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Waiting for Brexit: Crisis, conjuncture, method

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Abstract

UK geopolitics for the last five years has been heavily dominated by Brexit. The lead up to the referendum, the result, negotiations, intervening general election, extensions, further negotiations, and impending exit from the European Union have captured both academic and public interest. This paper contributes to geographical and wider social science research on the everyday geographies of socio-economic change, with a particular focus on Brexit and the temporal politics of waiting. Emerging analyses focus on Brexit as an event, as uncertainty, and a discrete period for and of research on public moods. I illustrate how exploring Brexit through the lens of waiting provides new ways of thinking through the time-spaces of Brexit, by drawing on data collected during an ethnographic participatory project in Gorse Hill, Greater Manchester (2018–2020). Analysis of group discussions, peer-led research projects, podcast recordings, vox pops, and ethnographic fieldnotes highlight the embodied, everyday, endured, and emplaced experience of waiting for Brexit. More specifically, findings make the case for this waiting as crisis, as conjuncture, and as method. The paper closes with a discussion of the pace and timeliness of research, and the implications of waiting for, in, and with Brexit and other forms of socio-economic change.

KEYWORDS

Brexit, conjuncture, crisis, everyday life, method, waiting

1 | INTRODUCTION

Geopolitics in the UK has come to be dominated by Brexit. From campaigns for a public vote, Leave and Remain referendum campaigns, the resulting vote to leave the EU on 23 June 2016, invoking Article 50, and ongoing international negotiations, Brexit has captured the interest of human geographers. Emerging geographical writings on these matters have pointed to Brexit as a political and everyday event, a moment of uncertainty and crisis, an affective outcome and public mood, and a prism for understanding race, class, and migration relations (Anderson & Wilson, 2018; Anderson et al., 2020; Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Burrell et al., 2019; Miller, 2019). Within this, Brexit is commonly discussed and researched *as* and *at* a certain point in time, a “particular moment in the process of Brexit” (Anderson et al., 2020, p. 260). While new contributions to this corpus of work are frequently emerging, there remains space for reflections on the

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everyday geographies of Brexit. That is, how Brexit is part of the temporal fabric of everyday life, bound not by formal decisions, votes, or deadlines, and approached through prolonged rather than snapshot engagements.

With this paper I provide new theoretical, empirical, and praxis-led insights on waiting as temporal politics, using the example of Brexit in the UK. In doing so, I also contribute to geographical work on the everyday life of socio-economic change (see Hall, 2019; Jeffrey, 2010; Stenning et al., 2010). For Sharma, temporalities amount to “*lived* time ... a specific experience of time that is structured in specific political and economic contexts” (2014, p. 9). Bastian et al. similarly describe how “time is intensely and perhaps intrinsically political – it suborns power, and vice versa” (2020, p. 292), and for Massey (1991) and Holdsworth (2021) temporality is likewise intrinsically relational. Indeed, in the context of Brexit, Clarke describes temporality as “the site of strains and tensions and, in consequence, emerges as the focus of political-cultural struggles for the power to ‘tell the time’” (2019, p. 137). While the temporal components of Brexit have started to be explored, the focus is invariably on Brexit as an event, a moment, or interval (Anderson et al., 2020; Armstrong, 2017; Clarke, 2019). With an alternative tack, here I extend temporal understandings of socio-economic change (in this case, Brexit) through the lens of waiting.

Waiting, whether in line, for a decision, for moments, or for long stretches of time, is a “quintessentially geographical phenomenon that orders time and space” (Corbridge, 2004, p. 183). Waiting as a temporal experience highlights social and spatial unevenness, differences, and inequalities, and is of growing interest to geographers. However, as Auyero argues, although the social sciences have been preoccupied with the links between power and time, the temporal, relational, and conditional components of waiting, as a “particular experience of time” (2011, p. 7) have been lesser documented. Attention to waiting, he argues, “and its (apparent) related inaction goes against the social sciences’ preferred focus on individual and collective action, on the event” (2011, p. 5). This is not to equate waiting with inaction; on the contrary, waiting is “an active, conscious, materialized practice ... in which time and space often become to objects of reflection” (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 957; Olson, 2015; Ozoliņa, 2019).

As this paper illustrates, paying attention to experiences of waiting can reveal much about the “conduct of everyday life” (Corbridge, 2004, p. 191), which can “acquire a different (more relevant, more consequential) sociopolitical significance” (Auyero, 2011, p. 25; Massey, 1992; Scott, 2009). Waiting is also a form of praxis, informing and shaping the temporalities of research in practice. As I argue, mechanisms of slower scholarship, minor-theory, and gentle methods, as examples of feminist praxis, might be more readily achieved with ethnography or waiting as method (Hall, 2019; Katz, 2017; Pottinger, 2020). This also highlights the tensions between problematic readings of waiting – a consequence of uneven and discriminatory politics – and more prosaic understandings of waiting as everyday praxis.

Heeding Clarke’s (2019) call to think multiply about socio-economic change, this paper explores multiple waitings for Brexit. Working through cognate literatures on the geographies of Brexit, temporality, and everyday life, giving rise to discussions on crisis and conjuncture, section 2 makes the case for using “waiting” to conceptualise the everyday temporalities of socio-economic change, such as Brexit. Section 3 details the ethnographic and participatory research exploring everyday life and Brexit, from which data in sections 4, 5, and 6 are drawn. Weaving together a range of sources, including group discussions, fieldnotes, podcast recordings, participant reflections, and vox pops, these sections make the case for understanding waiting for Brexit as crisis, as conjuncture, and as method. From these findings, the embodied, everyday, endured, and emplaced experiences of waiting come to the fore. The paper then closes with a discussion of the pace and timeliness of research, and implications of waiting for, in, and with Brexit, and other forms of socio-political change.

2 | BREXIT, TEMPORALITY, AND WAITING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

It is difficult not to consider the temporality of Brexit, since it defines how Brexit is experienced – over time. A key temporal framing applied as a lens to understand Brexit is as a set of events or moments, or as one major event. That is, Brexit is described as a moment or moments characterised by scale and magnitude. This is perpetuated by the frequent encapsulating of a wide set of processes under the “Brexit” umbrella. As Anderson and Wilson explain, “perhaps it was felt as a ‘major event’ not only because something settled was overturned, not only because of the surprise of a change ... but because there was and is no consensus about the UK’s (post)Brexit futures” (2017, p. 291). For these same authors, Brexit as event has been described as being at once ordinary and eruptive, innocuous and dramatic, but an event nonetheless.

Within discussions of Brexit as event, Brexit is also described as a series of decisions and outcomes – that also feel *eventful* (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Bromley-Davenport et al., 2019; Miller, 2019). Moreover, the times between these events or decisions are conceptualised as “‘in-between’ moments in the Brexit process,” a period of demarcated time which is endured (Miller, 2019, p. 1). Anderson et al. (2020, p. 257) refer to Brexit as *impasse*, whilst also acknowledging

the significance of “moments in” an impasse, too. Nonetheless, this time is bounded, bookmarked “between decision and possible exit” (2020, p. 257), as “something [that] will end” (2020, p. 259). For others, this between-time is described as a sort of entanglement in which people and politics are “caught up,” knotted together with histories, memories, nostalgia, and futures (Benson & Lewis, 2019, p. 2211; Anderson et al., 2020; Bromley-Davenport et al., 2019). The effect is that geographical writings on Brexit are characterised by a sense of chronological orderings or followings (Anderson et al., 2020; Miller, 2019), which commit and conform to a processual understanding of social time (Baraitser, 2017; Bastian et al., 2020; Holdsworth, 2021). With what follows, I argue for reframing these debates towards concepts, empirics, and praxis of waiting.

The process of the UK leaving the EU is regularly considered to be a crisis moment. Marked by uncertainty, opacity, and a threat to democracy, justice, and equity (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Miller, 2019), the unknowing of leaving the EU as an outcome is marred by crisis-talk. The process of Brexit as crisis often revolves around the political and social fragmentations that the referendum is thought to have exposed and exacerbated, “in terms of class, age and socio-economic status,” as well as race, ethnicity, and gender (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016, p. 48; Anderson & Wilson, 2018; Benson & Lewis, 2019; Burrell et al., 2019; Team Future et al., 2017). Emerging literatures also show how different elements of Brexit are considered a crisis moment in ordinary lives, charting the start or continuity of uncertain times. Examples include: health, financial, and social challenges for older UK migrants living in Spain (Miller, 2019); the extension of the hostile environment and racialised, everyday bordering for migrants living in the UK (Burrell & Schweyher, 2019); the emotive and relational spaces of family lives and Brexit politics (Davies, 2021; Davies & Carter, 2021); and widening everyday intergenerational and class inequalities (Team Future et al., 2017). There are tensions here, for it is argued that the outcomes of Brexit are uncertain and unclear, while holding that fragmentation, aftermath, and chaos are a given. Furthermore, that all these examples are subsumed under “Brexit” highlights that the temporal nature of socio-economic change cannot be confined to an event.

Linked to this, current writings also consider Brexit to be a series of “incommensurate” moments (Anderson et al., 2020, p. 257) that culminate into crises. The referendum and leaving the EU as leading to crisis is a well-versed argument – perhaps too easily asserted – wherein it is “simultaneously connected to “a crisis of (neo)liberalism,” a “crisis of globalisation,” and other actual or anticipated crises” (Anderson et al., 2020, p. 258). Brexit is also described as sort of “nested” within other crises, to use Carastathis’ (2018, p. 143) terminology, “a crisis within a crisis.” There are parallels here to the assertion that years of neoliberal state withdrawal, globalisation, and post-2010 austerity measures have perpetuated discourses and experiences of left-behind communities, which are considered to have a causal link to the Brexit vote (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Clarke, 2019). Thus, the temporality of Brexit as leading to, or nested in, crises is as much about the culmination of events or moments, as their ordering, chronology, and progression. Brexit as leading to crisis also connects to another temporal framing, of Brexit as conjunctural.

Geographical writings on conjuncture have proliferated in this context, with crisis and conjuncture described as “partners in crime, dancing together to punctuate, condense and intensify time” (Hall, 2019, p. 171). Hall and Massey theorise conjunctures as “a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape” (2010, p. 57). They argue that conjunctures are driven forward by crises, suggesting that not only are conjunctures themselves defined by their temporal features (a period of time, a duration, a moment), but they are also the result, the following-on from crises.

Conjunctures also have a distinct spatial form, too. Brexit as conjuncture is frequently described as a space of clarity, change, hope, uncertainty, possibility, or unresolvedness (Anderson & Wilson, 2018; Anderson et al., 2020; Clarke, 2019; Davies & Carter, 2021; Miller, 2019). It is argued that Brexit has “disrupt[ed] and open[ed] up possibilities” (Anderson & Wilson, 2018, p. 291), and “left a vast array of questions ... unanswered” (Miller, 2019, p. 1). Writing on Brexit as a problem space of “conjunctural analysis,” Clarke explains that such analysis is valuable “because we have no way of knowing in advance what processes, relationships and dynamics will turn out to be merely ephemeral and which will be consequential” (2019, p. 132). That is, the multiplicities of happenings that led to Brexit as conjuncture may not always be an indication of possible futures; these can only be told over and with time.

Brexit geographies are likewise charged with embodied imagery and visceral metaphors, that I posit are more than powerful language tools; they highlight Brexit – as an example of everyday socio-economic change – as embodied, everyday, endured, emplaced, and experienced. This includes the metaphor of being “in the shadow” of Brexit, or “in the wake” (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016, p. 47), even the notion of “nesting” crises (Carastathis, 2018) has the connotation of corporeal closeness and intimacy. Bachmann and Sidaway refer to negotiations over UK borders as “less of a phantom border perhaps than a phantom leg syndrome, associated with an empire that is no longer there” (2016, p. 50). Anderson and Wilson argue that Brexit is “something that touches people” (2018, p. 292). Here, Brexit is considered emotionally

and physically proximate, present, and identifiable, which leads onto observations of the temporalities of Brexit in empirical investigation.

Connecting to my previous argument, empirical research on Brexit has tended to focus on the “moment,” usually according to specific political decisions. Armstrong (2017) refers to this as “Brexit Time,” the intense period leading up to, during, and after the referendum, over which a series of political decisions (and indecisions) have played out. Parameters are thus placed around the space-times of research (Massey, 1991), even if applied with retrospect, constructing temporal boundaries around the study of everyday Brexit geographies. This begs the question of whether Brexit has been conceptualised as an impasse or conjunctural moment *because* it is being approached as one from the outset. A different tack to understanding the everyday geographies of Brexit involves researching over time, staying with people and experiences. An exception comes from Davies on the relational politics of negotiating Brexit and political talk within families, as “sedimented over time” (2021, p. 9). Within this, it is important going forwards to differentiate between various elements of the process of leaving the EU (e.g., the referendum, negotiations, withdrawal) to also highlight how the language of Brexit shapes the temporality of these discussions.

Reflections on the temporalities of researching everyday socio-economic change leads on to the notion of waiting. Critical scholarship on waiting spans the conceptual (often referred to as the politics of waiting), the empirical (giving detailed attention to embodied experiences of waiting), and the methodological (Baraitser, 2017; Jeffrey, 2010; Ozoliņa, 2019). Overwhelmingly, this growing body of research indicates how waiting is a temporal and political organising logic (Ozoliņa, 2019), and a routine, prosaic activity. Augero's ethnographic research in a welfare office in Buenos Aires, for instance, reveals how waiting is experienced as “uncertainty, confusion and arbitrariness” (2011, p. 6). Waiting in this context persuades citizens “of the need to be patient,” transforming them into “patients of the state” (2011, p. 6). Likewise for Ozolina, in a study of an unemployment office in Latvia during a period of austerity, “time emerged as a form of control ... a story about politics of waiting in the aftermath of the global neoliberal turn” (2019, p. 5). As Baraitser identifies, it is in the embodied experience of waiting that these organising politics come to bear, where temporality becomes “a form of politics” (2017, p. 93), or a political tool. Being made to wait, to hold out, to sit tight, to put up with, be patient, etc., because of social inequalities, is a reminder that a lack of control over time, both passage and usage, can provoke an agonising sense of drag and delay (see Baraitser, 2017; Corbridge, 2004). This is reflected in, and balanced alongside, an ethnographic approach that seeks to capture these experiences of waiting by dwelling in the everyday. As I discuss below, this can also be understood as a form of praxis.

Waiting is also defined by its mundane, prosaic qualities. Scott reminds us that asking questions about waiting and queuing (or “waiting in line”) “might seem ridiculously trivial but, once unpacked, reveal intriguing sets of rules” (2009, p. 2). Massey describes how everyday life often consists of waiting in a bus shelter “for a bus that never comes” (1992, p. 9; also see Corbridge, 2004; Jeffrey, 2008). Experiences of waiting shape everyday routines and relationships, whether waiting for an appointment, a phone-call, a delivery, though these are also central to the politics of waiting. As Massey (1991) explains, place is co-constructed through time as socially produced and relational. Thus, while waiting is a fundamental part of everyday life, who is made to wait, how long for, and the conditions they wait in, are socially and economically differentiated; think first-class lounges and express queues. In these instances, waiting is what Lefebvre (2000) refers to as “compulsive time” and becomes productive time; whether for work or leisure, waiting is made comfortable and compensatory.

For the poorest and most marginalised in society, mandatory or enforced waiting is a daily experience (Corbridge, 2004), what Jeffrey refers to as “the social production of ‘waiting’” (2008, p. 954). Waiting can further marginalise groups and individuals, “excluding them from key decision-making structures” (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 954–955; Jeffrey, 2010). Massey (1991, 1992) conceptualises this as part of space-time shifts that riddle globalisation and organise everyday life, but which manifest differently depending on place. As Olson explains, “waiting and urgency can therefore feel banal and ubiquitous, and hardly or great ethical and moral consequence,” and yet “space and waiting come together to produce and maintain potentially abusive and harmful arrangements of power and inequality” (2015, p. 517).

Multi-scalar dimensions of waiting emerge strongly in these writings, of waiting as an embodied *and* a social condition (Baraitser, 2017; Massey, 1992). Ozolina makes the case for waiting “as a form of state control in contemporary neoliberal capitalism” (2015, p. 5), or what she terms the “etatisation” of time (2015, p. 6). This is produced by the demand to “wait out” economic downturns, to live in limbo, in delayed and suspended time, as “the shadow temporality of neoliberalism” (2015, p. 9). There are parallels with work on Brexit and temporality, since waiting is “a narrative that becomes part of the national identity, as well as an organising logic” (Ozoliņa, 2019, p. 26). Waiting for political decisions can be a normative condition – though in Latvia, the discourse was shaped around catching up with Europe, whereas in the UK it was framed around breaking away. And yet, this waiting was also felt in everyday life, as a lived, embodied experience, via

a shortage of goods and queuing for stores. In these instances, citizens found ways to manage time and waiting through communal practices of sharing and passing on (Hall, 2019; Ozoliņa, 2019; Stenning et al., 2010).

In other cases, waiting provokes fear, suspense, a sense of being “trapped in an endless present,” as well as feelings of being left behind (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 956; Jeffrey, 2010). Waiting, particularly the embodied act of queuing, is thought to be “always in relation to some measure of scarcity” (Corbridge, 2004, p. 190). Indeed, Olson describes the body as “the most basic unit” (2015, p. 519) where waiting is experienced and mediated, noting that waiting can behold its own temporalities. In particular, she argues, “the urgent body” enters “another state of waiting, such as triage” (2015, p. 521). This again highlights the unevenness inherent in waiting, and whether it has a purpose or outcome (Corbridge, 2004; Olson, 2015). One such purpose, I argue, is in waiting as method.

Ethnography, by virtue of its focus on being in and with people in their everyday lives, lends itself well to the study of waiting. The approach is often affectionately referred to as “deep hanging out” (after Geertz, 1998), indicative of the activities involved, as well as the time and emotional commitment required. This also offers a different perspective on the value of waiting or, rather, those who wait. More than method, ethnography is posited as a means of understanding the everyday worlds of others through emplaced engagements, connections, and attachments, of being *with* others, though of course this is not without critique (Stacey, 1988). Here, Katz’s notion of minor theory – “theory that is interstitial with empirical research and social location” (1995, p. 166) – is useful in turning towards understanding waiting not just as having methodological contours but also as a form of research and everyday praxis. As she argues, “working in a minor theoretical mode is to recognise that ... subjectivities, spatialities, temporalities are embodied, situated and fluid; their production of knowledge inseparable from – if not completely absorbed in – the mess of everyday life” (Katz, 2017, p. 598).

The distinct focus on the combination of subjectivities, spaces, and temporalities within ethnography is particularly important when empirically exploring the everyday politics of waiting. Jeffrey describes longitudinal research as “itself a form of ‘waiting’” (2008, p. 957), and found himself to be a “species of waiting” during long-term ethnographic research, enduring “long periods in enforced idleness” (2010, p. 29). Ozoliņa makes a similar observation, that “the ethnographic method allows us to pay close attention to how people actually do keep ‘going on’ and ‘persevering’” in waiting contexts (2019, p. 15). This is arguably due to a combination of prolonged, emplaced periods of fieldwork, and the emphasis on observational methods, which largely involve waiting and watching. As Pottinger (2020) shows, there can be an intrinsic slowness and tactility to ethnographic research, and for Rose (2020) waiting and loitering can provide a space for interpersonal fieldwork relations. In their discussion of ethnographic methods, Mannay and Morgan argue that “waiting time in research is neither empty nor without use; and in times of waiting we often learn new things about participants and ourselves” (2015, p. 172).

In these literatures, ethnography is described as something of a micro-political space, shaped as much by relationalities and co-presence as by temporalities, embodiment, and place. To research everyday life is to delve into how waiting, for instance, is manifest in daily life, how it comes to shape and be shaped by time, spaces, and practices, and the ways in which it is understood by those who experience it. As such, waiting might be understood as both politics and praxis; a conceptual and empirical matter; an object and subject of study. Building on this, in the rest of this paper I show how synthesising ideas about everyday life, temporality, and waiting can reveal fresh perspectives on Brexit and the process of leaving the EU as an example of socio-economic change, including the temporalities of empirical research. With this, details of the empirical project and methodologies are described below.

3 | RESEARCHING EVERYDAY LIFE AND BREXIT

The findings discussed in this paper are drawn from ethnographic and participatory research carried out in Greater Manchester in the North of England (UK), from November 2018 to February 2020. The project was originally geared towards exploring everyday futures after Brexit, however, from the outset the temporal parameters of the project shifted. Just as the UK government requested extensions, so did the research team. Where once the plan was to explore key moments during the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, it became clear that this was not conducive to understanding lived experiences in and with Brexit as a process. Instead, the research adopted an approach that focused less on moments of Brexit and more on everyday life, from which the theme of waiting emerged.

Greater Manchester is a large and diverse English city region (known as a “combined authority”), with sites of extreme wealth and deprivation, often in close proximity. The region was the first in England to be given devolved powers (which currently extend to transport, health and social care), and consists of ten boroughs. In the referendum, a majority

voted to “leave” the EU in seven of the ten boroughs. Gorse Hill, the most northerly and one of the most deprived wards in the borough of Trafford, was chosen as the site for this research. The area is socio-economically mixed, with an interesting identity as a working-class area steeped in a rich history of migration. Furthermore, it had not been saturated by researchers previously, like many other parts of the region. Close to Manchester city centre (the main retail and financial district in the region), the ward comprises Gorse Hill village, including a range of local independent businesses, youth centre, and a large supermarket “superstore,” as well as Old Trafford, which is the home of the internationally famous Manchester United Football Club. Another key area in the ward is Lostock, nestled between high-rise flats and the motorway, with local community organisations and a park, though with fewer amenities than the village.

To develop an ethnographic approach of emplaced engagements and attachments (Stacey, 1988), time was dedicated early in the study to steadily familiarising myself with the area. This preliminary fieldwork involved scoping Gorse Hill by foot and on public transport, reading online reports from the local council and community organisations, and meeting with key contacts. This included face-to-face discussions and bumpings-into with local councillors, business owners, faith groups, youth and children’s centres, lunch clubs, foodbanks, schools and nurseries, hobbyist groups, and activist and charity groups, as well as meeting with individuals known in and around the area as holders of local history. From dancing bhangra-cise with the local Women’s Institute (a form of exercise that draws on Punjabi bhangra dancing), painting watercolours at an evening class, to chatting with young mums at a youth centre, the focus was on getting to know the area and the people within; what could be understood as a method and praxis of waiting (see Mannay & Morgan, 2015). I took recommendations from each person I met on where and with whom I should engage, centring place-based attachments and relations (Massey, 1991). This led to encounters with a wide range of people living, working, and playing in and near Gorse Hill. This approach was heavily informed by my previous work using an “ethnography on my doorstep” methodology (Hall, 2019), as well as participatory approaches to exploring socio-economic change as it happens (Davies & Carter, 2021; Team Future et al., 2017).

Building on this waiting-with and deep engagement (see Geertz, 1998), in March–April 2019 I started to galvanise the local connections developed into the next phase of research activity. Three group discussions were arranged with pre-existing community groups, including a local activist/charity group (GD1), a lunch club (GD2), and a local community partnership (GD3). The 23 participants who took part in these discussions all lived within the area and varied in socio-economic backgrounds. The groups were mixed gender, mostly with participants aged 30 upwards, and the majority were white British. Efforts were made to conduct similar discussion groups with a women’s group, nursery workers, and local business owners, but proved difficult to organise. Therefore, additional discussions were had with members of these different communities and informed the wider ethnography.

From the three arranged discussion groups, six members from across Gorse Hill (three women, three men, aged 40 to 82) volunteered to continue their involvement, opting to receive methods training and lead their own mini-projects. The aim was for the training to be a means of giving back to participants by way of sharing skills, and for peer-led mini-projects to open up new conversations about everyday life in Gorse Hill and the process of leaving the EU. All six who attended the creative qualitative research methods training (delivered by myself and my colleague, John Foster) described the excitement of learning new skills and meeting new people through the project. From this group, three individuals (two women, one man, aged 40 to 82 – referred to throughout using pseudonyms) carried out their own mini-projects. Roz completed a photo-diary around her home, local park, and school; Josie interviewed friends and family, made autoethnographic notes and took photographs on holiday; and Arthur interviewed friends and carried out some observations at local meetings. The data participants collected during these mini-projects were not stored by the study, nor are they reported here. Instead, a group discussion was held (May 2019) where participants shared their thoughts and reflections from their own investigations (P reflections).

From here, a few meetings were held on future steps. Given the reliance on spoken word, and the ever-changing landscape of Brexit politics, we collectively settled on making a podcast, the title of which came out of our discussions: “Everyone’s got an opinion on Brexit.” The idea was to discuss experiences with Brexit processes and living in Gorse Hill, building from their peer-led project reflections, and gathering a sense of public opinion. These podcast discussions thus had two purposes: to create a collaborative output and to inform my ethnography. Informed consent was provided on this basis. Hence, within this paper I draw on my ethnography (using the singular “I”), while acknowledging the deep engagement of the three participants who informed large parts of the fieldwork, but who were not involved in the data collection, analysis, or writing process for this paper. There are of course tensions here around representation, acknowledgement, and ownership in ethnographic research, which in writing this paper I have had to confront, though for more detailed discussions on the politics of collaborative research approaches see Stacey (1988) and Team Future et al. (2017).

To develop material for the podcast, we agreed to attend a Community Fun Day in June 2019 to gather wider community views and for further discussion and inspiration. Deploying the creative training techniques, we came up with the idea of having a stall with a banner on display: “Everyone’s got an opinion on Brexit ... what’s yours?” We also agreed that I would ask passers-by to write on a large paper tablecloth on a stall (completed by over 40 members of the public) and collect vox-pops (10 recorded, from people across a range of ages, genders, and racial backgrounds). Roz, Josie, Arthur, and I continued to meet on a regular basis from June 2019 until February 2020, recording the podcast at a range of local community venues. Eight podcast sessions (30–70 min long) were recorded during that time.¹ Our original plan was to record three sessions and then to edit the material for public release from late summer 2019. However, the group decided that it was interesting to continue meeting, chatting, and recording, as plans for EU withdrawal continued to change (dates, elections, parliamentary debates tabled) and it was collectively agreed to piece together the podcast once we had all our materials. Bringing together and analysing in tandem fieldnotes, group discussions, participant reflections, podcast recording, and vox pops, as part of an ethnography, a distinct theme of waiting emerged. It is to these findings that I now turn.

4 | WAITING AS CRISIS

Waiting for Brexit ignited multiple connected themes related to the notion of crisis. Rather than relaying tropes of Brexit-as-crisis (Anderson et al., 2020; Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Bromley-Davenport et al., 2019), these findings reveal that *waiting* for Brexit is understood as a crisis-in-waiting, crisis-like, or a form of nested crises.

Participants across the different forms of interaction, and regardless of whatever looming decision, deadline, or deadlock, often described the process of Brexit as a crisis waiting-to-happen. It was in the waiting, the musing, the opportunity to observe but with no sense of clarity that Brexit was described as a crisis-to-come: “Brexit? What are you gonna say? It’s a mess,” exclaimed one vox-popper (Vox-pop 1). Others similarly described Brexit as “a whirlwind” (Vox-pop 7), a “dog’s breakfast” (P reflections), a “disaster” (GD1, GD2), a “shitstorm” (GD3), and a “quagmire” (Josie, Podcast session 3). Participants lamented the “last minute consultations” (P reflections), and the sense of a “waste of time” (GD2, GD3) was regularly mentioned in group discussions and ethnographic encounters. In the first group discussion with members of a local activist group, one participant described it as like “the butterfly effect” (GD1), highlighting the unknown but large-scale anticipated ramifications. When talking about Brexit in this way, as a crisis yet to come, participants tended to place themselves outside of the process, waiting on the outside and looking in.

Moreover, the urgent sense of politicians rushing through decisions was described in direct contrast to this waiting experience (Olson, 2015), and furious moments of political changes were discussed as enhancing feelings of stuckness, exclusion – of being left *in* waiting (see Jeffrey, 2008, 2010). For example, at the community fair, one participant said he felt like waiting for crisis, whether economic recession or civil unrest in Northern Ireland, was “preventing a lot of people from being able to sort of ask for another referendum because it seems as though there’s going to be a lot of, say, aftermath of that as well” (Vox-pop 10). In a group discussion with a local community partnership, the conversation similarly turned to waiting for Brexit as the deferral of crisis: “a deflection from the government dealing with real issues. It does them well, at this moment in time, for the last two years, to say I tell you what, we’ll talk about Brexit, we won’t talk about anything else” (GD3). Waiting for Brexit was considered problematic, because it led to a slowing down and deliberate obscuring of what participants felt was an inevitable crisis (see Ozoliņa, 2019).

Related to this, the language of being in limbo was often raised. Brexit was described by participants as “limbo-land,” provoking feelings of being “unsettled” (GD2). Being in limbo is well versed in literature on the politics of waiting (Jeffrey, 2008; Olson, 2015; Ozoliņa, 2019), and it is fitting that waiting for Brexit was described as being like “Hotel California.” This metaphor has an inherent temporality to it, and comes from the last two lines of the song by *The Eagles*: “You can check out any time you like / But you can never leave.” This experience of waiting in limbo also induced feelings of frustration, of being on the precipice of a crisis. Across all the group discussions, crises of democracy, morality, and immigration were raised and debated; for some, these issues were seen to raise further crises about national identity, and for others intergenerational and place-based relations (see Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Bromley-Davenport et al., 2019; Miller, 2019).

It was when discussing place-based relations that participants framed the period leading up to and since the referendum in more emplaced ways, and the possible crises-in-waiting it would create. Neighbourhood relationships were often raised as an example of how the process of Brexit became lived with in everyday life. It was in the waiting for changes in the name of Brexit where tensions could build. In this waiting space, social relationships could be tested: “your friends and your neighbours, you’ve got to still have them as your friends and your neighbours” (GD1). Similar discussions were

had with other participants, who stated, “you can’t really talk about Brexit to anybody” and “I don’t discuss it with anybody. I watch the news. I have my own opinions and I don’t go into big discussions about it” (GD3). For her peer-led mini-project, Roz spoke to her hairdresser, who expressed “I’m sick of it and I don’t understand the process anymore. Neither do my customers. [...] I’m not really listening anymore” (P reflections). One participant even described these relational place-based tensions using geographical language: “there’s this kind of odd, kind of this like space, this map in your head, of who you can talk to” (GD1).

In these and other examples, participants regularly talked about Brexit in the abstract, perhaps a means of dealing with what had become a sensitive topic for conversation (Davies, 2021). As one participant put it: “it all gets bound up and people start to make the arguments about personal things. And then people argue about a theoretical thing and it’s all gets horrible and yucky, and I don’t want it involved” (GD1). It was in the waiting space, the not knowing, that personal relationships were also left in limbo: “I don’t like to go down that kind of rabbit hole if we don’t know” (GD1). After one discussion (GD3), difficult conversations were had about the community venue as a safe space, and some relationships between group members have since shifted. It seemed getting personally involved in Brexit talk was considered a form of crisis-making.

While everyday talk on personal opinions was often avoided, participants talked with more ease within research spaces about how they envisaged everyday life in Brexit times. Queuing, for instance, was one way in which waiting for Brexit was described as a *crisis-in-waiting*; foreseeing queuing for passports and petrol (GD1, GD3, Podcast session 5), stockpiling food and medicine (GD1, GD3, Podcast session 8), queues of lorries coming to and fro at the Dover crossing (GD3, GD4), as well as shortages of nurses and GPs (GD3, P reflections). One participant linked EU withdrawal to the long wait for a mobility car (P reflections). To have to queue for longer and more frequently, even if an everyday experience (Corbridge, 2004; Olson, 2015), was interpreted by participants as a sign of things to come, the indication of a crisis waiting to happen. It was even posited that the notion of “left behind places” insinuates that people and communities are left in waiting, “like a forgotten umbrella” (GD1); in another group discussion Gorse Hill was described as a “forgotten neighbourhood” (GD2). Moreover, in this waiting space, or “waiting period” (GD1), as one participant called it, none of these issues could be addressed. The “wait and see” (GD1) mantra was for some a site, a dwelling space, of respite. Rather than a point of inaction (Auyero, 2011), waiting was considered a period for consolidation, of holding out. Here, then, waiting is positioned as a multi-layered crisis; a crisis-in-waiting, and waiting, such as queuing, as an indication of impending crisis.

This leads to another theme – that waiting is considered a crisis unto itself, or *crisis-like*. Waiting for the various negotiations, debates, and elections was described as a “joke,” a “pantomime” (Roz, Podcast session 4), and that “all these leading nations are just laughing at us” (GD3). People described being “sick of it” (GD1), “fed up of hearing” (P reflections), and wanted it “done,” “get on with it” (Vox-pop 4) – “it’s on the radio every frigging day” (P reflections). The mess of Brexit, and the feelings of this waiting as being crisis-like were described in a humorous way by Josie:

It’s like we’ve just taken, gone for a walk with all your family and it’s a nice day, but it’s been raining the last few days, you walk up a path, you decide ooh, shall we go on this one? You get your knee stuck in mud, wellies, kids falling over, everyone’s screaming, someone’s got stuck and everything’s going wrong all at once. And it was this lovely day, it started out, and now, oh my God, can’t wait to get home and everyone’s stressed more than they were when they went in. (Podcast session 3)

Even though ostensibly removed from parliamentary debates and EU-level negotiations, with this metaphorical story Josie emplaces herself and her family within a story about crisis caused by waiting. The farcical process of Brexit, as Josie tells it through a family day out gone wrong, becomes something that is relatable and meaningful; a way of making sense of the place of Brexit within everyday life (see Massey, 1991).

Further to this, in group discussions participants described waiting for Brexit as an omnipresent, everyday irritant (see Anderson & Wilson, 2018): “if you worry about it too much it’ll drive you up the wall, just the day-to-day, you wake up, you turn it on, you go to bed, you know, it’s there” (GD3). It was suggested by one vox-popper that it was the waiting period since the referendum, when “there hasn’t been much progress on leaving” that “has alienated many people from politics, people feel that their vote hasn’t been respected. [...] Those who voted leave feel that they haven’t had their voice heard. Those who voted to remain are frustrated that they’ve not felt listened to” (Voxpop 9). Again, it was the *waiting* for Brexit that was considered crisis-inducing.

While (and perhaps because) participants removed themselves from talking too much about Brexit with others, the experience of waiting for Brexit as crisis-like was felt as very embodied and personal (Hall, 2019; Olson, 2015). Discussing feelings raised by Brexit, a participant in the first group discussion said:

Not good ones [feelings] for me, not good ones at all. Bit of uncertainty, a bit of worry, a bit of, just just oh gosh ... just just, urgh, urgh why, just all kinds of, of just a mix of, mild despair really, you know, in the sense that [...] it's only just started, and that's what really makes me feel a bit "uck." (GD1)

The way this participant talked about and motioned when they said "urgh" and "uck" was with their fists clenched, their body drawn inwards, face screwed up – a very visceral distortion and recoiling. At other times, the referendum result and the waiting period around this was described as a "kind of like a heart sink, feeling" (GD1), a "horribleness" (GD1) and "oh my God, I've never been so ... urgh" (Josie, Podcast session 4). Similar emotional and embodied responses came up in other group discussions, including that of avoidance: "I'm avoiding the issue, absolutely and completely, if I don't think about it, it won't affect me" (GD3). In our July 2019 podcast discussion session, Josie described how her teenage son "just turns off [the television] and says, 'oh my God,' the remote goes off" (Podcast Session 2). Experiences of waiting were more clearly expressed as embodied, located corporeally, rather than within interpersonal relations.

Furthermore, it is in waiting for Brexit that the nested, multiple element of crises (Carastathis, 2018; Clarke, 2019) come to the fore; in this limbo, or waiting space, it is more likely for interwoven crises to occur. Over the time of the research, and in the longer period of waiting for Brexit, participants talked about austerity cuts that had decimated the local community, including delaying the building of a new school (GD3, P reflections), gradually declining industry in the area (GD1, GD2), and EU nationals feeling "stress and anguish," making difficult decisions about their future in the UK (GD1, GD2).

Brexit was more than a background, it was the wider context in which poverty, deprivation, and hardship were nestled (Anderson et al., 2020; Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Clarke, 2019; Miller, 2019). As one participant explained, "the people I interact with have got more immediate issues as to whether they're able to feed their children tea tonight, if they're going to be able to pay the bills, whether they are going to be able to get another job interview" (GD3). Brexit was even likened, for one participant, to when her father got cancer – that the outcome "wasn't as bad" as the waiting (GD1). In fact, in early 2020 two of the podcasters, Arthur and Josie, sadly passed away. By exploring socio-economic change over time, rather than following a particular political moment or decision, the everyday-ness of waiting for Brexit comes to the fore; whether as a nested crisis, waiting as crisis-like, or the sense of a crisis-in-waiting.

Here, waiting and place emerge together; comprehensions about the impacts of Brexit on, in, and with everyday life were discussed by participants as emplaced in both space and time. These changes in place – closing youth centres, the growth of local food aid, the removal of green space – together with embodied experiences served to give Brexit a sort of time stamp on and in people's everyday lives; living Brexit in the present, in place, but with a limited sense about what the future might look like. As the next section continues, these various waitings-as-crises became visible as they occurred in place and over time, accumulating towards conjuncture.

5 | WAITING AS CONJUNCTURE

Crises and conjunctures are often discussed in tandem: Hall and Massey (2010) argue that crises drive conjunctures forward, they bring them into view. While conjunctures are not thought to present neat outcomes – for "the nature of their resolution is not given" (Hall & Massey, 2010, p. 57) – they are positioned as moments of clarity, reflection, and provocation (Clarke, 2019). In this section, I present findings on waiting for Brexit as conjuncture, in ways yet to be fully comprehended in current literature.

First, doing research over a protracted period means that the product of waiting, the accumulated endurance of waiting, is brought into focus (see Auyero, 2011; Jeffrey, 2010; Ozoliņa, 2019). However, rather than offering prefigurative potential, as writings on conjunctures would suggest (Clarke, 2019; Hall & Massey, 2010), the overwhelming response from participants was a feeling that *nothing* might happen. In short, waiting for Brexit was shown to leave space for Brexit never to happen, or to happen differently. Here, it is the waiting, rather than Brexit as an event (Anderson & Wilson, 2018), that is *conjunctural*. This was especially voiced by those who did not want the UK to leave the EU, but not exclusively. At the community fair in June 2019, for instance, participants mooted that the UK government should "just abandoned the idea" (Vox-pop 6), that "if it's not broken, why fix it?" (Vox-pop 8). In group discussions, the lack of direction and progress on leaving the EU was similarly described as a space of uncertainty and inactivity: "it's just a shambles, you don't know where, you know, you don't know what to believe, what not to believe" (GD2).

Furthermore, while conjunctural politics are often discussed as future facing, that "history moves from one conjuncture to another" (Hall & Massey, 2010, p. 57), waiting provided a space for reflection on the past. In the group discussions, and for participants carrying out their own mini-projects, questions like "if you could go back, how would you vote now?"

(GD3, P reflections) were commonplace. Discussions about a second referendum occupied a similar space, and it was because of waiting that this was even a possibility – in the absence of any progression. This lack of progress, being stuck in the “waiting room,” was also identified as a space where tensions would rise: “that’s what happens when you have a stalemate. You look for a scapegoat” (Arthur, Podcast session 3).

In addition, waiting encouraged people to reflect more on the passage of time, the experience of being left to wait, and what happens during that time. One example that came up multiple times during the fieldwork was the argument for a second referendum and changing the legal age to vote, because the numbers of older Brexit voters who died since the referendum were outweighed by those aged over 16 likely to vote Remain. Thus the referendum result was regarded as a “snapshot” only of the demographics on that particular day and time (Podcast session 1). As one participant explained, “if 16 year olds are allowed to get the vote, then a revote should be put in place because there’s a whole other generation that should have a say on this decision” (Vox-pop 7). It was the waiting period since the referendum that made a second vote seem more likely and justified, emerging as a possibility with conjunctural qualities.

Aligned with this, rather than providing clarity and reflection, the findings here reveal how conjunctures are also likely to be marked by confusion and complexity. In waiting for Brexit, participants regularly described themselves as confused, the situation as uncertain (GD3), that “it’s getting more complicated as it goes on” (P reflections). The temporality of this uncertainty – speed, tempo, time-period, rhythm – was always at the heart of these expressions of confusion: “It will be a good thing in the *long-term* but at the *moment* it is just disaster;” “I think maybe very, very *slowly* things will get better or worse;” “I don’t think you’ll notice it, I think it’ll just *creep up gradually* and it’s one of them things where you just accept it in the end” (GD2 – emphasis added). During the first podcast session, Roz likened the opaqueness of decision-making and resolution to the *Saw* film franchise – “it’s a bit of a sadistic choice [...] it’s like, you could choose this or this but ahhh, well you can’t go back now because you’ve lost an arm.” Some participants even likened waiting for Brexit to another conjunctural moment: “do you know what it reminds me of? It was like 1999 come millennium, and the world was going to stop. And that was it, end of the world, we’re going to go off the cliffs. And it’s a similar feeling that the unknown always worries people” (GD2).

These references to missing limbs and going off cliffs relate to another strand of this waiting as conjuncture theme, concerning how waiting can be experienced as a very embodied conjuncture. Where I previously discussed embodiment as important in waiting as crisis, the conjunctural space of unknown possible outcomes was again expressed as highly corporeal. There were many comments about holding one’s breath, watching and waiting, holding in, keeping still, “pilot disconnected” (GD1), feeling “desensitised” (GD1), “detached” (GD4), “overwhelming ... tiring” (Josie, Podcast session 6), and “like dragging period pains” (Roz, Podcast session 8). In discussions, participants questioned why they were being made to wait, identifying how waiting could be a political tactic (Baraitser, 2017; Ozoliņa, 2019): “do you think it’s done on purpose? The whole thing is bizarre. Do you think it’s done on purpose to get the above average man on the street confused? It really is ridiculous” (GD3).

These examples did not suggest feelings of crisis *per se*, but rather a conjunctural, endured experience of waiting for the “what-next” and “what-if.” In a discussion session, one participant vividly summed up waiting for Brexit as:

It’s like somebody is telling you, they’re going to pull a plaster off your arm, but they’ve been telling you for five years that they’re going to pull it. [...] And you know, it’s gonna really hurt, but you just keep getting told how much it’s gonna.... And you’ve not even experienced the pain of it yet. (GD1)

Roz similarly described this conjunctural space of waiting for Brexit as torturous and disembodiment:

It’s classic, it’s like torture, you know when you get sensory deprivation or something and it’s like we’ve been kept in this state for three years, and so we’ll be just a little bit more pushover-y. (Podcast session 2)

Together these examples describe waiting for Brexit as an uncomfortable, prolonged embodied experience – of anxious anticipation, pain, and numbing, and the body as a site of emplaced temporal politics. Waiting as a political strategy (i.e., being made to wait rather than a tactic from below) also has biopolitical implications, of personal and intimate unease and discomfort (see Olson, 2015). It also was discussed as making people more accepting – what Roz terms “pushover-y” – of future Brexit deals (Auyero, 2011; Ozoliņa, 2019).

The language of Brexit used in extracts throughout this section (denoting speed, pace, tempo, etc.) in turn shaped the temporality of Brexit in people’s everyday lives. Frustrated by waiting and being made to wait (for “Brexit” as an umbrella

term refers to a wide range of processes and decisions) – and the connotations of waiting as an expression of social exclusion – made Brexit seem “out of place” within the temporal rhythms of everyday life (see Massey, 1991). Even describing Brexit in this way worked to concertina a whole complex set of processes together to feel like one long wait.

6 | WAITING AS METHOD

In this third themed section, I explore the significance of waiting as method, and more specifically waiting for Brexit as method. Waiting is a well-versed methodological tactic for ethnographers (Auyero, 2011; Jeffrey, 2010), and my field diaries were full of remarks about these temporal, emplaced research experiences. Waiting outside community buildings for classes to open or doors to be unlocked; walking around the park at the community fair with my microphone, waiting for people to speak to me; gaps in conversation during podcasting sessions, which we learned to do so as not to interrupt one another on the recordings. These are also examples of the anticipatory effects of waiting in the context of research on Brexit. Some of the recruitment activities were predicated on waiting, slowness, and gentleness (Ozoliņa, 2019; Pottinger, 2020), an approach that valued being spatially and temporally emplaced in people's everyday lives – a watercolour class in a locally owned bar colloquially termed “The Sip” being an apt example.

Some key moments in the research came from these waiting times, such as when I waited to check on a participant at the end of a meeting, only for us to have an extended conversation revealing huge changes in funding due to affect the local youth centre (field diary, April 2019). Another example comes from a photo diary I undertook on 29 March 2019 (so-called “leave day,” two years after the invoking of Article 50), so that when I met with Roz, Josie, and Arthur, I would have some observations to contribute, too. One photo I took was of a bus stop bearing a poster for the EU resettlement scheme – a venue traditionally used for waiting (Corbridge, 2004; Massey, 1992). Later that day, I took another photo while I was on a bus waiting in traffic – of the digital sign on the main road that read “expect delays” (field diary, March 2019), the meaning of which was predicated on the space-times of the fieldwork.

Where ethnographic research is aligned with waiting (rather than forcing data collection to happen, such as in arranged interviews and surveys), participatory research brings out new features of waiting as method, which typically involves waiting with rather than for others (Pottinger, 2020; Team Future et al., 2017). This also highlights the relational, situated, and emplaced qualities of waiting (Baraitser, 2017; Holdsworth, 2021). For instance, Roz decided to use a photograph as a “visual aid” during our reflective discussion of their peer-led mini-projects, taken on the site where a new school was due to be built (P reflections). Coincidentally, I had a picture from the very same location just a few weeks previously, before the site had been cleared of dozens of healthy trees. Here, waiting with others provides new reflections that a sole ethnographer might not capture, highlighting the importance of place-based attachments in waiting as method.

There were also instances where waiting as method could be understood as compulsive time (Lefebvre, 2000), deployed for research (see Mannay & Morgan, 2015). When Roz, Josie, and Arthur carried out their mini-projects, they all spoke of productively using time that would have otherwise been spent waiting. Josie, for instance, asked the blind-fitter about his views on the referendum while he worked, plying him with tea and biscuits as they chatted (P reflections). Roz used her time at the hairdressers while having her hair dyed – a process that can take a couple of hours – to chat to the staff and other clients (P reflections). Waiting as method was also shown to be an embodied experience (Olson, 2015; Ozoliņa, 2019). Following one discussion group, where some inter-group tension had arisen, I wrote in my field diary that “the time during the discussion was so awkward and uncomfortable. My back hurts from being and feeling so tense” (field diary, May 2018). These embodied elements were also highlighted by participants – one name for the podcast that Josie threw in the mix was “no sleep till Brexit” (which is another example of the language of Brexit as shaping its temporality). These examples also draw out themes of everyday, embodiment, and endurance that emerge across the data. They also work to re-complicate often highly critical understandings of waiting, enlivening the idea of waiting as everyday praxis.

Extending this idea, waiting for Brexit might also be understood as method. Set in the context of socio-economic change as it happens (Davies & Carter, 2021; Hall, 2019; Team Future et al., 2017), it was waiting in this specific setting that also constituted methodological innovation and critique, shaping the rhythm and tone of engagement. For example, the nature of EU withdrawal as it intersects with everyday life, as a space of waiting, crisis, and conjuncture, meant that participants were acutely aware of the need to research *over time*, rather than understand Brexit as a snapshot or series of events. Arthur, for example, talked about his interview questions changing by the day, and of the need to wait and observe change as it happens. This sense of sticking around, wait and see, then fed into how participants led their own mini-projects. Josie commented on how her “photos already look like a memory” (P reflections). A sense of time and place as passing, and of waiting together, is threaded throughout observations, fieldnotes, and conversations.

The example of creating the podcast is pertinent here, showcasing what happens when waiting with others as method. Initially, our plan was to script parts of the podcast from the reflective discussion in May 2019. We had agreed on practical things like the name, format, and purpose of the podcast, possible key themes, and when to release it. However, in just four weeks between this and the first podcast discussion session in June 2019, we found that there were too many political changes and announcements to do this in a way that felt meaningful and adaptable. Arthur, Josie, and Roz felt it was far more interesting to continue recording as plans for Brexit continued to change (dates, elections, and parliamentary debates tabled), so we agreed the podcast episodes would be pieced together once we had all our materials. They all said they enjoyed meeting up, it gave them a chance to think, chat, vent, learn, and be in the company of new friends.

In the end, we recorded eight podcast discussion sessions, each accompanied by a picnic and copious amounts of tea and coffee, with pauses punctuating our discussions as we slurp from mugs, lean over for grapes, or crunch on crisps. Project money was used to pay for room hire and the food, which we tried to spread across different parts of the community via the project – a small way of reciprocating the local generosity received (see Hall, 2019). Waiting as method, particularly waiting for socio-economic change, can therefore help to nurture enduring, emplaced everyday relationships within fieldwork (see Katz, 2017; Pottinger, 2020). Within this, connections are also drawn to the temporalities of research and of academic praxis more broadly, especially in how waiting can invoke conceptual and empirical connections to praxis, minor theory, and slow scholarship. I explore this further in the closing section that follows.

7 | TIME TO CLOSE: WAITING AS PRAXIS

This paper has advanced geographical and social science scholarship on socio-economic change and everyday life by considering how Brexit can be conceptualised through a socio-temporal framing. Current writings on Brexit hold this temporality as a given, focusing on events, moments, and intervals (Anderson & Wilson, 2018; Anderson et al., 2020; Clarke, 2019; Miller, 2019). This paper extends this framework to focus more specifically on the experiences and qualities of temporality, specifically on waiting. Waiting is understood as both a socio-political organising logic (Auyero, 2011; Jeffrey, 2008; Ozolina, 2019) and as an embodied, emplaced, and endured experience (Corbridge, 2004; Jeffrey, 2010; Olson, 2015). Using this conceptual framing and reflecting on innovative ethnographic participatory research carried out over more than a year, the findings in this paper highlight new ways of thinking about everyday geographies of Brexit.

First, of waiting for Brexit as crisis. This included feelings of a crisis-in-waiting, Brexit as crisis-like, and as a crisis-to-come. Through place-based attachments and everyday practices, feelings of waiting in limbo, emplaced and in the present, induced a sense of crisis, personally and inter-relationally. Second, of waiting for Brexit as conjuncture; of possibility, of change and nothing, alike; of reflection on histories, rather than always forward-facing; of confusion, rather than moments of clarity; and of embodied endurance, of waiting as corporally felt. This language of Brexit further shapes its temporality. Third, and finally, of waiting for Brexit as method. Waiting was shown as a methodological tactic in ethnographic research, presenting space and opportunity for ethnographic encounters, but also a space for waiting *with* in emplaced and situated research. Waiting also shaped the rhythm and tone of the fieldwork, in which enduring and meaningful research relationships were developed. Here, waiting as praxis was revealed as another way of understanding waiting as a political tool, and the value of dwelling in the everyday.

Following this last point, I close with reflections on waiting for Brexit as a praxis. This project, from the scoping fieldwork to polishing the podcasts, has involved learning to slow down, to negotiate time, and to wait *in* the everyday. It has required a new level of patience, in the process of making the podcast, starting/stopping around Brexit talks, elections, personal matters, and at the time of writing, the Coronavirus pandemic. This also sits at odds with the timeliness of the research, pressures to get results out fast, when they are most relevant, impactful, when interest is piqued – offering a window into the neoliberal academy as it is shaped by the temporalities of urgency (see Olson, 2015). Moreover, it was in the nesting of crises, the temporal clash of Brexit, with doing fieldwork, with Coronavirus, that these urgencies were exposed and became conjunctural. After the passing of Josie and Arthur, my focus quickly moved from concerns about writing up the findings before they “dated” or keeping up with my research schedule before teaching started, towards embracing waiting as praxis – carefully crafting the podcasts, ensuring the best bits were featured, including laughing and heartfelt moments, listening, relistening, rewinding, pausing, and pondering. It is in waiting as praxis that considered and meaningful engagements with everyday, embodied, emplaced, and endured experiences of socio-economic change can be brought to life, and through which the tensions inherent in the temporal politics of waiting might be redressed.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

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ENDNOTE

¹ Sessions were held in June (1), July (2), August (3), September (4), October 2019 (5, 6), and January (7) and February (8) 2020.

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