

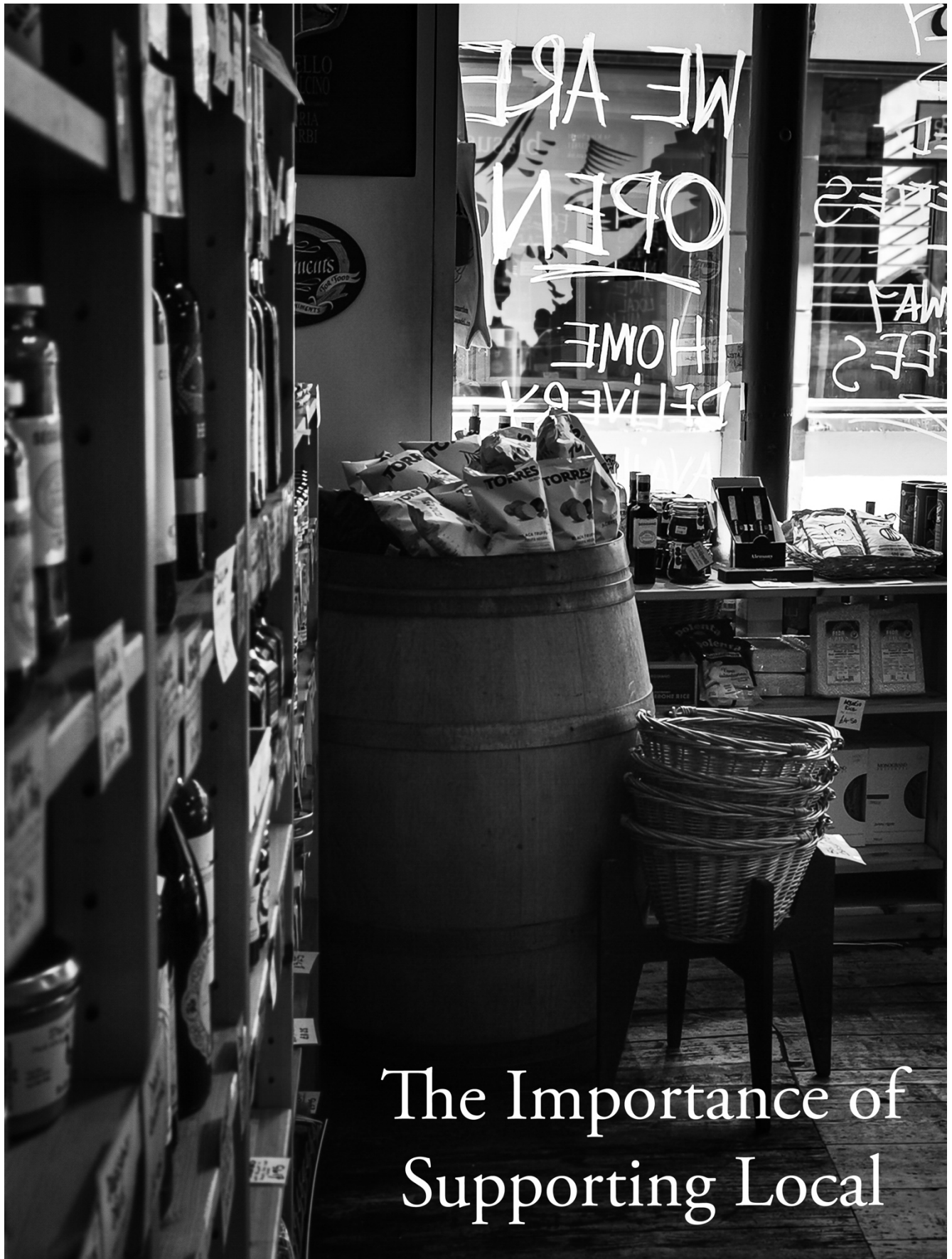
Evaluation

In response to the task of documenting our current situation, I have chosen to create photo essay that captures my personal views and experience through this pandemic. As a key worker and volunteer within the food industry and health service, I felt compelled to try and voice the mutual and encompassing feeling that I have experienced through working closely with people who have been affected by Covid19. This was a sense of community and the importance of support within it, especially for small independent businesses based in the agricultural and hospitality industries. The photo's that I have taken are of a Deli based in Carmarthen, who throughout the lockdown have transformed their normal day to day routine into a community-based delivery service, sending essentials out to those in need with the main focus being on local and small producers and suppliers.

I wanted to continue with themes that I have used and researched previously through my work, such as environmental and social justice. As a starting point I first made my moving image piece as it was a progression of my work from my last project for my Visual Studies portfolio. I decided to transform what started as a book, into a moving image piece to see if it could become a more immersive experience. I feel as though my technical capability of editing the video itself is something that if improved would benefit the piece greatly and I wish to progress further with it.

For my photo essay, I wanted to be able to capture the personality of a small independent business and it's struggles during this difficult time. But I also wanted it to act as a platform in order to speak about greater issues. I feel as though I was able to do this through my imagery. I decided specifically not to involve any portraits or connection to people, this was specifically to try and capture an essence of isolation and separation. However, I feel as though I could now use it as a starting point to create a larger portfolio of work where I could create intimate profiles with suppliers and business owners.

Moving Image Link: <https://vimeo.com/416999865>



The Importance of
Supporting Local

If this pandemic is to teach us anything, it is that of the importance of supporting our local economic development. The coronavirus pandemic has created an existential crisis for all small, locally owned businesses, which are the backbone of the nation's economy. They create the bulk of the jobs, cultivate new innovation, and shape our communities' personalities. Unlike most national retail chains, they adapt their products and services to meet their communities' needs. And a much higher percentage of the money spent in locally owned businesses, versus chain retailers, remain in the community, generating economic activity that supports schools, parks, first responders, and other vital community services.

Most small businesses don't have the credit and capital to weather the coronavirus pandemic. And the average small business has only enough in reserve to remain open for 27 days. For restaurants, it's only 16 days; for retail shops, only 19. Being closed for weeks or months — because of the COVID-19 pandemic will be devastating for hundreds of thousands of small businesses. Governments, foundations, and



non-profit organisations everywhere are scrambling to help small businesses stay afloat during this crisis, but everyone can help.

Uncertainty breeds fear, and fear makes a person wonder whether there is enough food in the fridge. The restrictions on our movement in recent months, coupled with a daily drip-feed of unease, have been unlike anything most of us have ever experienced. We can't visit our elderly family or even find out whether we are infected or not, but we can at least stock our kitchens with dried pasta and flour, to give us the sense that we are somehow prepared.

The way we eat at any given time reflects our national state of mind. For 50 years or more in the UK, we have been eating with the largesse of a people who felt that food was an inexhaustible fountain. Unlike the wartime generation, we did not worry too much about wasting odds and ends or



saving the bit of bread that was not mouldy, because we knew that there would always be another loaf. Nor did we have to keep track of the seasons, because in the never-ending summer of the supermarkets, blueberries could be shipped in for our pleasure no matter what the month. For many, these past few weeks have been a shock: a moment when almost everyone in the country felt at least a bit insecure about food and started to realise that the fountain could dry up.

In some ways, this has been a rare moment of clarity, when we finally recognise how much we owe to the low-paid “key workers” who put in the hours to grow and harvest and pack and cook and deliver so that the rest of us can have food available at all times. But with that clarity comes a new unease. The panic buying and shortages, even if only temporary, have revealed to us that our food system is built on a far less solid foundation than we imagined.

A supply chain reliant on a relatively small number of large factories to process and package food is a fragile one. Decentralized and localized systems are more resilient in the face of disruption, meaning more small-

scale farms producing more food could be just what we need to protect our communities against future crises.

Instead of panic buying, perhaps we should speak more of ethical spending. There is solace in feeling prepared, especially when we actually have no idea what’s coming next. But we have a shared responsibility now more than ever, to support our local farmers and independent shop owners. Local farmers have proven more reliable in a crisis than the industrial food supply chain. The longer the outbreak continues, the more likely consumers will have to reckon with diminishing agricultural supply, particularly for imported products and those processed in large plants with hundreds of on-the-floor workers who are unable to practise social distancing effectively.

And yet many British people still ignore these independent shops, in their eagerness to join the queue at a hollowed-out supermarket. It is as if we have been brainwashed to believe that these familiar superstores are the only ones that can supply us with the abundance and choice, we have become accustomed to.



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In the UK, the cheapness of our food can make headline news. Yet it's important to remember that while we might be saving money, there's always a cost somewhere down the line. Factory farmed animals, meanwhile, may make cheap meat but it comes at a cost to the quality of life to the animal. When it comes to supermarkets, the cost can be to our high streets and local shops. Considering ethical issues when we go shopping means taking costs like this into account.

It's not just the links between the product and its impact that ethical consumers need to consider, but the activities of the company behind the brand. A small number of multinational companies own a large proportion of the country's favourite brands. Many of these companies are involved in a range of unethical activities.



An Indian subsidiary of Unilever (owners of the Birdseye brand, Persil, Dove, Marmite & Flora among others) dumped mercury from a thermometer factory and exposed workers to its toxic effects. Nestlé, owners of Nescafé and a variety of other food ranges, is the target of a continued boycott for its controversial marketing of breast milk substitutes. Meanwhile, PepsiCo, owners of Quaker oats and Walkers Crisps, has donated cash to George Bush, whom most environmentally concerned people would consider an enemy to their cause.

As consumers, we have a great deal of power in our pockets and we've already effected change. We just need to look at the example of how the supermarkets and food companies responded on the issue of genetically modified food. Even the threat

of withdrawing our custom can change and has changed company policy. It's often easy to get overwhelmed by the scale of the problem and by the number of changes that you could make. Yet small steps can lead to bigger ones, and it's better to take a few small steps than no steps at all. Every vote count (which is more than many of us can say about our votes in general elections). Awareness of global poverty, animal welfare and environmental issues are at an all-time high. If we can carry this awareness into our shopping basket, support our local community then we can all work together to help make the world a better place, and make sure that companies start treating it, and us, with more respect. While money may make the world go around, deciding how we spend our money might just save it.

