all co-researchers, our research moves beyond the purely analytical and into the emotive and embodied experiences of the research collaborators. For example, story writing retreats support the women who run voluntary community kitchens in finding the headspace we require to engage in deeper reflection on their daily practices. At the same time, these stories served as data and provided unique and profoundly personal perspectives into daily challenges around food.

As a co-research team, we were tasked with re-writing knowledge in explicitly decolonized ways. As a collective, we actively sought to remove the power imbalance between researchers and the researched and to employ the recommendations of a FACT co-research study that exposed the relationship between researchers who extract data from communities and, with it, community members' agency over what happens to it (Paganini et al, 2021a). While this is a messy undertaking, it would be naïve to claim the absence of power differences between community members affiliated with partner organizations and researchers affiliated with the project, between people of colour and White colleagues, and between students and supervisors. The trust-building process that underpinned the project was politically motivated and sought to address social inequality. Therefore, this

project began and will end with the standpoints and experiences of the women running the community kitchens who shape the research agenda, methodology, analysis, interpretation of data, and dissemination. Our critical feminist approach through the co-research methodology challenges how knowledge is produced and whose knowledge holds power in the context of academia. Research must be informed by the insights of the communities where the research takes place to allow communities to bring their voices to the research processes and global discourse on food security and RFG.

What is cooking: methods for exploring community kitchens

As the pandemic dragged on, short-term government relief funds, civil society donations, and corporate donations dwindled. This starved kitchens of necessary supplies, suffocating the sustainability of community kitchens, perpetuating hunger, and removing communities' newfound platforms for support, hope, solidarity, and encouragement. While some kitchens were forced to close, some community kitchen staff dug even deeper into their networks to continue to provide essential nourishment, shelter, and spaces where neighbours could feel 'human again' (Battersby et al, 2022). Yet, mirroring experiences in the health care sector, little attention was paid to those kitchen workers who put in long stretches of work – sometimes without pay, while struggling to take care of their own families. A three-day retreat, organized by the authors (see Figure 3.3), provided 25 female kitchen heads with space to breathe, vent, reflect, dream, rethink, and co-design community kitchens as multifaceted hubs addressing their communities' diverse needs through food (Paganini et al, 2021a).

As part of the research process, we conducted 20 kitchen exchange visits and accumulated photovoice data. Photovoice is a qualitative method that allows researchers to gain insights into people's lived experiences (Milne and Muir, 2019). Twenty women leading community kitchens took photos during their exchange visits, which allowed them to reflect on their day-to-day work in the kitchens. A joint co-analysis of the photos was a decisive step; through conversation, expression, and description of everyday life, the photographs turned the ordinary into research content. Community kitchen heads and the authors of this chapter were invited to a gallery walk to leave comments about their observations, co-analyse, and identify key themes from the photographs. We discussed these in a fishbowl session where each kitchen leader shared what we observed and learned from other kitchens and how this learning applied to their own kitchens (Figure 3.4). This gave co-researchers a bird's eye view of community kitchens in Cape Town beyond their own community, the structures that drive them apart, the burdens we face, the exhaustion that plagues us, and the network of

Figure 3.3: Community kitchen volunteers came together in a three-day workshop to present their stories, celebrate successes, and envision the future of their kitchens as communal spaces.



Source: Nyaba, 2022.

Figure 3.4: Analysis of the photovoice exercise through fishbowl discussions.



Source: Nyaba, 2022.

like-intentioned women who model how to surmount these challenges. By sharing and sorting stories, co-researchers contextualized and interpreted their photovoice to produce short texts. Two of these pieces are presented in the following section.

Interconnectivity of food

Community kitchen leaders saw food as more than something served on plates. It was their entry point to responding to intersecting crises in communities. The conversations during the retreat highlighted the rich menu of services shared alongside food, from responding to domestic violence, nutrition and growing organic food, childcare or after-school care, to urging gang members to desist from gang violence. The value derived from community kitchens transcends the immediate need for food, offering critical community spaces for seeking and building connection, exchanging, and solidarity; querying norms; spearheading transformation; and giving voice to advocates for food system change. Community kitchens foster social values and (re)build communities' broken social fabric and the women who run them serve as trusted community advisors in the absence of government services. The kitchen heads described how the everyday practice of preparing and serving food had allowed them to identify and assist vulnerable individuals relationally, with dignity.

However, a dominating narrative during the retreat and photovoice exercise was to acknowledge the exhaustion, the dwindling resources, and the ongoing problem of donor conditionalities that undermined the women's vision of creating spaces of dignity. The women co-researchers also noted the lack of conversation about hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the year-long community research process, women who run community kitchens led discussions about taking food security out of the sole possession of public health statistics and recognized the intersectionality of compounding issues. In previous research, we argued that employing feminist approaches to food security research can unearth the root causes of broken systems and power struggles and amplify marginalized voices normally excluded in mainstream food security research approaches (Paganini et al, 2021b).

Serving stories alongside soup

In this section, we share the writing of two co-researchers from community kitchens. Their lived experiences speak powerfully to RFG by underscoring the importance of network building and allyship in food justice activism. These examples rely on the direct voice of community kitchen leaders to illustrate the importance of participatory processes and reflections and to show the interconnections between food, care work, and other social movements. The first example is one co-author's reflection on the vulnerability of kitchen heads and the multiple stresses and shame experienced by Cape Flats' women in the wake of systemic violence. The

second example highlights a persistent theme that continuously surfaced during the retreat, in photovoice, and during writing workshops: violence against women, its causes, and how food insecurity among perpetrators amplifies it. The text below is a call to activism written by a Black, female gender advocate who mainstreams gender awareness and activism within community kitchens.

A process reflection: safer spaces, emotions, and building political voices through food

As a young activist, I had looked to the older women who run community kitchens in reverence, eager to join them in their brave food security activism. Yet, when we converged at the retreat, there were tears as each divulged her anger, stress, guilt, exhaustion, and physical pain. I was struck by the below piece of writing by a community member working at FACT who analysed the systemic violence that emerged during her struggles running a community kitchen.

‘It was hammered into us, from my mother, from my community; it was echoed by everyone: your hunger must not be written on your face. Your poverty must never show. My mother raised us to know that if you don’t have something, you must accept that situation until the next paycheque. Having to go next door to ask for something for the kitchen table shows your poverty; you only ask close relatives or go to bed hungry. Poor people were teased. My mother was working for a family and brought food leftovers home from work; you get teased for that, because you cannot afford your own. They call it eating the scraps from the White person’s dinner table. The secrecy around our hunger came from the indignity of running out of food; it is shame. When it comes to shame, if you are transparent, people laugh at you. They gossip about you; they don’t help you. So, most people don’t want to be exposed and keep hiding their situation.’ (quote collected during the photovoice documentation)

I was surprised to find something within these courageous leaders that I thought dwelled only within me, as a young Black woman: shame. Though they carry ample experience and expertise to transform local and global responses to food insecurity, they are not immune to the cycle of violence deeply embedded in Cape Town’s historical context. Shame is deeply embodied here and haunts each of us. Through our community kitchen work, we had been drawn into community and opened ourselves to vulnerability; thus, I chose to reciprocate by sharing with them a poem I wrote titled ‘Shame’. I could barely lift my eyes to look at the faces of

the women as I read it, but there was the need to recognize our shared burdens and find solidarity and space for discussions and planning as a collective community.

Shame

Feeling ashamed
 of my body
 with its breasts that part ways
 violently
 when I lay on my back,
 that one breast goes and lays on one side
 the other breast goes and lays on the other
 I am ashamed
 of the gleaming marks on
 my bronze skin
 You can see how far my
 stomach must have stretched when it carried the baby
 I was ashamed then
 I am ashamed now
 I was ashamed even
 when I was too
 young to be ashamed
 or understand shame
 So shame is a taunting little thing
 that grows in size and likeness
 and changes with you
 When your thighs take the shape
 of a curve
 its muscles growing stronger to
 withstand what weight you carry
 shame has its own muscles
 It grows taller with you
 a second shadow that
 does not disappear even when the sun
 disappears from the sky
 You carry your baby on your back
 and somewhere your shame is attached
 Perhaps a heavier load
 perhaps it is why you tire so
 quickly on your way to the taxi rank
 I am not ashamed to admit
 that I have nursed this shame
 and fed it as I fed my growing child

I have groomed shame, because
letting go is a shame on its own

My poem is about no longer being beautiful and no longer conforming to an ideal. It's the same with hunger. We are either too thin from starvation or made overweight by the sugary fast foods that we can afford. In the same way we hide our bodies in shame, we hide our feelings. Rather than answering "How are you?" with "I am well", we have become adept at answering with, "I am surviving". We hide our shame about not being satiated behind platitudes, clothes, and our own belief that tomorrow will be better.

Silence kills: reclaiming DALLA

Challenges in the Cape Flats may seem overwhelming, but in coming together with other women who volunteer at community kitchens, we have found strength to keep going and form the community kitchen network which we call 'With pens and pots to parliament'. By exploring the kitchen work, we have discovered kindness, warmth, belonging, purpose, support, resilience, and solidarity. We have recognized the power of people, social relationships, and networks as most of our kitchens survived only through social networks and sharing. Our networking has allowed us to become part of something bigger than ourselves and inspired others to do the same. In solidarity, women can advocate for their needs using a unified voice.

Violence against women – physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and socio-cultural – is a conspicuous and widespread violation of human rights in South Africa. This violence pervades the political, economic, and social structures of society and is driven by strongly patriarchal social norms and complex and intersectional power inequalities, including gender, race, class, and sexuality. The relationship between gender inequality and GBV is well established: gender inequality legitimates violence and is further established by the use of such violence. The possibility of intervening in this relationship, however, presents a far more complex challenge.

Unbelievably, after 28 years of democracy, South African women are regularly confronted with systemic sexual harassment and violence. The government has failed to enforce laws and policies intended to safeguard women's rights. Even the police often fail to provide adequate protection. Instead of enjoying the fruits of democratic freedom, women constantly live in fear of rape, harassment, discrimination, and murder.

We argue that gender discrimination and violation of women's human rights should have punishable consequences and effective enforcement. Men, women, and people of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community¹ in South Africa are impacted by violence in multiple and intersecting ways. South Africa's rape rate, as a particular form of GBV, is one of the highest in the world

(UNODC South Africa, 2002). GBV as a product of many factors related to first and foremost hunger, HIV/AIDS, cultural negative practices and attitudes, gender stereotypes and inequalities, and extreme poverty continues to be a critical human rights and development issue for South Africa. “And how does this manifest in our work on food? We move! We DALLA!!”

Our community kitchen work’s expansion has brought us together to reclaim ‘dalla’. Dalla is a word used by gang members in Cape Town to encourage each other to immediate, intimidating, violent action that sends passers-by fleeing. As victims of gang violence for years, women and children are reclaiming the word as an act of resistance and have initiated the DALLA campaign with the Callas Foundation. The campaign gives a (female) voice to the demand to dismantle patriarchal society/systems and GBV in Cape Town. The campaign sees women coming together to educate and heal each other, protect their vulnerable, enforce the law, and mobilize resources in the form of expertise, knowledge, food, and violence prevention.

Today, we see women in the Cape Flats, Cape Town’s low-income area, advocating using the hashtag #Patrickmustfall.² Patrick is the name chosen to symbolize patriarchy in South Africa. Patriarchy manifests in the violence against women and the violent environment of our cities. It is a physical manifestation in our food system and unpacks which food is available to whom. Healthy food is only affordable to the rich. If families have to cut corners, women step back to offer the meal to the son, husband, or other male family member. Patriarchy in food systems is oblivious to women’s unpaid or underpaid care work in farming, grocery shopping, cooking, serving, and cleaning. Therefore, food activism is naturally rooted in feminism because, as bell hooks says, ‘the work of feminism does not end with the fight for equality of opportunity within the existing patriarchal structure. We must understand that challenging and dismantling is at the core of contemporary feminist struggle’ (2013: 5).

The feminist campaign, DALLA, pairs ‘Patrick’ with ‘DALLA’. This is a campaign developed by the kitchen network. The women of DALLA reclaim the word and espouse it with a new meaning:

Deliberate: We are deliberate in our actions, thinking, and behaviours. We are determined to change the effects of GBV in our communities.

Action: We are committed to educating and creating awareness workshops and expert training on GBV. We involve all stakeholders.

Leading: We lead by example. We will not stop until we reach as many women and children from all corners and walks of life as possible.

Liberation: ‘I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change; I am changing the things I cannot accept.’ Angela Davis

Awareness: There is power in awareness – Knowledge is power! WOMANDLA^{3,4}

The importance of claiming voice and space and seeking healing and destigmatization resonate within both of these stories. The stories show how food can be considered as political as it is not only a means to fill individual bellies, but to determine and be determined by the broader culture of communities and cities. If there is not enough food, shame prevents people from taking part in political processes and community work. Insufficient food supply and access also means an increase of violence, which manifests in the brutally high rates of GBV in South African cities and communities.

Concluding thoughts

This chapter had two focal areas – the first was the experience and vision of the community kitchens as they emerged in the wake of the COVID crisis. The second was the centring of co-researchers' voices within the research process. We, as a research team of academics, community-based researchers, and activists, believe that the story told here and the way it has been told make two valuable contributions to RFG.

The first contribution is to research orientation. The approach presented here builds on RFG by showing an example of how more accessible methods such as photovoice and story writing enables new perspectives to emerge through art in research. This re-writing of stories is grounded in African oral traditions and challenges conventional research methods. Central to this project was the insistence that leaders in the community kitchens must play a central role in the research process. The project involved participatory research processes in which co-researchers were not only active participants in the analysis of findings and legitimized the work of academic researchers but were also involved in every phase of the research process. The co-researchers worked with the academics to develop the community kitchen network to guide the research questions, develop the methods, conduct fieldwork and analysis, and write up findings. In an era of reporting against 'pathways to impact', what is being created here is emergent and shaped as much by community needs as by funder log-frames.

The work presented here represents an attempt to centre research processes locally as a critical feminist endeavour. In the context of RFG, critical feminism is important because it has helped to uncover the ways that gender, race, class, and other social categories intersect and shape knowledge production. It allowed the researchers to question the assumptions and biases that are often taken for granted in traditional research methods and to highlight the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups. By doing so, critical feminism helped to create more nuanced and inclusive research practices that better reflected the diverse experiences and perspectives of the people being studied.

The second contribution is the way this research frames food. The work re-emphasizes the power of food as a lens through which to understand deep, systemic challenges. The power of the kitchens is their recognition that they are not just providing food to individuals as a bundle of nutrients, but that through the challenges of procuring, cooking, and distributing food, and through careful reflection on how recipients engage with the kitchens, the kitchen heads along with co-researchers from FACT gained new insights into the interlinked, systemic challenges of post-apartheid South Africa. Within this research, the food itself and the practice of feeding enabled new ways of seeing the connections across individual and systemic scales, between past and present injustices, and between social, economic, and political struggles. Furthermore, the work of the kitchens revealed the way food provided novel entry points to intervene in systemic challenges. The preparation and distribution of food provided kitchen heads with opportunities to identify particularly vulnerable individuals and households and intervene in ways that respected the dignity of participants. The kitchen network allowed for the sharing of food as a means to not just meet needs of other kitchens, but also to build solidarity. For example, kitchen heads have subsequently held shared training meetings on GBV. This work demonstrated the potential of everyday food practices as a means to understand complex social problems and as a shared background for mobilization.

Finally, the work presented in this chapter seeks to disrupt an outdated binary that has been constructed in African research, which is replicated in African food research. This binary reduces dynamic and diverse African food landscapes and their many ingredients, techniques, and stories that bind historically disconnected locations to a narrative of deficiency, framed by developmentalists' concepts of poverty, hunger, survival, and food insecurity ([Critical African Studies, 2022](#)). The work presented here recognizes that culture, politics, and identity are forged in the crucible of poverty, hunger, survival, and food insecurity, and that at the same time these developmental challenges cannot be addressed without addressing culture, politics, and identity.

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Notes

- ¹ This acronym, and its many variations, is constantly being updated as awareness evolves. We use the acronym used by African authors at the African Book Festival in Berlin, where selected stories from our research were presented. The acronym stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, 2 Spirit, Intersex, Asexual, and more.
- ² In South Africa it has become common to frame social and economic struggles with the hashtag ‘mustfall’ in the wake of the 2015 #RhodesMustFall as statements of alignment to common movements towards decolonial actions.
- ³ Womandla combines the word woman with the isiXhosa word *Amandla*, which means power and is a rallying call for resistance.
- ⁴ Parts of this story were previously published in a blog post: <https://tmg-thinktank.com/blog/with-pots-and-pens-to-parliament-understanding-and-responding-to-crises>

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