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# Enacting other foodworlds

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*Affective food initiatives performing a care-full politics of  
difference*

**Emma Louise Sharp**

*A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.*

*School of Environment*

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## ABSTRACT

Food scholarship has struggled with what to make of alternative food initiatives (AFIs), both practically and politically. The surge of interest in AFIs in the past few decades has focused on the ways that AFIs might operate independently of capitalist, anonymous and mass-production processes, and is based predominantly on urban studies in the global north. These studies often interpret AFIs as political movements and defiant alternatives to industrial agri-food relations, representing a performance of singular alterity. Commonly this understanding of “alternative” has been collapsed into a politics of consumer identity, which is studied from the outside in abstract terms. More recently, these ways of framing food knowledge have been criticised in the literature for oversimplifying the complex set of objects, moments, sites and relationships that food embodies.

Understanding food economy differently involves re-drawing the boundaries that we conventionally place around food. Post-structural thinking helps us reimagine these boundaries. It also redirects attention to embodied practices of food that are largely overlooked in food scholarship, and recognises that the sensory realm filters and invites varied experiences of affect, including political incitements. Situated in the context of critical food geographies, this dissertation considers different food ontologies in order to open up diverse understandings of practice in diverse food initiatives, as opposed to conceptualisations that are contained in binaries or closed categories. These considerations include problematising the ubiquitous terms of “alternative” food initiative or network.

I interrogate a novel set of connected, empirical food experiments in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, and explore what political work they do in the world. My approach to these experiments includes seeing them through different conceptual and typological lenses, co-producing food knowledge with a community food activist, and employing ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methods to explore unexpected and diverse food practices involved in dumpster diving, farmers’ markets, the Crowd Grown Feast, and in the production through practice (or “enaction”) of foodbox kale. This work advances a set of methods that involve spending intensive time in the field, sensing and reflexively “more-than-following” food.

My thesis argues that the different food experiments encountered here share a deep ethic of care, and build on embodied and affective practice. At the core of this shared ethic lie practices of attunement that mediate the relations of what this thesis proposes are *affective* food initiatives. I propose that attunement enacts a care-full politics of difference and possibility that transforms foodworlds.

**Key words:** enacting difference; affect; care; attunement; affective food initiatives; feminist post-structural politics; more-than-following; possibility

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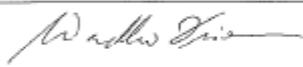
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CHAPTER 5 Food fights: Irritating for social change among Auckland's alternative food initiatives

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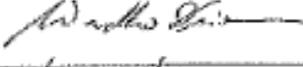
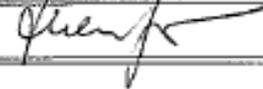
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# Chapter 1 | INTRODUCTION: RELATING FOOD AND HUMANS

## 1.1 Introduction

The contemporary agri-food literature is characterised by a deep and politically corrosive rift between capitalist and “alternative” food economies. Underpinning this is the tendency to set up binary understandings that put alternative food practices in opposition to what is seen as conventional, and study them in pre-determined categories. This thesis ruptures these deeply entrenched, normalised notions of how food and food knowledge is constructed and enacted, including challenging the associated methodological, ontological and epistemological biases that come with these conceptions. Appealing to the recognition that alternative food studies literature is ‘complex and multi-disciplinary’ (Allen *et al* 2003:62) with a variety of conceptual takes, the chapters in this thesis work through a variety of theoretical lenses — drawing from a range of food scholars, feminist political theorists, and critical social theorists — that are applied to different case studies. The different cases incorporate concepts of diversity, the unexpected and experimental, transgression, assemblage, affect, care and concepts of the body that are advanced through a feminist post-structural politics. They are used to explore “alternative food initiatives” (AFIs) in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa NZ) as a series of conceptual contradictions and political tensions around food. The point of this work is to acknowledge food practices that are generative of human and non-human wellbeing, that are enacted regularly but not seen, and that demonstrate possible ways to “do” food differently and thereby create other foodworlds to those that we have been conditioned to believe are dominant or exclusive.

While the field of food geography has been constructed as an alternative/conventional binary which employs a rational, economised and masculinised approach to food research, in the flesh, food is more complex and is constructed through many non-observable or non-rational means, such as taste and touch (see Section 1.4). In this research I argue that traditional geographical methods of constructing food and food knowledge have built the illusion of a foodworld made up of mostly rational, economised and masculinised food objects, and that where data is unpredictable, unexpected, diverse, and/or embodied, it has been largely dismissed from geographical narratives. This thesis advances a different narrative of food that is informed by these marginalised contexts, and my methodological approach derives theory from what is alive and apparent in the field.

Also lively is the academic activism in the labour of this thesis, as different chapters variously aim to: change the way we frame food; see actually existing resistance to un-caring food practices in

various guises; and, exercise a commitment to enactive research. The latter recognises the transformative effect of the embodied, reflexive researcher in performing and reforming food knowledge(s) and practice(s)<sup>1</sup>. The theoretical and practical perspectives of this work are therefore fundamentally political in the way that they reimagine and perform something different to the idea of conventional, dominant and hegemonic discourse and practice of food.

The surge of interest and dominant narratives around the practices and politics of AFIs that have emerged over the past few decades offer an opportunity that academics and practitioners might take up to practice these politics. Working from a commitment to researching actually existing practices in order to open up spaces of possibility, this work traced an enquiry into AFIs differences, and culminated in the development of a novel methodology that emphasises the value that a lived experience of food might offer our understandings of it. Drawing from varied theoretical insights, the empirical work took place over the course of 18 months, and involved canvassing more than 100 AFIs in Auckland, followed by surveys from a subset of 23, and then participatory ethnography and auto-ethnography by ‘following’ six AFIs constituting numerous individuals.

## 1.2 Terminology: Foodscapes, Foodworlds and Food Economy

While the terms “foodscape”, “foodworld” and “food economy” may appear to be used interchangeably in this dissertation, they are in fact subtly different concepts. I consider the term *foodscape* to encapsulate the concept of a ‘food environment’<sup>2</sup> (MacKendrick 2014:16), which observes ‘spatial distribution[s] of food across urban spaces and institutional settings’ (Johnston *et al* 2009:512). This type of food assemblage is described in Chapter 6: (Re)assembling Foodscapes with the Crowd Grown Feast, which spotlights a ‘food environment’ case study and identifies distant but traceable relations of food exchange in particular places and spaces. In this dissertation *foodworld* is considered to be conceptually more embracing. Employing Michael Carolan’s (2013c) notion of ‘wilds’, we might think of foodworlds as more process and practice than state, becoming more than being, and of thinking relationally rather than through abstraction. In this sense, foodworlds consider embodied and embedded forms of food relations as well as how they materialise politically and practically in foodscapes. While the term foodworld has a genealogy in geography associated with phenomenologists such as Anne Buttimer, David Seamon and Yi Fu Tuan, I use the term in the sense of how it has been re-animated by cultural geographers interested in non-representational theory:

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<sup>1</sup> recognising that there are many different forms of knowing and many potential performances of that knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> MacKendrick’s (2014:16) ‘foodscape’ assembles (not necessarily proximate) food features like ‘grocery stores, a community garden, ... food banks, ... public school breakfast and lunch programs, ... a farmers’ market, food trucks, and several fast food restaurants’ with boundaries that expand and contract depending on how connections are made or lost.

*By 'animating' lifeworlds, non-representational ethnographic styles aim to enliven, render, resonate, rupture, re-imagine, and to generate possibilities for fabulation. If indeed there is a quintessential non-representational style, then it is that of becoming entangled in relations and objects [ethnographically], rather than studying their structures and symbolic meanings, thus animating the potential of these meshworks for our geographical imagination.*

Phillip Vannini (2015:319–320) *Non-Representational Ethnography*

It is in this framing of an animated foodworld that the potentials of these food relationalities are made clear. *Food economy*, as read through framings of post-structural political economy and diverse economies (Section 1.4), is defined as the stewarding of food resources in the making of food related livelihoods.

### **1.3 Moving Beyond a Normative “Alternative”: Thinking and Doing Differently**

The idea of *alternative* food initiatives (AFIs) was introduced by Allen *et al* (2003) as agri-food activity that ‘share[s] a political agenda: to oppose the structures that coordinate and globalise the current food system and to create alternative systems of food production that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and socially just’ (p61). This pivotal piece of literature draws from Raymond Williams’ (1977) terms of “oppositional” and “alternative” that refer to everyday struggles with a hegemonic social organisation. This nomenclature allowed Allen *et al* (2003) to ‘locate [AFIs] within an alternative, rather than oppositional, frame’ (p65) to the conventional agri-food activity, as in, not directly confronting structural reasons for food systems problems (like causes of food insecurity), but rather doing something different that might tackle the symptoms (like providing access to food for the food insecure). Also useful in this text is Harvey’s (1996) recognition of the ‘militant particularism’ that arises in the work of AFIs, where practical efforts to transform everyday lives can only be achieved within the confines of one’s context, inevitably carrying forward situated ‘particularisms’ including those that are problematic. Agri-food literature has taken up Harvey’s observation, calling out the “local” as a loaded term, couched as an ideology for liberal politics and for oppositional practice (e.g. DuPuis and Goodman 2005).

What emerges in this thesis is that, as pointed out in Allen *et al* (2003), analysis must assemble not only a theoretical stance on the potential of AFIs, but also their historical contexts and the on-the-ground knowledge of practitioners. Harvey (1996) places the particular efforts to make change in tension with a hopefulness in an alternative vision, such that ‘theoretical practice must be constructed as a continuous dialectic between the militant particularism of lived lives and a struggle

to achieve sufficient critical distance and detachment to formulate global ambitions’ (Harvey 1996:44). This is a starting point for considering how AFIs might be thought and done differently.

### 1.3.1 The Normative “Alternative”

Although the descriptor “alternative” is used liberally in agri-food lexicon, its meaning jars with the politics of its use. This is because, by its very nature, “alternative” sets up a contrast and in so doing implies a system of binaries — for example, alternative/capitalist, alternative/conventional, alternative/ubiquitous, alternative/powerful. Despite the alternative/oppositional debate, agri-food scholarship still frequently positions AFIs in opposition to “conventional” corporate capitalist food systems, suggesting a singular politics of anti-capitalism, where capitalism is associated with “bad” food (e.g. environmental or animal exploitation) and non-capitalist food is assumed to be “good” (e.g. incorporating fair labour conditions, or being local). In the flesh, however, the politics of food are messier than this.

Holloway *et al* (2007) explored the need to get beyond these ‘facile dichotomies’ (Guthman 2003:45) of the conventional/alternative divide that troubles AFIs. Instead they argued for a relational approach which recognises the multi-dimensional, contested and dynamic nature of food production-consumption relationships. They develop a heuristic framework for analysing such relationships that consists of seven analytical fields (employed in Chapter 4 of this thesis) which they apply to three distinct and unique case studies in the UK and Europe. The arrangement of their novel characteristics across the seven fields enables each project to be expressed through their various forms of resistance or difference to dominant systems of food provision. Holloway *et al* (2007) conclude that it is necessary to go beyond simply labelling practices as “alternative” and to examine how the specific ordering and spatiality of particular projects can challenge centres of power in food supply, in order to say something useful about the politics embedded in production-consumption relationships.

Given the above important and different contributions to understanding the language and work of AFIs, while I use the term “alternative” in this dissertation, I simultaneously look for a different naming — something more-than-alternative, something that is appropriately destabilising from a theoretical perspective.

Jenny Cameron and Sarah Wright (2014) go so far as to rectify what they identify as a misnomer, renaming these objects/organisations as *diverse food initiatives* (see Section 1.5) to underscore their project of economic diversity in community food, and drawing from JK Gibson-Graham’s (2008) important work on *diverse economies* (detailed in Section 1.4). The politics of the alternative food

movement, however, goes beyond a particular allocation of capital, and mode of labour. I look further out, for inspiration in my food empirics' entanglements of different individuals, groups and political projects, and ways of measuring them, in order to de-centre the rational, the measurable, the masculine, the capitalist, and the economic altogether.

Thinking and practising diversely offers us the opportunity to embrace the unexpected ways in which food is found, and in which it becomes. Simultaneously, diverse readings and practices of food provide more possible spaces and processes for negotiating, debating and cultivating a mutual understanding at the intersection of many different bodies — food and its connections with humans and more-than-humans (for example, animals, pollinators or soils that do important “foodwork”<sup>3</sup> in our worlds). That is, it points to where less visible ways of practicing — or “doing” — articulate together and are enacted in lively foodscapes. This research adds to a ‘patchwork of practices and performances’ (Carolan 2013b:145) of difference.

And so, I explore these food initiatives as I find them, in their ‘actually existing’ (Gibson-Graham 2003:128; and developed in Krueger and Agyeman 2005) assemblages rather than positioning them solely as a counter-politics. Examining them as relational assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) widens the scope further than the linear “supply chain”<sup>4</sup>, to consider their multiplicity<sup>5</sup> of relations — histories, multiple sites and less visible more-than-human connections — that perform and construct food, rather than focusing solely on the politics of the producer or consumer. I adopt diverse methods that include reflexivity, enactive research and auto-ethnography, and tell my experiences as stories to validate my own subjectivity as an object of study, rather than engaging in a methodology that only watches and classifies from the outside. I move beyond theory to notice and allow myself to be changed by embodied, affective practices of food, rather than stopping short in a purely conceptual exploration of difference. In so doing, this thesis moves narratives of food from simply “alternative” to diverse and affective.

### **1.3.2 Learning to be Affected**

Where recent decades of geographical thought have grappled with the knowledge gap that exists around how affect is learned, imbued or generated, using food empirics I develop the concept of *attunement* to bridge this impasse. Seeing and doing food through attunement produces a politics in itself. It highlights *the body* as an instrument of measurement (Longhurst *et al* 2008) and as a means of calibration. I highlight the body as a symbol and dynamic of feminist modes of: deconstructing

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<sup>3</sup> defined as the labour of enacting food knowledges and realities in the field.

<sup>4</sup> as typical of agri-food studies in Aotearoa NZ in the 1990s.

<sup>5</sup> in the sense of Mol's (2002) ‘object multiple’, described in more detail in Chapter 2 and applied to a specific case study in Chapter 7.

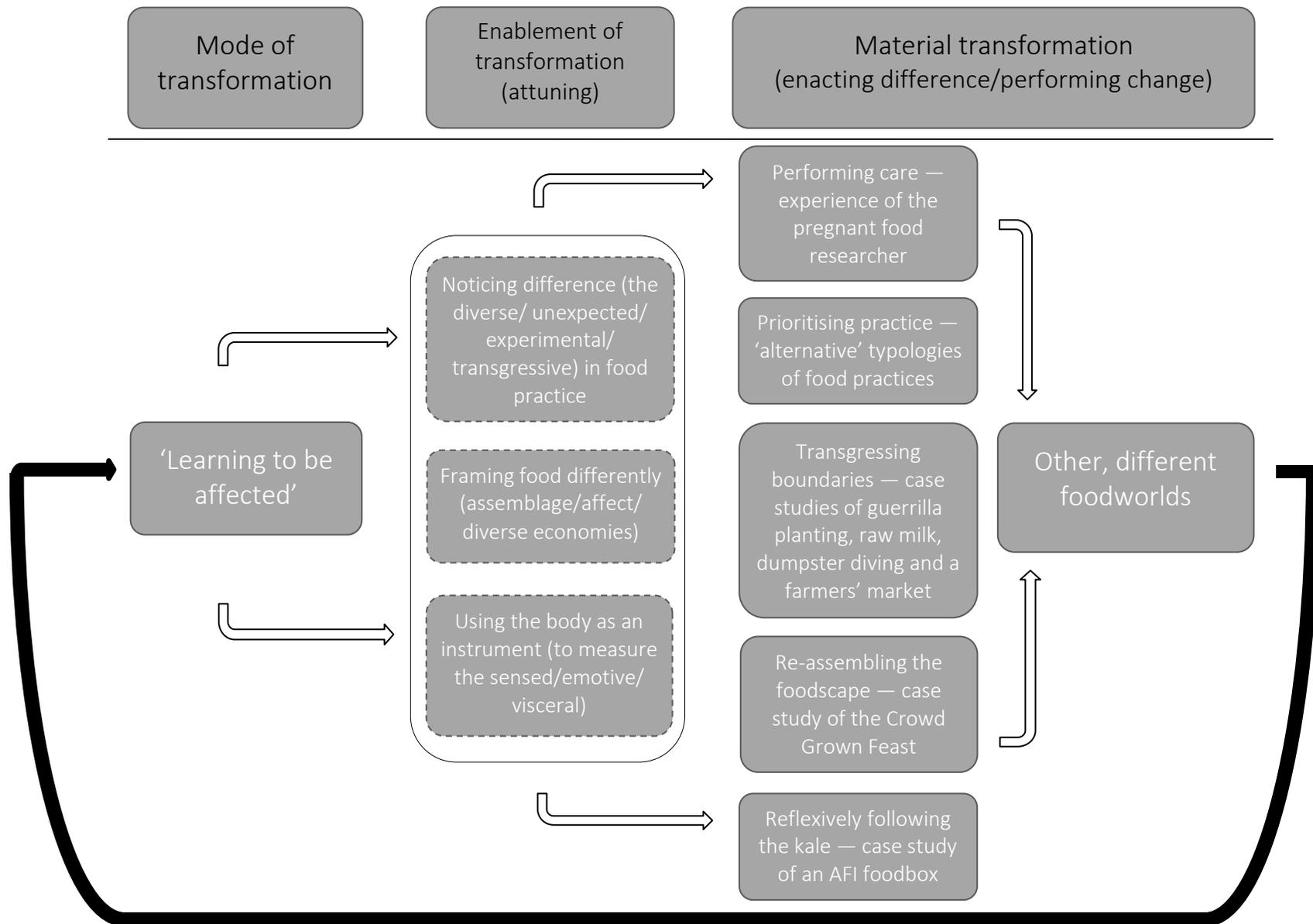
monoliths (e.g. rhetoric, power structures, economic models); making visible marginalised theory, epistemology, ontology, empirics and politics; prioritising the performative; and, prioritising care. I move forward using the terminology of “enactment”, so as not to privilege epistemology over ontology, such as in the terms of “making” or “constructing” worlds (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). And I use these ways of thinking to consider how harnessing or measuring senses, visceralities, feelings, thoughts and motivations of individuals might have a transformative effect personally and in wider groups.

Figure 1.1 illustrates multiple axes of difference enacted in this thesis, while recognising that aspects of these forms and enablers of transformation can only be performed and cannot be represented graphically. Rather than arrange this graphic to distinguish theory and methods of this dissertation, the enaction of foodworlds challenges these categories in a process of theory-informing-methods-informing-theory. Attunement is presented in this graphic as the pathway between ‘learning to be affected’ (Latour 2004a) and foodworld transformation. The practice of “attuning” is captured as an assemblage of: noticing difference in food practice (i.e. diversity, the unexpected, the experimental, and the transgressive); framing food epistemologically and ontologically differently (informed by a feminist post-structural political theories of assemblage, affect and diverse economies); and, using the body as an instrument to “measure” food (in sensed, emotive, visceral ways).

We might think of attuning as a counterpoint to Carolan’s concept of ‘tuning’ (2011). In his work, which focuses on embodied experiences of food, Carolan suggests that we are able to become conditioned to particular brands of taste as “Global Food” has become an everyday, lived experience for us. As he surmises, ‘we think with and through our bodies’ (2011:1), and if our experience of food is limited in the varieties and brands that we encounter based on the standardisations of the industrialised food system, then particular embodiments and relationalities are lost, and other understandings are shaped. (Indeed, the same phenomenon is reflected in the academic framing of food, where a ‘myopic, productionist ‘gaze’ (Roe 2006:106) conditions researcher experience and framing).

It stands to reason then, that our bodies could become (at)tuned to a different system of food, one that helps to make uncaring, exploitative practices of food “out of tune” with the bodies that come into contact with them (Carolan 2011). Attuning to AFI food instead introduces competencies, knowledges and sentiments that make problematic the artefacts, practices and visceral experiences of food that are less caring. They show us that there is work involved in conditioning, or attuning us to more caring forms of food that acknowledge relations, context and look beyond what is conventional in food practice and research, to something different.

Figure 1.1 presents my proposal of the different enactments of transformation in this dissertation: performing acts of care, prioritising practice, transgressing, (re)assembling, and following — always in the continuous tense, in a process of becoming — as embodied, performative acts. In this study I explore how ‘learning to be affected’ (Latour 2004a) through attunement may lead to affective enactments of new foodworlds, which in turn may propagate further attunement and material transformation through the multiple, different possibilities generated.



**Figure 1.1:** Modes, forms and actually existing material transformations of diverse, affective food thinking and practice. AFI = alternative food initiative

### 1.3.3 Key Concepts

A thesis can be cut in many ways, but if I had to extract some key concepts that are emergent from my doctoral research, the ideas of “enacting difference”, “affect”, and “care” are perhaps the most influential. While they are developed in different places in this thesis, and do not feature in every chapter, they are connected concepts that have overall importance for food politics and transforming foodworlds.

The idea of enactive practice has been put to work by Michael Carolan (2011; 2013a; 2013b), and the *Biological Economies Research Group* in Aotearoa NZ (see e.g. Le Heron R *et al* 2016; Lewis and Rosin 2013). Ideas of performativity and difference here are also drawn from the work of diverse economies scholarship (Gibson-Graham 2006) which has, in turn, emerged out of historical connections to feminist, post-structural theory that deconstructs pervasive man/woman, mind/body dualisms. The diverse economies project has demonstrated a performativity of language in creating the effects that it names (Butler 1993:2) and of what is embodied, to accommodate the practiced, the bodily sensed, and the lived (Butler 1990; Longhurst 1996; Haraway 1997; Probyn 2000). Collectively these scholars contribute to the idea that there is a disruption of (masculinised) hegemonic narratives when the “knower” performs the feminine by recognising their body, and placing real bodies into research and social change activism. When we frame the world through our bodies we not only construct geography and our bodies/identities through practice (Butler 1990:139), we enact a politics of difference in knowledge production (Law and Urry 2004) too. The chapters ahead explore the manifold ways in which AFIs might enact difference.

This leads me to affect. The concept of affect is founded in feminist thinking about what is lived and sensed, as a knowledge construct that demystifies the body (Longhurst 1996; Haraway 1997; Probyn 2000; Butler 2005). In this thesis, the concept of affect draws particularly from Ben Anderson’s (2006) thinking, about how we experience feelings and emotions, and how an intensity of these feelings changes our capacity to act, and to act differently (Massumi 2002). And with this intensity of affect, a “body’s movements [are afforded] a kind of depth that stays with it across all its transitions — accumulating in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in tendency” (*Ibid*:213). Anderson (2006) usefully draws a trajectory between the conditions of affect and hope, and then goes further to consider how an enactive politics of knowledge production can fulfil this hope. He suggests that through hope, affect draws one’s attention to the potentials of every encounter, including the *practices* that embody these alternative, and transformative possibilities (p738). I

engage with the concept of affect, particularly in Chapter 7 (but allude to it ahead of this in this thesis, as I came to grips with the limits of representational thinking).

Finally, the concept of care has been significant for this thesis. It is embedded in examples in my thesis document (particularly Chapter 3 on my positionality) and can be interpreted through scholarly readings of work by Joan Tronto and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa who offer some highly complementary thinking. I subscribe to Tronto's focus on: 1) care as interdependent and entangled (on and in affect, emotion and reflexive practice); and, 2) her ideas of care as a commitment to maintaining our world to live well within it. First of all, Tronto's (1993) thinking on the political potential of care proposes care for self, other humans and the non-human. We might consider then in food assemblages that care is extended from ourselves, to animals, parts of nature, or food objects as we variously construct them, as well as the traditionally recognised human actors of producer and consumers. This care assemblage that Tronto (1993) proposes also offers that care can constitute a many-for-one relationship, or a many-for-many relationship as well as a one-for-one relationship (*Ibid*:103). These ideas together serve to decentre the human, and consequently offer an enlarged sense of community. Secondly, Fisher and Tronto's (1990) explanation of care as a 'species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible', highlights care as a practice, enacted into being in everyday performances of food (p4).

From Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's theories of care (2011) her acknowledgement of Latour's (2004b; 2005) 'matters of concern' is useful. This translates well to my ideas around noticing (or attention to) what is material, ontological and epistemological, as well as what is neglected in our understandings of food. The commitment to neglected things offers a mandate for looking to sensory and visceral representations of food (i.e. affect) that construct food meanings, as well as the relational aspects of food supply beyond the producer and consumer (to the typically neglected non-human). Importantly, however, it is important to note that these ideas suggest an action or performance of care. It is not merely a matter of 'concern' as Puig de la Bellacasa refers above; as Tronto (1993: 103) notes 'we would think someone who said "I care about the world's hungry," but who did nothing to alleviate world hunger did not know what it meant to say that she cared about hunger'. As visible from several angles now, enactment is the demonstration of an embodied politics.

While these 3 concepts of *enacting difference*, *affect*, and *care* do not emerge in every chapter of this thesis, I outline in Chapter 8: Conclusions, how I engaged with them in my empirical chapters using different theory to interrogate a politics of AFIs, as my thesis journey progressed.

## 1.4 A Feminist Post-structural Politics

Theoretical standpoints in this research are outlined in each chapter. Nonetheless, despite covering a range of empirical subjects, theoretical themes did weave through all of the chapters. Most notably, there is a strong commitment to post-structural theory, which includes epistemologies of assemblage<sup>6</sup> thinking and becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), foldings<sup>7</sup> (Deleuze 2006), and ideas of affect (Anderson 2006). As clear from the key concepts of this thesis, this work builds into a feminist project of food relations incorporating embodiment, performativity and body politics (Haraway 1997; Probyn 2000; Butler 2005) to examine senses, emotions and viscosity (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2008; 2010; Longhurst *et al* 2009; Probyn 2016) with important ties to feminist post-structural economic theory (Gibson-Graham 2008). This work is strongly gendered both nominally and theoretically in that it calls out traditional masculinised constructions and constructors of knowledge, and draws attention to the equality of feminised approaches to knowing. These theoretical underpinnings (described more in Section 3.3) are all applied to the context of alternative food in this dissertation. Further, this work employs a number of different methods (discussed in Chapter 2) that embody these epistemological and theoretical commitments. In this chapter, I outline the theoretical and epistemological themes of the thesis in more detail.

In the context of food systems, post-structural political economy speaks of practices concerned with the embodied, performative and contextual nature of our foodworld, the materialities of food production processes, their epistemological and ontological construction, and the socio-ecological relations of food as commodities (Lewis *et al* 2016). Feminist economic scholars JK Gibson-Graham have been central and energetic champions of post-structural notions of economic plurality, shifting a focus to ‘alternatives’ that, in their words, currently have a ‘status [that is] marginal and unconvincing ... difficult to budge’ (2008:618) in today’s capitalocentric<sup>8</sup> world. Specifically, Gibson-Graham’s (2008) performative ontological project of *diverse economies* is known for opening up understandings of previously un-acknowledged or under-acknowledged economic practice, and interrogating the generative role of ‘hidden and alternative economic performances that contribute to social well-being and environmental regeneration’ (*Ibid*:618). Diverse economies build on Gibson-Graham’s provocation of a post-capitalist politics (2006), one which highlights actually existing alternative economic practices found on the ground, suggesting that they are taking

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<sup>6</sup> including ‘rhizome theory’ which suggests that ways of interrogating and interpreting are not linear, but rather manifold, and non-hierarchical, without a beginning or an end.

<sup>7</sup> *foldings* are detailed in Chapter 7, where the concept is applied to the particular case study of foodbox kale relations.

<sup>8</sup> a hegemony of thought that sees no alternative to capitalism, as discussed in Gibson-Graham’s (2008) theorisation of post-capitalist politics.

place in the everyday. These scholars challenge academics to put these performances squarely in front of other academics and students, and to proliferate these encounters through enabling policy- and systems-making. Our dependence on an academic tradition of strong theory, of universal rules and assumptions, has until recently required scholars to pick just one camp — capitalism or not — and thereby miss opportunities to think bigger and wider and differently.

Gibson-Graham's diverse economies project enthusiastically draws from Eve Sedgwick's idea of weak theory (1997; 2003). As an influential gender, queer and critical theorist, Sedgwick resolves to keep individual but convergent ideas and practices separated, and not let them merge into a kind of universal, or be conflated to represent something they are not. By building on a weak theory approach, Gibson-Graham's ideas have been transformative for academic and community thinking about economic objects, food included (e.g. Little *et al* 2010; Le Heron 2013).

### **1.5 Diverse Food Initiatives: Adapted and Adopted**

Alternative food initiatives (AFIs) have been narrated in the diverse economies space as alternatives to the dominant and normatively capitalocentric system of food exchange (Cameron and Gordon 2010; Cameron and Wright 2014; Dixon 2011). Cameron and Wright (2014) consider that economic practices and participants articulate alternative food economies with social movements, human and more-than-human justice, and public responsibility around food. They adopt Gibson-Graham's (2008) diverse economies framework (DEF) to reveal practices of *diverse food initiatives* in Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia (Figure 1.2).

While the DEF is extremely helpful in showing the diversity of (in this case, food) economies, it also harbours some conceptual constraints. Specifically, it categorises economic activities into three basic forms: capitalist, alternative capitalist, and non-capitalist. Yet, even though the DEF is ideologically a heuristic schema representing diversity, it has come to define the diverse economies project in light of the way those following it have directed their attention — that is, to non-capitalist economic practice. As I go on to argue here, this has been at the expense of developing a label that better captures the vast majority of actually existing, routine economic activity, which is a mixture of capitalist and non-capitalist practice to the extent that these two categories end up having less clear ontological status. Visually, Gibson-Graham's DEF is tabular, and tiered, with partitioning lines between categories. And, although a heuristic device, this is perhaps why the DEF schema might be interpreted as featuring separations where 'familiar binaries are present' (*Ibid*:615): capitalist or other, alternative-capitalist or other. To a critical eye, linguistic and visual representations of the diverse economies project might then seem to create ideological rifts within this project of diversity.

| <b>Enterprise</b>   | <b>Transactions</b>   | <b>Labour</b>   | <b>Property</b>  | <b>Finance</b>  |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Capitalist</b><br>Nationally based retailers<br>International retailers (e.g. ALDI)<br>Local retailers (e.g. cafes and coffee shops)                   | <b>Market</b><br>Food from major supermarkets<br>Food from local retailers  | <b>Wage</b><br>Workers at national and international retailers<br>Workers at local retailers<br>CSA workers<br>Community garden work  | <b>Private</b><br>Retail spaces<br>Backyard food growing areas   | <b>Mainstream</b><br>Loans from mainstream banks  |
| <b>Alternative Capitalist</b><br>Small family-run food businesses<br>State/council owned businesses (e.g. council owned worm farm)                        | <b>Alternative Market</b><br>Food sourced directly from farmers (e.g. farmers' markets, CSA)<br>Saturday morning sales of community garden seedlings<br>Sales of community garden herbs to restaurants and coffee shops<br>Fair trade produce   | <b>Alternative Wage</b><br>In-kind payments for 'volunteers'<br>In-kind payments for community garden workers<br>Self-employed workers (e.g. farmers, sole operator food outlets)           | <b>Alternative Private</b><br>Land used for community gardens from councils, churches, schools, sports clubs<br>Premises for CSA and community kitchens on notional leases or donated arrangements from institutions<br>Showgrounds for farmers' markets | <b>Alternative Market</b><br>Loans from cooperative banks and credit unions<br>Slow money lending |
| <b>Non-capitalist</b><br>Self-employed farmers<br>Self-employed food operators<br>CSA<br>Community gardens<br>Community kitchens<br>Food 'rescue' schemes | <b>Non-market</b><br>Food from backyard production and community gardens for home use or gifted to neighbours and friends<br>Donations of food to community kitchens or food 'rescue' schemes<br>Donations of waste from restaurants and coffee shops for community garden composting | <b>Unpaid</b><br>Community garden volunteers<br>Community kitchen volunteers<br>Self-provisioning workers (e.g. back-yard producers, allotment community garden producers, dumpster divers) | <b>Open Access</b><br>Gleaning and scrumping from overhanging trees and trees in public parks<br>Open community garden produce<br>Dumpsters for diving<br>River for fishing<br>Open access meals from community kitchens                                 | <b>Non-market</b><br>Family and friend lending<br>Donations and gifts<br>Sweat equity             |

**Figure 1.2:** The diverse food landscape of Newcastle.

Source: Adapted from Cameron and Wright (2014:3) c.f. Gibson-Graham (2008)

CSA = community supported agriculture

Indeed, the use of the term “alternative” is problematic here, in that it oversimplifies a food ideology to the point of undermining its value. In economic terms it can imply an anti-capitalist sentiment, but whether anti-capitalism is antecedent for “real” transformation is a subject that pervades collective action and social movement debates, both in academia and in communities at large. While the diverse economies political project claims to accept difference and reveal plurality, some of the language used to describe the process of knowledge production within certain categorisations might seem constraining; for example, ‘the hegemonic framing of capitalism’ (Gibson-Graham 2008:615). Their narratives align with food activism research that exposes forms of alterity and/or protest as lodged in pre-determined, class-framed constructions of privilege, and the ways that they tend to produce and reproduce neoliberal logics (Guthman 2008b; Guthman and Brown 2016; DuPuis and Goodman 2005).

Gibson-Graham’s work is not without its detractors, however. The DEF and its project make a deliberate move to highlight the already present and everywhere nature of difference, and to fashion an enactive politics of making it visible and reproducing it in its place and elsewhere. These provocations have been critiqued unfairly as presenting a dualism between the “real” world of capitalist investment, social classes, global corporations, globalising infrastructure, and massive flows of finance, commodities and so on, versus (in food terms) a local “fantasy world” of community gardens. This form of critique (e.g. Samers 2005) has tended to misrepresent the politics of the DEF as naïvely utopian. In fact, ideologically, Gibson-Graham maintain that transformative possibilities *can* comprise capitalist devices, provided there is a prioritisation for care of community and environment (2006:80), it is just that “alternative” agri-food scholarship has rarely paid attention to this co-constitutive space, choosing instead to idealise alternative economic practice. A focus on care is a disruption of the norm. Gibson-Graham anticipate the above critique in their earlier work, suggesting that it is itself part of the problematic intractability of capitalism. That is, they suggest it is ‘the way that capitalism has been “thought” that makes it so difficult for people to imagine its supersession’ (Gibson-Graham 1996:3).

Tellingly, these misrepresented politics have sparked an active search for transformability in these other co-constitutive spaces among proponents of the community economies project. One might interpret this activity as adding a new, and more productive, politics to that of the replication of diverse economies, in turn animating the DEF. Based on the generative aspects of this way of thinking, I do subscribe to Gibson-Graham’s approach (despite its implicit problems) of “setting aside” capitalist things that do exist *in order to see and know otherwise*. I believe it is productive to suspend our view of capitalist practices, to see diverse economies practices as they are, in the wild. This approach embraces a commitment to seeing and enacting multiple and diverse realities through

an engaged, participatory and ethnographic methodology. Rather than attempting to erase them, I see the DEF as foregrounding problematic truths or realities that do not fit with universals or prescriptions of how we should do food research. In so doing, it directs us to ask who the knowledge producers are, what they do, how their politics are performed, and to what effect and affect.

I argue though, that by paying more attention to the operation of “the possible”, critical scholarship might contribute to opening new spaces of both thought and action. To that end, I introduce theoretical considerations that contribute to understanding the limitations of present-day imaginings of the possible. I then turn to the problem of how to “think possibility” from within narrowed imaginations, and I argue that a re-coding of the possible must also invoke ideals, practices and potentials that are already present all around us, *including the way capitalism articulates with these new “alternative” possibilities*. Applying these theoretical orientations to food activism, I identify some of the liberating aspirations of diverse economies, and suggest that naming and exploring these spaces is essential in order to amplify their potentials and disrupt limited imaginings of the possible. An important question generated by this reframing is: If we suppose that a food economy can be other than one tied to a hegemonic reading of capitalism — or to the DEF’s exploration of capitalist *or* other economies — then what kind of foodworlds might be built from this unshackled thinking?

The problems of representation highlighted above — of the incompetency of language and illustration alone to depict the diverse economies project — only strengthen the need for affective methods of practice and means of measurement, to understand and to convey this work and its value. Where illustrations of categories and divisions are insufficient to fully describe the food initiatives I explore here, feelings and emotions might be a more convincing medium of expression and evidence. What is of most interest, however, is how thinking differently about economy can be transformative, as, regardless of the method or model of representation, the end goal is ‘a counter hegemonic discourse ... that can establish (some of the) contours of a shared political practice’ (Gibson-Graham 2006:81), which I think of as affective economies.

## **1.6 Enactive and Affective Economies: On the Edges**

As understood above, Gibson-Graham’s emphasis on the inside of non-capitalist economies leaves unexplored *their outside edges* where along representational lines these non-capitalist practices and work together with others. In order to not miss what exists on the edges and in between, I pay close attention to the grey areas of these co-constitutive relations, including where “alternative” practices seem to overlap with the capitalist economic practices that diverse economies seek to neutralise. I

ask the theory to guide me differently in approaching evidence in the field, and in exposing gaps and possibilities and potentials for difference in the world. Here, again, I follow Gibson-Graham and others by working with theory weakly, rather than using it as a tool to corroborate what we (think we) know. I also ask this commitment to diversity to do more than simply open up more diverse and vibrant economies (see Section 2.7 on *diverse methods*). I begin from the position that such a commitment promises to open up a hopeful way of thinking — of possibility. Thinking through a different representation helps me to present the edges that I will explore in the chapters to come, and to foreshadow both analytical and potential political ‘lines of flight’<sup>9</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) of food-making practices.

Working within the broad framework of diverse economies research, my aim is to take its thinking in a decisive but complementary new direction. This thesis explores the generative political value that lies in the ways in which capitalist and “alternative” activity articulate together. I will argue that diverse economies occupy a territorial form that is ideologically opposed to capitalist economies, but never fully isolated from a capitalocentric framing. I hazard a representation of this in Figure 1.3, with the usual caveats for its use as a representational (heuristic) device. This figure applies new sets of ideas to original community economies concepts and forms, and, as a result, encourages us to see and look for new possibilities. The aim is not to fix empirical realities into the DEF, but to offer a heuristic that formalises my ideas and provides a guide to reading this dissertation. In all models and linear narratives there are edges and orderings, but there are also overflows and opportunities for lines of flight. Rather than applying firm boundaries between capitalist, alternative capitalist and non-capitalist categories of economy, the schematic suggests more perforated edges that expose ‘fissures in the logics that sustain capitalism’ (Brower 2013:95).

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<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) ‘*ligne de fuite*’ was noted by translator Brian Massumi as covering “the act of ... flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing point in a painting is a *point de fuite*).” It has been situated theoretically with others concepts of Deleuze and Guattari’s: assemblage, multiplicities, and rhizome.

| ENTERPRISE   | TRANSACTIONS  | LABOUR  | PROPERTY   | FINANCE  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Capitalist</b><br><i>Supermarket duopoly (one nationally, one internationally owned)</i><br><i>Local cafes and retailers</i>                                  | <b>Market</b><br><i>Conventional Supermarketsupermarket/ minimart/Dairy (NZ)/ corner store</i>  | <b>Wage</b><br>Workers at national and international retailers<br>Workers at local retailers<br>CSA workers<br>Community garden workers   | <b>Private</b><br>Retail spaces<br><i>Backyard gardens/food-growing areas</i><br><i>Private urban (neglected) space</i>  | <b>Mainstream market</b><br>Loans from mainstream banks<br><i>Private capital</i>                              |
| <b>Alternative Capitalist</b><br>Small family-run food businesses<br>State/council owned businesses (e.g. council owned worm farm)                               | <b>Alternative Market</b><br>Food sourced directly from farmers (e.g. farmers' markets, CSA)<br>Saturday morning sales of community garden seedlings<br>Sales of community garden herbs to restaurants and coffee shops<br>Fair trade produce   | <b>Alternative Paid</b><br>In-kind payments for 'volunteers'<br>In-kind payments for community garden workers<br>Self-employed workers (e.g. farmers, sole operator food outlets)           | <b>Alternative Private</b><br>Land used for community gardens from councils, churches, schools, sports clubs<br>Premises for CSA and community kitchens on notional leases or donated arrangements from institutions<br>Showgrounds for Farmers' Markets | <b>Alternative Market</b><br>Loans from cooperative banks and credit unions<br>Slow money lending              |
| <b>Non-Capitalist</b><br>Self-employed farmers<br>Self-employed food operators<br>CSA<br>Community gardens<br>Community kitchens<br><u>Food 'rescue' schemes</u> | <b>Non-Market</b><br>Food from backyard production and community gardens for home use or gifted to neighbours and friends<br>Donations of food to community kitchens or food 'rescue' schemes<br>Donations of waste from restaurants and coffee shops for community garden composting | <b>Unpaid</b><br>Community garden volunteers<br>Community kitchen volunteers<br>Self-provisioning workers (e.g. back-yard producers, allotment community garden producers, dumpster divers) | <b>Open Access</b><br>Gleaning and scrumping from overhanging trees and trees in public parks<br>Open community garden produce<br><u>Dumpsters for diving</u><br>River for fishing<br>Open access meal   | <b>Non-Market</b><br>Family and friend lending<br>Donations, gifts, <i>koha</i><br>Sweat equity                |
| <i>AFIs redistributing (private) waste resources of capitalist enterprise (e.g. dumpster diving/city mission donations from supermarkets)</i>                    | <i>Capitalist sale of community garden produce or value-added food products, selling raw version of conventionally sold product (e.g. raw milk or honey)</i>  | <i>Alternative currency (e.g. food box)</i>   | <i>Plantings/foraging on private land (e.g. guerrilla gardening)</i>   | <i>Capitalist sponsorship of AFIs</i><br><i>Private funding of AFIs (e.g. community gardens or allotments)</i> |

**Figure 1.3:** Affective food economies of Auckland, where alternative activity is not completely isolated from capitalist economic practice. (*Italicised* adaptations indicate examples of clearly articulating capitalist and “alternative” food practice, noticed in Auckland. Underlined adaptations indicate examples that highlight the complexity of nominally “non-capitalist” food practices.)

Source: Adapted from Cameron and Wright's (2014:3) Diverse Food Landscape of Newcastle.

AFI = alternative food initiative; CSA = community supported agriculture

Perhaps the “grey areas” between capitalist and alternative practices, where there is articulation between what have been known as capitalist and non-capitalist forms, are the key spaces where potential lies for the creation of other newness. And for this reason I name Figure 1.3 as illustrating *affective food economies* of Auckland, where I propose that spaces of newness are locations of *affect*. The stuff on the edges and in between is perhaps the most interesting, and is where, I argue, the potential for transformability takes place. In considering what happens in the overlapping and co-constituted spaces of “alternative” initiatives and the “dominant” food system, in the following chapters I explore examples of actually existing food economies that break down these classifications, tiers and binaries of capitalist or other, alternative-capitalist or other. I keep my eyes open to a plurality of economies, including those inextricable from capitalism. This critique does not detract from the diverse economies project of Gibson-Graham and others, and their hopeful project to demonstrate the “everywhere and always” nature of difference. Nor does it imply a subsumption of diverse economic thinking into capitalist economies or capitalocentrism, respectively. Rather, it points to new spaces of articulation to explore for new potential to perform the world differently in the context of capitalism’s stubborn persistence.

The edges of capitalism are understood by Anna Tsing (2015a:np) as ‘sites where non-capitalist forms of value are constantly being converted into capitalist value’. We can see clear examples of such conversion in, say, the co-optation of niche “alternative” markets like organics (e.g. Guthman 2004), the commercial sale of foraged mushrooms or fruit (e.g. Tsing 2015b), or insects being marketed to the global north<sup>10</sup> as an alternative protein source and being converted to commodities (e.g. Glover and Sexton 2015). In these instances capital is prioritised over care, and particular examples of this conversion might be seen as care-less. Surely, however, the processes are not unidirectional or inflexible, and the inverse is also true? Indeed capitalist value might be converted to non-capitalist and affective forms and objects — a ‘complex feedback relation’ between bodies, environments (Grosz 1992:242) and forms of governance in which each (re)produces the other, rather than counters the capitalist system to change it. And so, there may be the creation of a new foodworlds at these edges, from grassroots, experiential, visceral — affective and “care-full” — learning.

In my case studies I see actually existing examples of capitalist value converting to non-capitalist forms of value, at these shared edges of “dominant”/“alternative” food relations. One example is of dumpster diving (explored further in Chapter 5). Here, the creation of “salvage valuation” (see ideas

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<sup>10</sup> The “global north” and the “west” (while recognised as homogenous terms for large and highly geographically differentiated locations) are used somewhat interchangeably in this dissertation to describe largely privileged and wealthy societies.

of Tsing 2015b) offers a space where the capitalist organisation of the supermarket determines when food becomes waste, and then a process of re-valuation occurs when it is rediscovered, retrieved from a bin, shared and eaten. The process is networked. It involves a complex history in its food miles, its intermediaries, and its producers. But beyond that a newness is created where dumpster divers notice and become attuned to this new value. In this way, this new value appears to manifest in a space of affect, and a space of *care* for humans and more-than-human others.

Addressing this space, I tease out Tsing's proposition that 'edges [can be] found in the middle of capitalist formations as well as out-of-the-way places' (2015a:np) through a set of food economies. As I have discussed, I propose that these edges have the greatest potential for transformability. Such material transformation might lie in the embodiment of food's politics, and the practices and performances that are enacted in self-reinforcing and collective transgression, which are often on the edges of "capitalist"/"alternative" economies. The ways that AFIs practise in concert with conventional food does not lessen their impact. These are sites where we cannot help but see the diversity of human and more-than-human engagement. Demonstrably, they are affective in various ways.

## **1.7 Research Objectives**

This thesis explores the multiple objects, moments and sites of 'alternative' food. The objectives of this thesis, as outlined in the sections above, are:

- to question the assumption of a capitalist/alternative dichotomy in food economies, and whether that binary exists; and if it does not,
- to explore the blurred edges/grey areas to reveal what they look like;
- to adapt Gibson-Graham's (2008) diverse economies framework (DEF) to reflect what actually existing practices take place at those edges;
- to identify a more appropriate nomenclature for what has been normalised as "alternative" in food scholarship;
- to highlight and liberate the transformative potential of affect; and,
- to fashion a food politics that might be embraced by actors on the ground who straddle multiple, diverse food economies in their routine practices.

To realise these objectives, I document and theorise these spaces and the affect generated within them. I work with conceptual tools to understand how alternative foodworlds can be (re)thought of

as sites of diversity, and what else that might generate. I use actually existing examples to understand what we can make of these food encounters, and understand their potential for enacting the food system as something different. The multiple empirical examples in this thesis and their varied theorisations deal with the fundamental question: ‘What political work do “alternative” food initiatives do?’.

## **1.8 Overview of This Thesis**

### **1.8.1 Situating the Project**

Before embarking on this project I performed a food politics without thinking overly hard about it. This journey into affective worlds of food challenged and opened up new possibilities of how one might know and do food differently. Part of the initial intention of this research was to explore embodied aspects of alternative food initiatives, on the premise that understandings of the world are shaped by lived experiences. My thesis therefore charts the pathways of my own lived experience as a changing and learning PhD student, learning my field and experimenting with concepts that relate to the politics of alternative food as my own understanding of theory and methods changed over time.

This thesis is intended to be read as a critique of some inherent problems in agri-food research in Aotearoa NZ and further afield, that relate to the politics of alternative food work. Interrogating these politics involves exploring the politicising history of food research, the politics of how different people construct knowledge around food and food systems, and exploring the transformative work that AFIs do for potential and actual social change, so that our practices of food might allow us and others to live well (and as this theme emerged in my work, more *carefully*) in the world. I sought to answer questions about how understandings of say, raw milk, or, kale, might be shaped by our embodied and lived experiences of them using an assemblage of different tools and concepts<sup>11</sup> to do this. And I looked to explore what this all means for a politics of food, and my own journey as an emerging food researcher.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Contributions**

I will start with a note on the structure of this thesis, before providing an account of each chapter’s content and how each contributes to the overall project, as relevant to the thesis question ‘what political work do AFIs do?’. The concluding chapter offers insights into the ways that the key

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<sup>11</sup> While I don’t subscribe to a theoretical home (my work is experimental in this thesis, and works with many different theoretical concepts to get at food politics) this dissertation is embedded in, and constitutes a project in food scholarship.

concepts that emerge throughout this research journey might connect to the empirical chapters' findings.

As described in Section 1.8.1: 'Situating the Project', as well as producing a framework for carrying out and documenting a PhD study, the following chapters register my thesis journey, and my enquiry into the political work of AFIs. This dissertation is constructed of a series of papers that document a number of different opportunities and turns in my journey as a researcher. Chapters 3 to 7 therefore carry their own conclusions and independent methods, theoretical development and discussion. This Introduction (Chapter 1) presents background to the various theoretical concepts employed in this thesis, including outlining the challenges of researching AFIs.

Chapter 2 provides a methodological framework for this dissertation which discusses the value of methodological diversity as a reflection of ontological orientation, proposing a model of *diverse methods* as an acknowledgement of the plural, different theoretically informed methodological approaches to doing this type of alternative food research. This chapter outlines the qualitative methods presented in the earliest of the empirical chapters that, whilst a departure from a purely positivist approach to food studies<sup>12</sup> (see Holloway *et al* 2007) have a more structural emphasis in the initial data-gathering phase that helps to "find the field". This chapter describes the methodological trajectory that changes over the course of this dissertation, moving to more post-structuralist, non-representational and experimental forms, inspired by the method of 'following' (Cook *et al*<sup>13</sup> 2004), and culminating in a novel methodological intervention that offers a way to access what is framed, noticed and sensed in the field. Five analytic chapters follow Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 accounts for my positionality and how this factors into my research design, approach, subjectivity and research journey. I explore my positionality and practise my own care work in the field, which has relevance to my reading of foodscapes, as well as identifying how care is variously practiced. Care is thought through the empirics of this chapter and then emerges as a central and repeating motif in this dissertation. Chapter 3 has, for the most part, been assembled from my book chapter: Fieldwork of Care in the Field of Foodwork: Pregnancy and Food in Participatory Ethnography.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter 4 marks a departure from using an economic lens, and a framing of AFIs as defined by a singular (non-capitalist) politics to research AFIs, instead asking what we might gain from interrogating lived experiences of food. It disrupts the methodological norm by using a framework

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<sup>12</sup> in a move to read food production-consumption relationships in more appropriately complex and relational ways

<sup>13</sup> as quoted from his University of Exeter profile page: 'Here, there and everywhere, Ian writes as 'Ian Cook *et al*' to acknowledge the collaborative nature of all of his work.' [http://geography.exeter.ac.uk/staff/index.php?web\\_id=Ian\\_Cook](http://geography.exeter.ac.uk/staff/index.php?web_id=Ian_Cook)

<sup>14</sup> under review for the book *Mothers/Mothering: Space and Place*, Ontario: Demeter Press.

that retains AFI diversity to create a novel typology of AFIs by diverse and embodied *practice*. It points to the political potential for AFIs to “do” food otherwise and make different worlds through a different form of knowledge production. The work done in Chapter 4 identifies gaps in international and Aotearoa NZ food research and offers an entry point to this doctoral research, as the first comprehensive study of AFIs in Auckland. This chapter also helped me define my field of Auckland’s AFIs, and identify the sampling techniques employed. From the 23 survey returns, “practices” were extracted out of the qualitative data. These practices were then plotted in a heuristic typology of practice. Categories for these practices emerged for the typology, of *producing*, *procuring* and *facilitating access*. This chapter has largely been assembled from the research article: *Alternative Framings of Alternative Food: A Typology of Practice*.<sup>15</sup>

Chapter 5 is the first of three chapters that, through ethnographic methods, ‘follows’ specific case studies. This chapter asks what we might make of AFIs — specifically farmers’ markets, dumpster divers, guerrilla planters, and raw milk collectives — when they perform acts of transgression, acting in an economic, regulatory, and/or social norms ‘grey area’ between conventional and alternative practice, to tangibly alter food systems as we know them. This chapter in most part is derived from an article co-written with a community food activist, based on our joint experiences in Auckland’s “alternative” foodworlds: *Food Fights: Irritating for Social Change Among Auckland’s Alternative Food Initiatives*.<sup>16</sup>

Chapter 6 considers how relational accounts of alternative and conventional foods, “food bodies” and affect might destabilise an agri-food studies field that has been dominated by structuralist accounts of the political economy of food supply. I therefore use an assemblage framework to examine the Crowd Grown Feast, an AFI that engaged 100 participants in a collective food procuring and eating event in Auckland’s city centre. This chapter is reproduced in most part from the research article: *(Re)assembling Foodscapes with the Crowd Grown Feast*.<sup>17</sup>

Chapter 7 expands the methodological (and therefore ontological) frame to ask what a relational method that prioritises embodied, lived, and sensed readings of food might offer our understandings of food politics. Through this final empirical case study in this dissertation I think through the affective realities that are materialised when I ethnographically and auto-ethnographically ‘more-than-follow’ an “alternative” commodity: foodbox kale. The AFI and kale’s food relations and their potential for affect are explored through my theorisation of attunement: an assemblage of what is framed, noticed and sensed in the world as a way of learning to be affected, as contingent on a

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<sup>15</sup> published in 2015, in *New Zealand Geographer* 71(1): 6-17.

<sup>16</sup> published in 2016, in *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*.

<sup>17</sup> published in 2017, in *Area* doi:10.1111/area.12376

series of subjective foldings of the self (Deleuze 1998; 2006). This different reading of food, through methodology and ontology, offers a different production, or enactment of foodworlds. This chapter is reproduced in most part from the journal article: Care-full Kale: Affective Foldings and Embodied Politics of an Alternative Food Supply Chain<sup>18</sup>.

In Chapter 8, the concluding discussion, I consider how this research advances an understanding of the possibilities of seeing and enacting different foodworlds. It synthesises my analyses of economic framings and what actually exists at the edges of these common categories. It discusses my different representations of food economies, the way that case studies in this dissertation help us to understand how affect is materialised in foodworlds, and how these multiple empirical studies converge to construct foodworlds of affect. I make some suggestions here for how affective practice has value for transforming what we know as a foodworld into something different and new, with a different performance of food politics, which is committed to an ethic of care. Chapter 8 integrates the key concepts of enacting difference, affect and care, as theorised and embodied in the empirics, into the interpretations of each chapter's contributions, and addresses the question "what political work do alternative food initiatives do?" in light of the findings.

This dissertation therefore takes the reader through different forms of knowing, thinking, doing, enacting and transforming that change that way that food and its relations are, and come to be.

### **1.8.3 Modifications from Publications**

Changes I have made from original published articles include editing for consistency throughout this thesis for ease of reading and cohesion of the document. For this reason, I describe above that 'for the most part', chapters have been assembled from the text of particular articles that I have had published, or that are under review. Modifications from the original publications include synchronising the referencing used, sequencing table and figure numbers, changing the naming of 'New Zealand (NZ)' to 'Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa NZ)' to more clearly align with the feminist imperatives of this work, amending punctuation, matching word form (compound modifiers like "post-structural"), changing some chapter titles from their original article names for a better fit, and adding representative quotes and helpful footnotes. In accordance with University of Auckland guidance on including publications in a thesis, in some cases I do not include a publication in its entirety, and have exercised allowances to enhance or update a publication prior to inclusion in the thesis.

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<sup>18</sup> under review with *Journal of Rural Studies*.

## **1.9 “Alternative” Food Matters**

The agri-food literature points to a diversity of experiments in food economy through which food politics might be performed, which it has tended to label “‘alternative’ food initiatives’. This nomenclature emphasises their alterity rather than identifying, naming and celebrating their diversity and difference, which in turn entrenches what is conventional as the norm, and frames all of these food experiments as antagonistic to capitalist modes of food provisioning. By contrast, in this thesis I look for a less pre-defined space of disruption and opposition in which scholars and activists might situate a ‘thinking of possibility’. I aim to disrupt the limits imposed by capitalocentric binaries on imaginations of the possible by looking differently at ‘alternatives’ to see what difference can be found within what is actually existing. I examine the grey spaces where capitalist and non-capitalist experiments might overlap and attempt to decentre economy in giving accounts of experimental food landscapes. In doing so I journey to places where food actors in various forms claim modes of agency that eschew or directly challenge the logics of capitalism and the restricted understandings and practices of economy produced in their name by advocates and critics alike. I seek out and find experiments that are enacting difference through affect and care, which demonstrate that there are quite different forces at work to what are commonly presented. These spaces and practices presented in the chapters that follow render the uncaring aspects of food production, consumption and other relations, ‘out of tune’ (Carolan 2011) to bodies that encounter them. This thesis proposes that embodied, affective practices of ‘attuning’ to diverse food practices might be achieved through processes of framing, noticing and sensing food in particular ‘caring’ ways that draw on and begin to rework our own subjectivities. Through these themes, this thesis pursues new ways to enact diverse food experiments by exploring the political work that ‘AFIs’ do and how they are already and everywhere forging more multiply care-full, caring foodworlds.

## Chapter 2 | SITUATED METHODOLOGY: BECOMING ATTUNED TO A POLITICS OF AFFECT

*To listen to and tell a rush of stories is a method*

Anna Tsing (2015b:37) *The Mushroom at the End of the World*

### 2.1 Introduction: Engaging in Multiple Sites of Food Relations

My research involved a series of extended engagements with growers, provisioners and eaters of food in different foodworlds. These included participatory research at: two organic farms in Pukekohe and Warkworth (a vegetable grower and a free-range chicken farmer, respectively); six weekends on the packing line for a local foodbox initiative; working with an urban gardening group over six months to organise their Crowd Grown Feast initiative; four weekends assisting a community farmers' market; collecting and distributing fish parts around South Auckland; accompanying dumpster divers into the field; and spending mornings at a local community garden. While not all of this fieldwork has made its way into the dissertation as case material in one or more of its chapters, it has certainly all informed my thinking. These multiple, different engagements constitute the fieldwork for the series of papers that make up this dissertation. They posed and raised different questions in different settings, and demanded different methods of engagement. In this dissertation I consider what is generated by bringing them together.

This fieldwork is ongoing, multi-method, multi-sited and performative. In the broadest sense, it is both ethnographic (a form of 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995)) and activist. It aims not only to pull back 'the veil of the commodity fetish' (Harvey 1990) in food geography, but to enact new, caring and affective de-commodified foodworlds. At its core lies a methodological pluralism (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). This pluralism is partly additive and partly opportunistic, but it also defines an approach framed by ethnographic and post-structuralist commitments to developing concepts, methods and analytic categories from the field (Das *et al* 2014; Hoholm and Araujo 2011; Hine 2007; Hage 2005); an approach that has been described as quintessentially geographic and 'methodology as ontology' (Le Heron and Lewis 2011; Le Heron E *et al* 2016).

## **2.2 Methodology as Ontology: Concept-making in the Field**

Developing situated approaches to derive situated knowledges from the field might be understood in the best sense of the aphorism: creating geographies from doing geography (see Le Heron and Lewis 2011). It acknowledges the enaction of social realities as simultaneous exercises in knowledge co-production, co-learning and the construction of politics through doing. More simply put, this approach allowed me to theorise ‘weakly away from’ the field, as Gibson-Graham might describe such work, and to work reflexively and enactively with my research participants. Knowledge making from this “field” is defined in part by a creative messiness that is difficult to describe or formalise as method in a traditional, positivist sense, and instead presents as ‘ethereal’ (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2013:81) or ‘fuzzy’ (Law and Urry 2004:392). It is also defined by a sensitivity to post-structuralist thinking, and to what Saskia Sassen has recently called ‘before method’ or the diverse and situated analytic tactics that allow for bringing social realities into knowledge frames and in turn into existence (Sassen 2013a; 2013b).

In working to develop situated methodologies in different sites, and in making sense of how they relate to each other, I have drawn on four post-structuralist influences, each of which is developed in the sections below. The first is the idea of enactive research (Law and Urry 2004; Carolan 2015; Lewis *et al* 2016), which I interpret as co-producing knowledge that enacts different futures in the act of making knowledge. The second is the notion of the ‘object multiple’, so elegantly laid bare by Annemarie Mol’s *The Body Multiple* (Mol 2002). The third is the idea of the social life of things (Appadurai 1986; Latour 2005), and Ian Cook (*et al*’s) translation of it into a methodology of ‘following’ the object. And fourth, my approach draws heavily on the work, broadly writ, of Gibson-Graham (2006; 2008), which highlight’s the political potential of affect, an ethics of care, weak theorisation, and immersed forms of participatory research in the diverse lived experience of difference that is already present and everywhere. These influences are interwoven through the remainder of this chapter.

Much of the identification, observation, recording and representation of different foodworlds in my work is about affect, and my own learning to be affected and affective in relation to the economies and subjects that I encounter. Practical approaches to the study and mobilisation of affect begin by recognising the situated nature of knowledge and action, and the multiple ontological manifestations or *folds* of subjects and their subjectivities (Deleuze 1988; 2006). The world is brought into existence through knowledge and practice, so studying it with a will to make better worlds demands a certain wildness (Carolan 2013c) and methodological openness. I worked to be affective in the wilds of the multiple food experiments that I still engage with now. This sustained,

enactive, multi-sited research has allowed me to engage in making new foodworlds by observing as a researcher and working with participants to build affective political potential. The research that informs my thesis, and the thesis itself, are very much about the performative dimensions of these field engagements.

My own learning through the process has led to ongoing personal practices. These include growing food in my domestic garden, redirecting kitchen waste to our worm farms and compost heap, patronising a food box initiative, dumpster diving, attending farmers' markets and subscribing to Free Fish Heads<sup>19</sup> as a potential recipient. In this way, as I have changed through knowing food differently, I have actively cultivated my own new foodworlds.

### **2.3 Positionality, Subjectivity and Situating Self in Methodology**

The multitude of constructors and constructions of food knowledge reveals food as ontologically complex. There are a diversity of grower, procurer and eater practices, each of which brings different worlds into being. How, then, might one come to know these worlds ethnographically? In this thesis I begin with the observation that positionality and subjectivity are always pivotal axes of the researcher-participant relationship, and that the co-production of knowledge and space is inevitable, including its potential antagonisms (see Dombroski 2011; Rose 1997). Epistemological reflexivity is necessary both to interrogate power, ethical and representational relations of researchers and their ethnographic subjects, and to moderate representations that are otherwise marginal. In that vein:

*[c]onsider the kindly ethnographer, the friendly ethnographer, the honest ethnographer, the precise ethnographer, the observant ethnographer, the unobtrusive ethnographer, the candid ethnographer, the chaste ethnographer, the fair ethnographer, the literary ethnographer. These are not the only images that one could examine, but in each case they are common images to which ethical and competent field researchers wish to hold.*

Gary Fine (1993:269) *Ten Lies of Ethnography*

These images point to the inevitable performance of a multiplicity of ethnographies, even by the same researcher in the same field. One individual might comprise a number of these attributes as an ethnographer, and generate different understandings and co-produce different knowledge as a result of just *being* in the field. In her examination of 'the object multiple', Annemarie Mol (2002) tells us that there are multiple subjectivities and diverse interests in any (researching) body, and that any

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<sup>19</sup> an initiative to 'reduce [fishing] waste and conserve fish' (Free Fish Heads 2017).

body can be mobilised as any time. As a geographer, mother, procurer, provider, grower and eater I might mobilise any number of these subjectivities in a food encounter, demonstrating that food relations are complex and that there are multiple ways that we can perform them. Recognising positionality and instability is essential in ethnographic and auto-ethnographic work, as is an ongoing reflexive engagement with it.

My own fieldwork with practitioners of alternative food initiatives around urban and rural Auckland was always participatory, yet was always conducted in different and shifting participatory frames. On the one hand I changed, in some ways fundamentally, as a biological actor as well as a researcher (see Chapter 3). On the other hand, others changed around me and in relation to me, often in ways that I could not see or understand as a researcher. As Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989:310) outlines in her prolifically cited dissection of teaching empowerment, although the teacher (or researcher, in my case) has ‘much to learn from students’ [or subjects’] experiences ... there are things that ... a professor [or researcher] could never know about the experiences, oppressions, and understandings of ... participants’. This is, of course, also the case in other knowledge relations. In my research, my relations with those with whom I worked changed as I learned to be affected, and as my learning affected those whom I encountered, even before allowing for the changes wrought by the shifting material relations and politics of the food economies we explored together.

In short, there can be no central point of authority or knowledge. An authentic voice is at the core of each participant experience, including my own. Like others who have placed themselves into motion with enactive intent, I use ‘myself as a means of gathering evidence in a particular place’ (Einagel 2002:223). Indeed, Longhurst *et al* (2008:208) argue that ‘the body is a primary tool through which all interactions and emotions filter in accessing research subjects and their geographies’, and, I would add, oneself. It is at this juncture, effectively following one’s self through embodied material and emotional journeys, that ethnography becomes auto-ethnography.

## **2.4 From Participatory Action to Enactive Research**

*... it can be a bit unnerving for scholars to learn that knowledge exchange does not start only after research stops. Doing research presupposes doing knowledge exchange. To acknowledge this is to acknowledge our active involvement in the altering of networks we claim to be innocently studying.*

Michael Carolan (2016b:13)

*The Very Public Nature of Agrifood Scholarship, and its Problems and Possibilities*

There have been multiple efforts in the food politics arena to capture both academic framing and practitioner-activist perspectives (e.g. Block *et al* 2012; Dollahite *et al* 2005; Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002; Gottlieb and Fisher 1996). Many of these have used participatory action research (PAR) approaches that prioritise the ‘why’ and the ‘for whom’ of doing research. PAR approaches have disrupted commitments to objective research in geography. Rather than the pursuit of objective truth *per se*, such approaches have prioritised social transformation, solidarity, a challenging of power relations, a building of emotional connection, prefigurative action, and making spaces for action (Chatterton *et al* 2007).

This suite of concerns encourages researchers to work in close collaboration with research subjects as co-participants in a unifying cause. PAR has been described as adopting a ‘pluralistic orientation to knowledge making and social change’, involving a mix of positivist and/or post-positivist approaches (Chambers 2008:297). Researchers have focused attention on action that might realise objectives associated with social and environmental justice.

In practice, historically PAR has been criticised for prioritising pre-determined objectives associated with known politics, institutional practice or policy improvements (Chatterton *et al* 2010). Critics have argued for a more activist disposition that emphasises the ‘act’ in activist research as a tool to *develop practice* for social change (Chatterton *et al* 2007) and to destabilise all manner of prior framings in the politics that are advanced (Wynne-Jones *et al* 2015). More recently, social movements have been conveyed in less structured terms, as ‘ambiguous, hybrid, heterogeneous, emotive, chaotic, de-centred or self-organising both within the discipline of geography ... and outside’ (see Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010:271 for a review of this literature). The turn to enactive research approaches also addresses these limitations (see Carolan 2015; Lewis *et al* 2016; FitzHerbert 2016) by prioritising the performative.

Enactive research approaches begin from a political project of knowledge production that emphasises the political potential of performative over representational knowledge (see, for example, Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; FitzHerbert 2016). They recognise that all knowledge and knowledge making, and therefore political projects, are situated, performative and political. They embrace a situated, embodied, affective and enactive politics of knowledge production that licences, even mandates, more open, experimental, practice-centred, co-productionist and activist methodologies. A focus on the “act”, and developing (that) practice as a material, political and intentional undertaking, offers several ways forward toward more compelling and performative forms of knowledge.

First, enactive research embraces a notion of sense-making that highlights ‘the capacity of all living systems to enact a meaningful world from a point of view’ (Colombetti 2014:15), which stresses both the subjectivity and the context-specific nature of the worldview. Second, enactive research de-centres the researcher as expert in sense-making. Rather, it situates them amongst others (practitioners and research participants) as co-producers of knowledge (Law and Urry 2004). It allows marginalised voices to be heard, but as credible and authorised voices rather than just cries from the margins. Co-learning and co-participation have space to take place. Third, it validates what might be seen as small-scale, individual-level practice. In some social movement circles, the only recognition of activism is ‘demonstrat[ing] relentless dedication, and contribut[ing] a sustained effort’ towards a cause, which can put ‘change-making’ out of reach for many (Bobel 2007:147). Enacting co-produced knowledge in place means that collective action for change does not necessarily depend on a specific articulation between personal and collective efforts, but instead recognises a more nuanced and complex notion of ‘the collective’ in a social movement context (Bobel 2007). Fourth, enactive research is in all of these performances of knowledge making and enactment both effective and affective. It generates actual change through practice, and offers affective potential where participants can notice and sense the objects of study.

Finally, enactive research draws from accepted and valued traditions of activist research, notably the pluralistic orientation to knowledge-making and social change of PAR; and the political orientation of activist-led research, which has the potential to develop practice as well as change policy. The priorities of PAR described by Chatterton earlier in this section, are all important commitments that are applied to enactive research practices that can collect many types of “data”. A holistic view of research methodology does not jettison the possibilities of different practices working together, making this a powerful methodological approach applicable to many stakeholders.

In their situatedness and subjectivity, enactive practices are both partial and non-innocent constructions of the world. They are not designed to represent reality or universalise explanation. In using such methods, my research cannot make universal claims, and I must also be wary of overpromising. There is no easy politics of enacting change from this type of activist ethnography, and no simple translation from knowing to doing or knowing/doing to change in the world beyond the particular knowledge made or action taken. There is, however, co-producing knowledge with research participants, in some cases through collective storytelling (see Chapter 5). There is also the learning to be gained from embodied practices of food making, provisioning and eating. There is always the possibility of learning to be affected, affective learning and the reproduction of practice, and of attunement to the projects of others.

## **2.5 Enactive Ethnography**

My fieldwork, then, has been ethnographic and activist, or guided by an activist concern with engaged practice (Kazemzadeh 2013). Ethnography makes sense of subjectivity, social formation and transformation by studying everyday mundane practices through more or less immersed forms of observation. It relies on participation and an embodied experience in the field that enables researchers to understand and document the diverse practices that constitute everyday life (Herbert 2000). It differs from surveys and interviews because it ‘examines what people *do* as well as what they *say*’ (Herbert 2000:552), and allows the researcher to observe this action and its effects/affect. It is a learning through difference, rather than a seeking out of similarity (McFarlane and Robinson 2012:766).

Ethnography is perhaps best understood as a method of assemblage: a set of instruments to collect multi-sensory and multi-faceted information; a research and ethics approach; and, as reflected in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, both a way to observe and see, and a style of reflection and writing. It aims to understand worlds as they are understood by those who occupy and make them, thus treating participants as ‘knowledgeable, situated agents from whom researchers can learn a great deal about how the world is lived’ (Cloke *et al* 2004:169).

By some readings (and with the obvious exception of colonial influence in anthropological work) the ethnographer has traditionally sat outside the politics of making those worlds, a disengaged anthropologist who is both stranger and friend. Modern trans-disciplinary ethnographic practice, however, has evolved to accommodate the engaged and political researcher. Herbert (2000:551), for example, argues that ‘ethnography explores the tissue of everyday life to reveal the processes and meanings which undergird social action, and which enable order to be reproduced and sometimes challenged’. In my fieldwork I take up this license to practise an enactive ethnography, which engages a performative politics of situated knowledge-making. In this sense, my ethnography is ‘activist’, triangulating scholarship, activism and practitioners’ encounters (essentialised in Kinpaisby 2008).

My research approach has been open, opportunistic and rigorous. I undertook multi-sited ethnographic work, journeying with objects/subjects and taking up any opportunity to collect diverse ‘data’. I put my body into motion to enact my ethics. Of course this approach comes with a range of risks — for example, to myself, where efforts ‘to do good on participants’ terms, rather than academics’ (PyGyRG 2009 in Wynne-Jones *et al* 2015:218) might compromise my own personal politics or ethics. There is also a risk to participants where published material on covert or subversive practices are made (more) public, potentially attracting penalties. It also comes with ‘the

academic risk of “self absorbed digression” (Anderson 2006:385 – see observation in Sexton 2016), which can easily accompany auto-ethnographic work. I work through my encounters, making sure to couch them in geographic theories of food.

To deal with each of these risks, I take a feminist approach to methodology that emphasises an ethic of care and a disposition of openness with all of its attendant intellectual and political commitments to anti-mastery. Social reality is not there to be grasped, captured, and beaten into prior categories that seek either to reproduce or transform the world in the image and political chains of other prior categories.

### **2.5.1 Creating a Field**

To understand more fully the discourses of the key human actors (coordinators, participants and/or patrons) of AFIs, I mailed out a short questionnaire (see Appendix III) to coordinators of 100 food initiatives that at first glance appeared to fit my initial definition of AFI, in Auckland. This involved two purposive categorisations (the AFI and the AFI representative), where there had been previously no categories. I was already constructing a field, making knowledge (we now had a database of Auckland’s AFIs), and bringing into being the AFI, both by inclusion and exclusion.

A covering letter (Appendix I) accompanied by a participant consent form (Appendix II) informed the initiative founder/coordinator that I was looking to engage with initiatives that ‘sit outside of conventional methods of food production and distribution (such as through supermarkets)’. The questionnaires requested either/or numerical information as well as open-ended answers to a number of general questions, mainly to help me define the initiatives further in some way, and to delimit the scope of groups/individuals that I might study. The responses were richly informative about the nature and practices of AFIs (see Chapter 4), and became important instruments in framing the relations I later developed with those who acted within them. Among other things, the questionnaires validated their practices and existence, as well as my research. Actors such as supermarkets, which were originally excluded from the survey, became very much part of the assemblage of ‘alternative’ food relations and the foodworlds of AFIs in latter parts of my dissertation; revealed through participants’ knowledge of their practices and the various discourses and practices of othering.

Phase Two of the research then involved purposively selecting and requesting involvement (Appendix IV and Appendix V) from respondents who were to be interviewed (see semi-structured interview schedule at Appendix VI) and ‘followed’ (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). The selected set of

empirical examples outlines contributions to the field of food scholarship by way of practice and lived experience. Embodiments, created through particular associations, foster particular knowledges, tastes and feelings about food. These understandings create an ‘out of tuneness’ with Global Food’s (Carolan 2011) conventions, creating space for attunements learned through deliberate noticing, framing (through subjective foldings) and using the body as an instrument to sense food differently. One thread that the cases — the raw milk collectives, dumpster divers, guerrilla planters, farmers’ markets, collective growing and eating experiments and foodboxes — in the empirical chapters share, is that they all offer “alternative” practice, rather than that which is oppositional to the conventional system (see Allen *et al* 2003) by introducing competencies, knowledges and sentiments that make problematic the artefacts, practices and visceral experiences of Global Food (Carolan 2011). These spaces and enactions, quite literally, enact new foodworlds by helping to make Global Food out of tune to bodies that come into repeated contact with them.

Practically and methodologically, these cases were chosen for their accessibility. As my research was being conducted in tandem with pregnancy, I chose not to follow AFIs that involved potential contact with lambing (i.e. a small, organic, and heritage-breed pastoral project), or the free range, organic egg farm (the intense ammonia smell inside the roost box barn was nauseating, perhaps even to a non-pregnant nose). I also chose not to follow multiple projects that illustrated similar types of relations, such as the numerous Auckland farmers’ markets. I followed just one, which through its strong committee structure, was able to clearly articulate its position on community, environment and (what was developing as a main theme in my doctoral thesis), a sense of care. Overall, I looked for a diversity of different practices, of different AFIs.

The ability for me to follow/trace food actors in a ‘more-than-following’ approach was important. However, while some actors and relations have been made visible, this thesis also only reveals the relations that were able to be made visible by my partial and situated accounts. Some human actors chose not to make themselves visible (declined the invitation of an initial interview/survey) and other remained invisible by the nature of ethical practices in fieldwork (for example, not interviewing disenfranchised homeless food actors who were gifted some of the dumpster dived food — not only had I not undertaken aspects of the research ethics process to enable me to do so as this was an unexpected aspect of the research, but I felt uncomfortable with the ethics of the situation when I encountered it, based on the clear power relations involved).

## **2.5.2 Following a Thing**

In what has become a significant disciplinary intervention, Ian Cook *et al* (2004) picked up on George Marcus's (1995) notion of multi-sited ethnography, and initiated a stream of food and wider economic geographies focused on *following the thing*. He broke geography's methodological-narrative mould by following the papaya supply chain as a series of multi-sited ethnographic vignettes. Supply chains were shown to be deep relationalities of economy, value and values, context and practices. About 'following' food assemblages, he later stated:

*[It] is much more difficult than it sounds ... a good following story has a clear focus ... like a chicken. That never goes out of sight. But anything and everything that's in and around it (throughout its conception, birth, life, death and travels) could become part of that story ... So many things that aren't supposed to go together in theory come together in practice.*

Ian Cook *et al* (2006:657) *Follow the Thing: Papaya*.

I followed different food objects and economic practices in their different contexts. However, I returned more to the multi-sited ethnographic tradition of Marcus and Appadurai, and departed from the way that Cook *et al* and others have used the approach in geography. I placed myself into the different experiments in different ways, and followed the encounters with food that followed. In doing so, I got my hands dirty through practice, and engaged with multiple actors in the making of the food economies: working at a farmers' market, diving into supermarket dumpsters to retrieve food, volunteering at and growing tomatoes for the Crowd Grown Feast, planting and harvesting kale, and packing foodboxes. To the extent that I followed physical or economic relations of food, I also traced chains of embodiment and affect attached to human and more-than-human actors in a 'more-than-following' of 'more-than-food' (Goodman 2016b, and employed most clearly in Chapter 7). This ethnographic approach enabled me to engage reflexively with these relations, be present in the field, sense and think about how I enact food into being.

## **2.6 Representing Knowledge**

*We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are.*

Anais Nin (1961: 124) *Seduction of the Minotaur*

Analysing and representing the work of the ethnographic self involves somehow representing observations that may be felt or sensed, rather than seen. Established academic practices of textual representation and the norms of evidence make this a challenge. There is a prevalent belief in

academia that ‘data are not properly “sociology” until they are published. If unpublished, knowledge perishes’ (Fine 1993:270). This corresponds with the norms of evidence and validation in academic research — it must be published, and subjected to certain tests of the data gathering and analysis involved, all of which are more clear-cut when the methodologies are positivist.

The definition of “knowledge” that underpins this belief is rather narrow, however. It ignores knowledge that is performed through practice, and is replicated (with or without textual representation) in the teachings and learnings of that practice. This knowledge is uncontained and not represented formally or textually, but it does not perish. Rather, it flourishes and proliferates through many hands and many bodies. Its output might be affect and/or care (see Chapter 3) or other capacities of the body. We might not just see things as *we are*, as Nin (1991) suggests, but as *we/they might become*. That is the point of enactive research.

Nonetheless, these feelings or senses can be translated with some difficulty, through rich descriptive narrative accounts, mapping of process, tabling of pedagogical heuristics, and appropriately rich description of the feelings of doing. Indeed, ‘research about the senses must also be *for* the senses and avoid the dullness of overly formal, overly analytic, and overly anonymous scholarship’ (Carolan 2011:21). It is in this sense that auto-ethnography takes on added significance as an analytical and representational endeavour, as well as a tool of observation. It can become a transposing of information metabolised through ethnography. As such, knowledge becomes vital, and circulates much more widely and in more politically affective and effective ways, but only if the research is framed in this way.

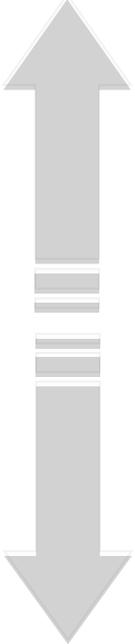
Storytelling is one way of representing enactive research. Indeed, as Anna Tsing provokes us to recognise, ‘to listen to and tell a rush of stories is a method’ (2015b:37). Understanding how food is practised, experienced and lived cannot be reduced to theorisable, rational and recordable agency and objective. Rather, these things are relational, as is any process of coming to understand them. They are split across multiple, sometimes contradictory, social positionings and political projects. Cook *et al*’s following of the papaya (2004) drew attention to ‘more-than’ methods, just as Sassen (2013a; 2013b) now points to ‘before method’, and FitzHerbert (2016) talks of ‘projectless’ research. This destabilisation of established methodologies in geography invites diverse audiences to take part in the process of knowledge production through their own reflexive sense-making (Heyman 2000). As Ellsworth (1989) explains of her research on finding the multiple voices of multiple injustices, social interactions (in the form of ‘potlucks, field trips, participation in rallies and other gatherings’) provide opportunities to ‘know the motivations, histories, and stakes of individuals’ (p316).

Michael Goodman (2016a; 2016b) has recently called for more creative ethnographic methods for producing knowledge of and about food — for approaches that take seriously the challenges laid down by Cook *et al*, Tsing, Nin, Sassen, Ellsworth and others. In my own enactive ethnography, I deal with the dilemma of representation by engaging in ‘research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) [my] personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)’ (Ellis *et al* 2011:273). That is, by making myself a research object (and a body multiple) I can, through critical reflexivity, as far as I am able and willing, do and write myself as a method and a practice of representation. In so doing I bring together post-structural, feminist methods of making visceral geographies (linking food materialities, ideologies, and affective relations with objects and place), with ‘following’ the thing. The aim is to highlight the sensory nature of foods’ being and becoming, as well as the temporal and spatial contexts that enact the thing. The storytelling here is a translation of these interactions, which transpose the many relations of food initiatives, networks and movements into words.

## **2.7 A ‘Diverse Methods Framework’: Weak Theorising, Attunement and a Politics of Affect**

Finally, in attempting to capture what I did in the field, how I thought it through beforehand, and how I now reflect back upon it, I draw from Gibson-Graham’s (2008) de/re-construction of economy through Eve Sedgwick’s (1997; 2003) lens of weak theory. I lay out the multiple methods that I used in this thesis positioned according to how I see them aligning with a feminist post-structural politics, as a Diverse Methods Framework (DMF) (Figure 2.1). The diversity that the approaches present can extend beyond economy, and can helpfully reveal different and less-visible methods that geographers (or sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, on-the-ground practitioners for that matter) perform.

Buckley and Strauss (2016) maintain that experimental, situated methodological toolkits can de-centre naturalised binary logics, to confront their actually existing relations and the oppressions they normalise. In this sense I am not only advocating multiple methods in research just for the diversity of data that it affords us. Rather, my assertion is that methodology is political, in that it has a role in achieving and exercising a system of governance over the way that things are done (including how they are researched, observed and communicated), and so is able to critically destabilise normalised thinking and behaviour. Without a doubt, these politics change our enaction of truth.

| Methodology  |  | Epistemological commitments        | Function  | Method                                | Data collected                            |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
|  | Structural                                 | Objective (Ch. 1)                  |   |                                       | Secondary data (Ch. 4, 6)                 |
|  |  | Rational (Ch. 1)                   |   | Survey (Ch. 4)                        | Numerics (Ch. 4)                          |
|  |  | To find universals (Ch. 1)         | Predictable (Ch. 4)                             | Questionnaire (Ch. 4)                 | Drawings/maps (Ch. 5)                     |
|  | Positivist (Ch. 4)                         | Diverse (Ch. 4, 5, 6, 7)           | Measureable/countable (Ch. 4)                   | Discourse analysis (Ch. 5)            | Third party discourse (Ch. 5)             |
|  | Constructivist (Ch. 4)                     | Situated/positioned (Ch. 3, 7)     | Action/activism (Ch. 6)                         | Fieldnotes (Ch. 5, 6, 7)              | Documented personal experience (Ch. 6, 7) |
|  | Political economy (Ch. 4)                  | Unexpected (Ch. 5, 6)              | Participatory action research (Ch. 7)           | Unstructured interview (Ch. 5)        | Storytelling (Ch. 5, 6, 7)                |
|  | Assemblage (Ch. 7)                         | To find difference (Ch. 7)         | Collective increases capacity (Ch.7)            | Photography (Ch. 6)                   | Visual (Ch. 7)                            |
|  | Feminist political economy (Ch. 5)         | Acknowledged subjective (Ch. 3, 7) | Knowledge production of self and subject (Ch.8) | Ethnography (Ch. 6)                   | Audible (Ch. 7)                           |
|  | Academic activism/practivism (Ch. 5, 6, 7) | Performed (Ch. 7)                  | Enactive (Ch.8)                                 | Following (Ch. 6)                     | Olfactory (Ch. 7)                         |
|  |  | Reflexive (Ch. 6, 7)               |   | More-than-following (Ch. 7)           | Taste (Ch. 6, 7)                          |
|  | Sensory (Ch. 6, 7)                         |                                    | Auto-ethnography (Ch. 7)                        | Viscerality/emotions/feelings (Ch. 7) |   |
| Post-structural  |  |                                    | Enactive research (Ch. 7)                       | Changed self/place/object (Ch. 3, 7)  |   |

**Figure 2.1:** Diverse methods, annotated with (non-exhaustive) examples of where the method has been used/discussed, in this thesis. Inspired by Gibson-Graham’s (2008) diverse economies framework.

As we negotiate resistance to our multiple and varied political projects, we can *feel* practices (rooted in a domineering or exploitative or narrow view of the world), that are ruinous, or that close down possibilities. What prevents us from *doing* differently, and ‘...what pushes back against our political imaginary and [the] techniques of thinking we employ are quite different stances toward theorizing and the world that, for many, stand in the way of a politics of ... possibility’ (Gibson-Graham 2006:1). Beyond theorising, the way that this different knowledge is *performed* is a practice of a different politics.

This way of doing alternative food research requires reading *and acting* for difference rather than for dominance (Carolan 2013b; Gibson-Graham 2006). It requires learning to be affected by practices, sites and moments of justice and inclusion. It requires an attunement to the messiness in which their politics are materialised, and the ways in which they articulate with normative practice. It also notices the benign but irritant practices of activism or transgression that push out boundaries of what is or isn’t just or ethical. It requires hope for that which is not-yet-become (Anderson 2006), as well as presence in the present.

As I have outlined above some knowledges are not represented in a numeric, measurable, mappable or visible form. Guides on geographic methodology are ordinarily devoid of approaches to harnessing sensory “data”, for example. Feminist approaches to this task are more abundant, but rarely do bodily understandings of food converge with methodological frameworks. The quality turn in geography pivots around this point exactly. While not advocating empiricism, which argues that *all* knowledge is derived from experiences of the senses, value can be seen in under-represented disciplinary methods of building the world. Methods that are more receptive and sensitive to the affective moments, sites and objects that we interrogate are of interest here. These include methods that give space to that which is sensed and felt, and with which we might form an attunement, in enacting a certain truth. Ultimately, *the political* in diverse methods recognises that such research approaches, at least in principle, are appropriate given that pluralistic societies are made up of individuals holding reasonable but conflicting moral and ethical views. Spaces of difference can be performed into being; they are constituted through practice, and this makes it important to be present in these sites in order to study them appropriately (Conradson 2003).

The sets of practices that are arrayed in the DMF (Figure 2.1) that I present are integrated methods that work towards ‘un-boxing’ food scholarship so that ‘analyses of the nature, culture and political economy of food ... [can] take place on the same page’ (Freidberg 2003:6). By listing them is not to suggest that they are each discrete methods without overlap. The purpose of presenting them this way is to show them as diverse and unbounded as their textual representation can allow them. The

methods arranged towards the bottom of the framework, engaging post-structural theory, focus on identifying meanings that are context-specific, and embrace the unexpected, diverse, sensed, performative and reflexive.

This heuristic goes some way to representing the involved and congealed nature of the interdependent framings of methodology, epistemology, ontology, and the methods that make up my research journey. The idea of a DMF gives substance to, and infers a methodology for, a series of opportunistic data collection initiatives afforded through multiple exploratory studies. In the following sections, I develop a case for this framework by tracing through the specific methods and methodological questions that informed the different case studies in this thesis. The specific details are then described at the start of each empirically derived chapter.

A DMF is a move to bring marginalised, hidden and alternative methods to the fore, to make them more valid and accepted practices of investigation and activism. This is a performative project and an ontological politics that enacts diverse subjectivities in its making. I use these diverse methods for a number of different empirical examples to re-read for difference, to accept the unexpected and experimental, and to reorient food research towards an ethic of care in practice and broader political pursuits.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The different ‘method-making-knowledge-and-realities’ (Law and Urry 2004:405) adopted in this dissertation not only perform different points of view on one single “reality”, but also enact multiple overlapping realities in revealing multiple worlds. As Mol (2002) might reflect, what ontological ethics do we wish to proliferate in our own vision of a food future? Our food problem is a multiple object, and therefore there is no one answer or solution as to how we should enact a different ethical reality of our world, instead demanding an approach of methodological pluralism.

Methodology shapes methods and makes realities. As a result, by thinking about how research is done — how we reveal and perform things, and how we come to know the world — we can take care in our approach to knowledge production, and justify to ourselves why we use particular methods. Gibson-Graham ask: ‘How might academic practices contribute to the exciting proliferation of economic experiments occurring worldwide in the current moment?’ (2008:613). I begin by asking the same question, not just about experiments in food economies, but about research methods and the value of proliferating them as a project to make visible already present alternative research ethics and activism. This performative ontological work constructs a different kind of academic practice: it celebrates and invests in difference, and performs a different academic

subjectivity at the same time as rejecting the rational food economy subject. Conventional research practice and economic subjectivity are closely aligned in their conditioning to incorporate particular methods and truths that purport to be universal (or at least will become universalised) (Haraway 1988). Making knowledge otherwise, with other ethics and politics, is a critical step to making worlds otherwise (Law and Urry 2004).

The making of other knowledge to make other worlds has been observed in recent geographic turns. The turn to enactive scholarship marked by Carolan (2013a; 2013b) and Lewis and Rosin (2013) is one direction. So, too, is a commitment to diverse methods (see Baker and McGuirk 2016) and the turn to a greater use of ethnography in geography (Herbert 2000; Vannini 2015). At the core of this research is a disposition to experiment, to do differently and make new worlds, which animates my own feminist, enactive (auto-)ethnography in the chapters that follow. The diverse methods I adopt (Figure 2.1) are bound up in what food has become to me, my own becoming and the becoming of this thesis. As a pregnant (auto-)ethnographer I brought my whole embodied self (and an additional self in the form of my unborn baby) into the field. This involves a complex ethics of care and politics of affect, which is bound up with how I came to practise and co-produce enactive research, and develop a different ethical reality of our world. In the next chapter I reflect on this experience.

## Chapter 3 | MY POSITIONALITY: CARING FIELDWORK, IN FOODWORK

*Women are everywhere and therefore always somewhere ... it is these somewheres that are being transformed ... but ... also ... these somewheres ... transform a woman.*

Kelly Dombroski (2016:314) *Seeing Diversity, Multiplying Possibility*.

### 3.1 Introduction

My experience as a visibly pregnant researcher “in the field” involved demonstrations of care in ways that were variously subtle, overt and sometimes unexpected, but above all complex. Spaces of care were enacted in interesting ways when I, and my unborn child, engaged in ethnographic food studies fieldwork in particular spaces: the domestic kitchen, the foodbox distribution hub, and the literal field (of kale). This broader research in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa NZ), interrogates research methods, epistemologies and practices that assemble new and diverse understandings of food normally seen as “alternative” to those of dominant, conventional food. This alternative food is normally discussed in contexts of the upper-middle classes of the urban global north.

One might expect that embodied studies of food (which I flesh out later) might involve a food researcher’s multiple foci on publicly demonstrating care for themselves, and for ethical food production that includes both human eaters and more-than-human others (for example, animals, pollinators or soils). As a visibly pregnant researcher engaged in food work, however, I found that care in the field was demonstrated *for* me by research participants, and *by* me for objects in the field (human and more-than-human), in unpredictable ways and places.

In this chapter I explore how spaces of care are constructed in participatory food fieldwork with a pregnant researcher. I address this question by exploring personal and ethnographic evidence that ‘make[s] social realities and worlds’ by *enacting* rather than just observing (Law and Urry 2004: 390-391). I engage feminist and food geographies in my enquiry, and relate these to embodied fieldwork, couching this discussion in the key themes of the regulation of motherhood, vulnerable bodies, and political food projects as expressed through care. I acknowledge that my account is partial and situated (Haraway 1988), as I consider care spaces as, simultaneously: interstices in the

field where my body's affect is materialised; and, my own body as a site of the field's affect. I locate myself and my co-participants in positions of relative privilege, in spaces that we embody food knowledge and politics. In this context I examine three cases of care for and by me as a pregnant researcher in spaces of food fieldwork.

### **3.2 Care in Pregnancy, Food and Fieldwork: A Review**

While many voices affect the pregnant (food) researcher, there are two dominant ones that I interrogate in relation to performances of care. They are mothers as peers/voices of intensive mothering (e.g. Bobel 2002) and the voice of public health (e.g. Ruhl 1999). Below, I review how these voices speak to regulate and construct vulnerable pregnant bodies and build political food projects around them, all in the context of feminist geographies.

### **3.3 Contextual Feminist Geographies**

Through powerful explorations of embodiment, body politics and the (de)construction of the (gendered) subject (e.g. Grosz 1994; Longhurst 1996; Probyn 2000; Butler 2005) in relation to pregnant bodies (e.g. Longhurst 1996; Bobel 2002) and food (e.g. Probyn 2000; Longhurst *et al* 2009), feminist geographers have provided a solid platform on which to assemble the particular areas of interest in this chapter: spaces of care, spaces of pregnancy, and spaces of foodwork. These provocative works have disrupted a discipline charged with cultivating only 'acceptable' geographical knowledge that occupies 'a masculine subject position' (Rose 1993:4). Early feminist geography confronted the privileging of mind over body in the production of academic knowledge, and validated embodiment and the corporeal — or knowing of the body — to break down gendered binaries. Elspeth Probyn's *Carnal Appetites* (2000) queried intersections of self, other, eating and food, which links to more recent work on the politics of emotions and viscosity, and the politics of eating (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2010; Longhurst *et al* 2009). Combining these knowledges with Longhurst's (1996) influential work depicting pregnant bodies in space as social constructs allows us to see clearly how spaces of care might be enacted for a pregnant researching body doing foodwork.

#### **3.3.1 Regulation of the Pregnant, 'Vulnerable' Body**

A modern, neoliberal, global north regard of the pregnant body embodies the interests of the mother together with the unborn baby and the outside community, in an exercise of collective responsibility (e.g. Longhurst 1996; Piering 2012). This responsibility might be read as an obligation to act on behalf of the baby and the pregnant woman by controlling or protecting pregnancy. Women's (non)

use of, and regulation in, particular places is at least in part due to a perceived mistrust of a mentally and physically ‘unpredictable’ pregnant body (e.g. Longhurst 1996; Bobel 2002) that poses a risk to a rational public order (Longhurst 1996). This riskiness in the ordered western world might be policed reflexively,<sup>20</sup> through peers, via consumer branding, or through the channels of governmental guidance.

The rhetoric of the risky but also vulnerable pregnancy draws lines around pregnant mothers. Regardless of socio-economics, pregnant women in western society are seen institutionally — translated societally — as objects of concern, placing them in the company of the young, the elderly and the immuno-suppressed. State-issued pregnancy food-safety guidance in Aotearoa NZ demonstrates protective care for pregnant women by advising them to not consume foods that might be unsafe for them or the baby (for example, raw milk, raw meats or shellfish, soft cheeses, unrefrigerated salads, mayonnaise, or alcohol), and limits are placed around substances like caffeine (New Zealand Ministry of Health 2010). Regulation of eating is extrapolated from the vulnerable pregnancy to the vulnerable infant, seen clearly in debates on the rights and moralities of mother and child in breast- or bottle-feeding politics (Ruhl 1999; Boyer 2011; and Lintott and Sander-Staudt (2012) contains several chapters on the subject). Breastmilk substitutes are made invisible and largely inaccessible through the public health system (including most hospitals and maternity units) based on Aotearoa NZ law,<sup>21</sup> and images of real babies are not legally permitted to be associated with breastmilk supplement advertising (see New Zealand Ministry of Health 2007). Further, a ‘breastfed is best fed’ pop-up appears on infant formula retailer websites in Aotearoa NZ, exercising psychological control by requiring viewers to click ‘I agree’ to access their webpages (e.g. Aptanutrition NZ 2017).

A liberal feminist political critique of the regulated pregnant body (Ruhl 1999), observes that vulnerable pregnant bodies are obscured where others’ needs (often the child and partner) take precedence (Benson and Wolf 2012). This builds on conceptualisations of the entwined yet discrete ontologies and epistemologies of the pregnant woman and unborn child (Kristeva 1981; Fischer 2012), which are reflected in the complex spaces that pregnant women occupy. These understandings of the pregnant body as risky, or vulnerable had some bearing on my own encounters in the field, which I narrate through case studies in Section 3.4.

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<sup>20</sup> including through practices of self-surveillance, self-control and self-disciplining (see Foucault 1977)

<sup>21</sup> based around the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, as executed by the World Health Assembly in 1981 to keep marketing practices compliant with the code.

### **3.3.2 Political Food Projects Expressed Through Care: The Example of the Organic Child**

Recent feminist/food studies in western societies have looked at how ‘structural/economic and discursive/rhetorical processes work to maintain alternative food movements as largely liberal, white (European-American) upper-middle-class groups’ (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2010:2956). Further, care discourse on risk, regulation and recommendation is up for differential interpretation based on privileges of knowledge and access to information. The vast majority of contemporary, western pregnancy and infant food guidance is: found in medical journals (e.g. nutritive guidance); co-opted by corporations with neoliberal agendas (e.g. advertising of baby foods, formula and mothers’ supplements); and/or, is found in public/social media but lacks critical engagement.

Critical academic food research, although largely inaccessible to lay audiences, interrogates the privileged politics of “natural” maternal caring, including feeding (Bobel 2002) and how some bodies are enacted as privileged eaters (Cairns *et al* 2013). Cairns and colleagues (2013) discuss how political values influence careful consumption, which determines food choices made by carers for children. They show how political food projects are expressed through care in the cultivation of an “organic child”, where care of the child simultaneously cares for the environment, as attributed to “light-on-the-Earth” food production processes. It could easily be the “local food child”, or the “ethical food child”, although the example of the “vegetarian child” perhaps better parallels the ingestion and metabolisation of the politics imbued in the food itself (e.g. food produced with care for environment, human labour, or of animals in producing that food). However, the political project of the organic child is broadly a project that has access to time and money (Cairns *et al* 2013). While in other times, places and geographical spaces, other groups of pregnant women might find themselves under surveillance for not being able to feed babies enough food, the right food, or food that is not part of a dominant national food culture, the organic child (in the urban, global north) has grown to be a middle-class contextualisation that is privileged by being nutritionally well-informed, media-influenced, and having a disposable income. Health literature around organic food therefore tends to be oriented towards the middle classes (Cairns *et al* 2013).

Contemporary critical food scholarship that connects pregnancy and more marginalised food/eating politics also includes the work of Guthman and Brown (2016) and Martinez-Salazar (e.g. 1999), who separately discuss the politics of foetal safety in farm labour. Martinez-Salazar, whose work maps food supply chains and gendered, racialised labour in North America, reflects on her own

mother's experiences as a food worker exposed to pesticides, which ultimately caused the death of her infant sister. These accounts are nearly invisible in public discourse.

My own experiences in the field were contextualised by my own privilege of particular knowledge of food and pregnancy, and also my capacity to act on my own behalf.

### **3.4 Embodying Mothering and Food Care-Work in the Field**

Participant-led ethnographic fieldwork in food studies offers opportunities to work with, and eat food: often participants are keen to demonstrate their identity politics by sharing what they eat, grow or supply. I present such embodied experiences from the field in three cases below, relating them to the feminist, food and care literatures already discussed. These cases illustrate differing moments of care, where "caring" for the pregnant body might be interpreted as simultaneously about different forms of regulation of the mother.

#### ***Case One: The foodbox packer's kitchen***

Celeste was a foodbox packer at the organic/local foodbox initiative which I was ethnographically "following". We were in her kitchen, trying some home-grown vegetables which she offered and I enthusiastically accepted. Celeste knew I was pregnant. She explained to me the health benefits of fermented foods, particularly for pregnant women. We shared some dandelion tea, for which she proposed similar health claims:

Celeste: *"It's very good for liver, and stomach ... Being a mum, housewife for 15 years, I should know something."*

Me: *"What milk is this? It's really good."*

Celeste: *"That's the raw milk that I'm getting. Tomorrow's our milk run. Somebody's going there ... [I]f ... the government car [comes] ... [you must] stop doing what you're doing ... and let the farmer know...he will deal with them."*

Celeste referred to the fact that one representative from her raw milk collective was collecting the bulk milk supply from the farm the next day, enough for the whole group. This was despite the legislated 5L/person/day maximum limit on the collection of raw milk from farmers in New Zealand. This limit was introduced to restrict the circulation of raw milk because of intermittent findings of illness-causing microbes in raw milk in this country. Government issued guidelines counter-indicate the consumption of raw milk for pregnant women<sup>22</sup> for the same reason. Celeste had not asked me about using this milk in the tea she had prepared for me.

<sup>22</sup> The NZ Ministry for Primary Industries (2016) recommends pregnant women 'don't drink or use' raw unpasteurized milk.

So what was going on in this case? Typically, a pregnant woman's body is regulated in relation to eating, by eliminating foods from her diet either through guidance, legislation or practically by not serving certain foods or drinks (e.g. cases where pregnant women are refused service of coffee or alcohol<sup>23</sup>). The regulation I experienced in *Case One* seemed mediated by censorship, through my lack of participation in the decision-making around consuming raw milk, and by Celeste's non-disclosure particularly in the way that her care for me was intentioned (I assumed *well*-intentioned, in providing what she clearly regarded as health-giving food). While (potentially) placing me at risk, for her, not doing so might have violated a rule of hospitality or commensality in her domestic space. The care demonstrated also revealed an unevenness of power in the context in which it arose. As fellow workers in a foodbox packing job, our power relationships were somewhat level. We both had an interest in naturalness in our food, and in a kind of food activism. In some ways I was a researcher with a similar background to my participant. I may have exhibited power as an "expert researcher" but as a guest in my participant's home the exercise of power shifted and became a negotiation of domestic space and its rules. As a host my participant constructed a caring space by offering food and drink (e.g. Cairns *et al* 2013). Despite my concern for consuming the milk, I also felt true to my food politics of care for more-than-human others, as raw milk signalled to me small dairy-herd sizes managed care-fully, and a lower environmental impact compared to industrial cows.

The regulation of my body's politics was complex, and despite demonstrations of "care" for me — and by extension also for my baby — there were potentially also damaging acts of care-lessness. "Care-lessness" in that the full repercussions of caring actions were: not considered; considered in an unthinking way; were considered inconsequential for my wellbeing; or, were blinded by the personal politics of the carer. Whether these acts of care were interventionist, deceitful or absent, experiencing these acts of care helped me reflect on my own care practices for myself and baby. While increasing my vigilance to acts of care, I started noticing that I was being cared for in particular ways in the field, that only sometimes felt to me to be "care-full" (c.f. Tronto (1993) regarding the interdependencies involved in the relationship for the person needing care).

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<sup>23</sup> Aotearoa NZ has no legal restrictions on serving alcohol to pregnant women, provided they are not underage or already intoxicated (see New Zealand Legislation 2013).

***Case Two: The foodbox packing shed***

As food packers we assembled weekly at the delivery hub [for the same foodbox initiative mentioned in *Case One*]. Boxes we packed were pre-selected by the customers based on their priority for local, or, organic food. On the packing line, we noticed the taste and the “sense” of food, which included eating samples of produce as we worked.

In my final week as a foodbox packer I had a weak back and it was difficult to lift produce crates. The packers were thoughtful and by my perception, caring, in lifting crates to help me pack boxes.

This situation was complex in a way that I had not anticipated, when others positioned crates on the packing line for me. By not choosing the crates myself and given the speed that we worked at, I could not decide which produce I was working with, organic or not which, it transpired, I felt rather strongly about as a pregnant woman. In previous weeks I had automatically positioned myself to work with the organic produce. Our box packing practices of brushing off soil, removing browned leaves and insects, and sometimes tasting food were restricted, due to my own comfort with the “riskiness” of being in repetitive direct contact with produce that might harbour pesticide or herbicide residue. Aotearoa NZ’s *Employer’s Guidelines for the Prevention of Pregnancy Discrimination* lists ‘pesticides, herbicides, and fertiliser’ (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2005:22) as examples of chemicals that may be harmful during pregnancy, and which pregnant women are within their rights, or obligated, to avoid in the workplace. I perceived some safety in the produce crates that were designated organic, which I could sense visibly in noticing insects still roaming on the vegetables.

Acts of care threw up unexpected consequences that confronted my own self-surveillance, -control and -discipline (or care) and performances in fieldwork. Self-care responses were to not eat the produce and ensure I was wearing gloves. By making eating absent in aspects of my research practice, the politics of my work changed in two ways. First, I eliminated an aspect of immersion into my fieldwork — my sensing of food through affect generated with taste — which I had resolutely sustained up until this time. What this context did offer however was the opportunity to consider other types of visceral affect (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2010) beyond taste that I was still able to access safely (by my own measure), including attuning myself to visible features and odours of the vegetables and hearing the descriptions of taste through my fellow participants, which led to further conversation about their growing, preparation and cooking. Secondly, by not eating, I demonstrated an example of enacting a new reality by *not* acting. The performance of not eating enacted a different foodworld (c.f. Gibson-Graham 2008) in prioritising an ethic of care for

myself. So in this case, enactions of caring spaces also created a disjuncture in my tacit engagements with food.

Case Two was a scenario that eventually led me to curtail my participatory fieldwork for the foodbox as I struggled to lift the produce crates while pregnant. Extracting myself as an act of self- (and other-) care performs a politics that disrupts care-lessness in labour that is seen more often in neoliberal structures. However, recognising my privilege in being able to choose my environments to work in and communicate incompatibilities with my values is critical here — tellingly, experiences of pregnant farm workers in precarious positions with limited capacity to protest are rarely discussed in food scholarship or public discourse (see Guthman and Brown 2016).

### ***Case Three: The organic vegetable farm***

Surrounded by the organic vegetables I had a sense of safety, wellbeing and care in my work, particularly, where life as a pregnant woman/researcher meant that I was alert to everyday or fieldwork hazards. My experience of wellbeing at the organic farm altered when, on a meal break, the farmer offered me raw honey that his brother harvested from his bees. He had made a special effort to have some ready for me, as an alternative-food-systems-researcher, to try. I accepted his offer, care-fully.

By researching and participating in alternative food in an effort to generate new ethical, political and economic practice, I perform my politics of care for environment, for plants and animals, and for producers and consumers. I do have an interest in the politics of raw honey; its extraction from industrial processing, its economies of care in small-scale production, and its mindfulness of bees' and beekeepers' welfare. While the benefits of caring for bees were clear to me, the offer of consuming raw honey was not straightforward.

Health departments internationally vary their advice on pregnant women consuming raw honey. Unlike raw milk, the New Zealand Ministry of Health (2010) does not have *raw honey* on its “do not eat” list, but does have *honey* on its safe list, and it is not listed at all as either “do eat” or “don't eat” on the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (2016a) '*List of Safe Food in Pregnancy*'. However, individuals on a number of international mothering websites variously recommend or warn against eating raw honey while pregnant. My participant's caring practice was of offering me a choice in line with his perception of my own care interests. I ate the honey in this context, where my sense of safety was perhaps mediated by a fieldwork environment where I otherwise felt unregulated and unthreatened by external factors, i.e. a mostly chemical-free (certified-organic, at least) work site, and national governmental guidance that did not discourage me from eating raw honey. My choice to eat honey but not drink milk may seem contradictory, though feminist

scholarship is helpful to draw on here, to observe that ‘taking responsibility for what and whom we care for doesn’t mean being in charge’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011:98), but rather prioritising the cared for subject. Given the context of a particular food object, site and moment, privileged with particular knowledge, I accepted this “thought-full” gift of food as my own performance of care for my participant who had enabled me with a choice.

### **3.5 Conclusion: Complexities in Spaces of Care**

This chapter is helpful in locating feminist and embodied literature in relation to my subject position, but also the politics of this dissertation. It is also useful in examining the enactments of care and how it materialises. Finally, this chapter documents situated and contextualised knowledge production around food and care. My pregnant, eating and food-researching body enacted care for human and more-than-human others in the field through practicing a particular food politics and accepting thought-full food gifts. The field’s affect materialised in my pregnant researching body through my attention to the thought-full, as well as care-less performances that were intentioned as others’ political acts enacted on behalf of my body and baby. Of interest was the observation of practices of noticing and then *not acting* to perform a different reality.

The field’s and my own affect materialised in my experiential learning that total immersion for a perfect ethnographic experience was a fiction. Having undertaken participatory fieldwork without a child on board previously, like Drozdewski and Robinson (2015) I was compelled to consider how this fieldwork experience was changed by having my unborn baby present. In prior fieldwork I had similar opportunities to ‘explore [and] immerse’ (Drozdewski and Robinson 2015:372) rather unimpeded. It was clear that this context was different, and though there were barriers to certain engagements in my fieldwork, these also afforded other opportunities (e.g. of sensing food) rendered for a pregnant body in what might be seen as masculinist constructions of fieldwork.

The ‘changing geography of where [and how] care-work takes place’ (Boyer 2011:231) was reflected in these experiences above. For me, pregnancy in fieldwork meant mixing deliberate care-work with fieldwork, which in turn enacted multiple, unexpected spaces of care, that informed the processes and outcomes of my research, and my own subjectivity. Certain acts of thought-fullness that deliberately noticed and prioritised the cared-for subject on their terms were “felt” as acts of care for me in the field. I also tried to notice my own research subjects in similarly deliberate ways. This *attunement* to the subject of care seems important to a project of enacting difference around food ethics and justice.

## Chapter 4 | A TYPOLOGY OF PRACTICE: ALTERNATIVE FRAMINGS OF ALTERNATIVE FOOD

### 4.1 Introduction: The Normative Alternative

Food production in Aotearoa NZ is rarely discussed in terms of non-industrial agriculture. Aotearoa NZ's domestic food industry and its relations within a globalised, conventional food system,<sup>24</sup> mostly in terms of technology and export value, is a dominant focus in the literature. Research into Aotearoa NZ's smaller scale practices and performances of what agri-food scholarship names “alternative” food, is meagre and often does not recognise the full range of political, ethical, and practical difference encompassed in alternative food movements and initiatives. Alternative food initiatives (AFIs) are described as antagonistic to the dominant food system, related to a particular type of political movement, and then too often represented in terms of the performance of a singular notion of alterity. As a consequence, critiques of “alternative-ness” — or alterity — in food may miss the potential that thinking and doing otherwise might have for making different worlds, individually and collectively; a potential that Castree and associates (2010) describe as ‘geographies of hope’ and Carolan describes as ‘difference-power’ (Carolan 2013b:146).

Politics of food are informed by both practices and embodied experiences, and the two have been suggested to articulate inextricably (e.g. Carolan 2011; Larder *et al* 2014). AFIs’ diverse practices are interesting on their own merit, but to disrupt dominant ways of thinking it is helpful to consider the actual, observable practices of a more socially embedded food movement. Holloway *et al* (2007) offer a methodological framework for collecting diverse data on AFIs, and they use these data to explore production–consumption relationships. This chapter uses Holloway *et al*’s framework to explore Auckland’s AFI foodscape and consider this learning in terms of their difference in practice rather than their politics.

This chapter addresses the gaps in research on AFIs in three ways. Firstly, it offers an entry point to investigate Aotearoa NZ AFI case studies, which are lacking in the international AFI literature. Secondly and more critically, it reveals *practices* of AFIs, which are rarely discussed in the AFI literature. And lastly, it utilises the data gathered from an established methodological framework to construct a novel understanding of AFI “doings” in a new heuristic — of typology of practice rather

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<sup>24</sup> This term is used here to reflect the language used in more ‘conventional’ narratives of global food supply, in agri-food scholarship.

than the normative politics of alterity. As Carolan (2013a; 2013b) describes, a productive approach is to disregard concepts of ‘more’ or ‘less’ (for example consumption, or politics, or economic profit) and instead converse in terms of ‘difference’.

With colleagues, I acknowledge in this chapter that a typology can be problematic, however it is useful to consider classifying frameworks in order to compare and contrast them with conventional systems and contemplate their inter-relationality. Categorisations of AFI practice demonstrate different, nonetheless tangible, connections to food. The proposed classification of AFIs in Auckland by practice instead of viewing them reductively as “alternative”, gives credence to a framing of plurality in the foodscape.

## **4.2 Foodscapes of Alterity — A Review**

As reviewed below, contemporary literature from the US, Canada, UK and more recently Australia, describes socially- and ethically-embedded, local food movements that have emerged in direct response to a hegemonic system. Even these general lobbies do not capture the variety of political motivations of AFIs or the incongruent nature of political projects associated with AFIs, for example the simultaneous pursuit of human health through industrial organic meat production or vegetarianism, both with differing potential consequences for environmental and animal welfare. Food systems have been relatively understudied in this way, particularly regarding their diversity in practice, their assembling, and their potential typology.

In the global literature, food initiatives that have been classified as “alternative” are wide-ranging. Farmers’ markets (FMs) have been investigated extensively. Their renaissance has been documented in North America (Brown 2001; Feagan *et al* 2004; AMS 2007 cited in Brown and Miller 2008), in the UK (Kneafsey and Ilbery 2001; Holloway and Kneafsey 2000), and in Australia (Coster 2004). It was proposed that FMs are in fact integral to the re-creation of regional and local food systems (Gillespie *et al* 2007). They have been studied in: the United States (US) e.g. regarding their manifestation as post-industrial entities, their economic impacts, and their links to local economies, respectively (Bubinas 2011; Brown 2001; Lyson *et al* 1995); Australia, e.g. their competition with other (mostly mainstream) food sources (Gross 2011); the United Kingdom (UK) e.g. as novel sites of consumption (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000); and, in overview (e.g. McEachern *et al* 2010). Subscription farming initiatives, e.g. direct farm-to-consumer food boxes, have been examined regarding consumer motivations for their use in the UK and France (Brown *et al* 2009), and comprehensively in the case study of the Good Food Box scheme in Toronto (Baker 2004; Johnston and Baker 2005). Food cooperatives and their connected social movements have campaigned on mobilising political projects like food sovereignty in developing countries, for

example, the work of La Via Campesina<sup>25</sup> (Rosset 2005), and more subversive activities of both dumpster diving (Ferrell 2006) in the US, and guerrilla gardening (e.g. Hardman 2011) in the UK. Domestic production (Larder *et al* 2014) has also been linked to empowerment through, and the importance of access to land for, food production. There has been interest internationally in specific AFIs' (primarily FMs) capacity to address various political projects, related to food miles (Wallgren 2006), food hygiene (Worsfold *et al* 2004), food security and a resilient food system (Cameron and Gordon 2010; Allen 2010; McMichael 2010).

There has been limited investigation into broader motivations for engagement with non-industrial food in Aotearoa NZ and for Aotearoa NZ produce. These include: food security (e.g. Rosin 2013); food miles (Saunders *et al* 2006; Stadig 1997); genetic modification (Kurian and Wright 2010; Knight *et al* 2007); agricultural resilience of rural communities around climate change (Pomeroy and Newell 2011); globalised agro-food systems (Goodman and Watts 1997); social dynamics in sustainable agriculture (Campbell *et al* 2012), and the conceptual (and practical) shift from agriculture as a tightly framed regime, industry or science to an assembled biological economy (Campbell *et al* 2009). Cross-cultural studies have compared New Zealanders' organic food consumption with several Asian countries' (Squires *et al* 2001). Pearce *et al* (2006) have mapped 'food deserts' (food access with respect to food security and deprivation) with case studies in Christchurch and Wellington, and Freeman and Buck (2003) endeavour to establish mapping techniques to classify entities like food gardens in urban Aotearoa NZ. More recently, special issues of both *New Zealand Sociology* (Volume 24, Issue 8, 2013) and *New Zealand Geographer* (Volume 69, Issue 3, 2013) have addressed Antipodean Food Futures and (New Zealand based) Biological Economies respectively considering agri-food histories, and visions for a more sustainable and just food future. Themes include health, food value and provenance. Theoretically conversations are started there around embodiment, materiality and assemblage as contemporary lenses with which to view food.

However, as discussed, few studies from Aotearoa NZ to date (relative to the abundance in the US, UK, Canada and Australia), consider AFIs. In line with international trends, FMs have been the most investigated AFI in Aotearoa NZ, particularly their economic and commercial attributes such as: media interpretation, commercial promotion and social elevation (Chalmers *et al* 2009); FMs as small-business models (Guthrie *et al* 2006); and, authenticity (Joseph *et al* 2013). They have also been examined based on their benefits to social wellbeing, for example, the value of group

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<sup>25</sup> La Via Campesina is a producer, and a political organisation focused on challenging global regulating bodies, e.g. the World Trade Organization (WTO). Via Campesina first coined the phrase 'food sovereignty'.

cooperation (Lawson *et al* 2008). Gardens and gardening have been examined in their capacity to preserve identity for migrant populations (Li *et al* 2010). Among studies that looked at Auckland's AFI activity, Murphy (2011) looked at general motives and perceptions of AFI participants in Aotearoa NZ<sup>26</sup> and a recent research thesis considered the potential for an AFI network and advisory such as a food policy council in Auckland (Durham 2013). Dumpster diving has been investigated in one Auckland example, from a 'consumer identity' perspective (Fernandez *et al* 2011), and as a subversive urban practice continues to attract attention in the media. Community gardens and their relationship to health outcomes have been explored in Auckland and Wellington (Earle 2011).

Despite the impressive international literature, and the growing activity of alternative food practices in Auckland, there is much scope to better document and acknowledge these performances. The studies to date cannot fully consider the full range of political, ethical and practical plurality that AFIs embody.

The following study of Auckland's alternative foodworlds depicts novel performances of AFIs, which are then articulated in a new framework to highlight their diversity and a different way of viewing alternative food economies.

### **4.3 Methods of Practice**

To capture a variety of practices, more than 100 AFIs were identified in Auckland, across a wide range of categories: FMs, community gardens, food boxes, pick-your-own fruit, food-share projects, urban or guerrilla gardeners, foragers (fruit and fish), raw milk collectives and consumers, chicken farmers and beekeeping associations all featured. Individual dumpster divers (not part of a wider collective) were also identified. 23 initiatives (two were umbrella initiatives for nine other community gardens) completed questionnaires with at least one respondent from each category of AFI listed above. Questionnaires comprised questions from Holloway *et al*'s Analytical Fields for Describing Food Projects (2007:8). Where AFIs were not centrally coordinated or where respondent details were limited, information was researched online or through AFI publicity materials.

Holloway *et al* (2007) fashioned their heuristic to portray the organisation of different case studies of food-supply (in a conventional, linear sense), using several analytical fields: Site of Food Production; Food Production/Procurement Methods; Supply Chain; Arena of Exchange; Producer-Consumer Interaction; Motivations for Participation; and, Constitution of Individual and Group

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<sup>26</sup> Two of the AFIs included in this study, both FMs, were located in Auckland.

Identity. This framework is also attractive for depicting practice as it preserves the heterogeneity and mundane characteristics of performances using open-ended fields to collect qualitative data. However, Holloway *et al*'s (2007:1) use of the framework 'directs attention to the particular locations of resistance to prevalent power relations in food systems that are made possible through different food projects' and therefore focuses on the political without considering the importance of practice. In our use of Auckland's AFI data gathered with Holloway *et al*'s framework, we tease out practices and performances from the data, classify observations according to Holloway *et al*'s fields in terms of their attributes, and employ it in a new typology of practice. This interpretation of AFI case studies gives license to divergent practices and their political meanings, enabling urban food transformation through seeing and doing "alternative" differently.

Though not representative of the entire field of Auckland AFIs, our documentation of AFI diversity is representative of what their practices reveal about them. Other literature shows this approach of looking to atypical cases because of their explanatory power, bringing new things into being (Law and Urry 2004:396), opening up new possibilities through academic work (Gibson-Graham 2008) and 'crafting rather than capturing realities' (Cameron *et al* 2011:493) through novel methods of interpretation and framing.

In this study AFIs are defined as groups (or associated individuals) demonstrating challenges to dominant practices and performances of food provision. A challenge of administering questionnaires to this variety of initiatives was their difference in structure, their general informality and the applicability of questions to do with their methods of exchange. With community gardens for example, no goods are exchanged *per se*, though tacit knowledge and experience both are, and in abundance. Therefore the significance of the embodiment of this diversity cannot be understated.

The following section outlines and interprets "doings" and practices that have been extracted from category responses (Tables 4.1 — 4.4) for the 23 Auckland AFI case studies, elicited using the fields in Holloway *et al*'s (2007) methodological framework.

#### **4.4 Traversing Auckland's Alternative Food Terrain**

*Sites of food production* (Table 4.1) varied considerably between AFIs. Of all fields, the most eclectic responses emerged in the variety of locations of food production for exchange. Both public and private land use was reported, on diverse scales, and occasionally, subversively. An urban gardening initiative located activity at "participants' homes ... backyards, balconies, berms"<sup>27</sup>, and

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<sup>27</sup> known variously in existing literature as grass verges/nature strips.

altogether seven different AFIs practiced in individuals’ backyards. Online research of Auckland’s community gardens suggests that practices have extended to front verge vegetable gardening, which have been the subject of contention between Auckland Council and local residents (see Gibson 2014). Other production sites include parks, church grounds, University grounds (2 responses), allotments, community centres (5 responses from one umbrella community gardening group), and farms (10). A fish parts “redistribution” project uses harbours and the Hauraki Gulf around Auckland to practice harvesting, to salvage fish heads from recreational catch, which are otherwise filleted and their remains discarded.

|                                    | Site of food production  | Food production/procurement methods   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Bee keeping group (2)              | University grounds/backyards   | Farming/consumer participation  |
| Chicken keeper (3)                 | At home/backyards  | Organic/non-caged (but housed)/consumer participation/permaculture  |
| Community gardens (4)              | Public land in parks/church grounds/University grounds/allotments/bee hives/community gardens (3)/community garden (1)/enviro-centre (1)/organic home garden/teaching garden (1) | Organic/consumer participation  |
| Dumpster diver (1)                 | Car parks  | Consumer participation  |
| Farmers’ market (3)                | Lifestyle blocks/farms   | Conventional farms/orchards/organic/consumer participation/permaculture   |
| Food box (1)                       | Farms/occasionally community gardens/allotments/backyards  | Conventional farms/orchards/organic   |
| Food share (2)                     | Lifestyle properties/organic farms/back gardens  | Conventional farms/orchards/organic/consumer participation, permaculture/food swap                                    |
| Foraging/Gleaning group (2)        | Backyards/orchards/the sea   | Foraged/conventional farms/orchards/public and backyard fruit trees/neglected orchards/the sea/consumer participation |
| Pick-your-own (1)                  | Farms  | Conventional farming/orchards/consumer participation  |
| Raw milk collectives/Producers (3) | Farms  | Uncertified organic/conventional farms  |
| Urban/Guerrilla gardening (1)      | Urban centre/participants’ homes – backyards/balconies/berms   | Consumer participation/gifting  |

**Table 4.1:** Sites of food production and food production/procurement methods

*Food production methods* (Table 4.1) varied considerably between and within AFI types. While organic (certified or self-certified) food production and distribution practices presented in most initiatives, they were absent from some AFIs responses where it could not be guaranteed. At least one AFI (raw milk producer) sought organic standards under an “organic philosophy” but through uncertified practice. Consumer participation (embodied food production) was overwhelmingly evident with 17 AFIs reporting this production practice.

AFI *supply chains* (Table 4.2) are typically shorter than in conventional food production. Community gardens, pick-your-own and foragers practice one step in their supply chain with consumers harvesting the produce. Most other AFIs have two-step processes, where one individual procures food, which is redistributed to a separate consumer, for example, a market patron, the City Mission, or a raw milk collective member. By one measure, the longest distribution chain may be the dumpster diver, who relies on the conventional supply chain to access gleaned foods. The chain length could vary considerably, particularly for imported foods. By another measure, the dumpster diver could be regarded as having a similarly short supply chain to the one-step projects, where the food is ripe for the (trash-)picking and allows immediate consumption by the procurer.

|                                     | Supply-chain  | Arena of exchange   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Bee keeping group (2)               | Harvesting→direct selling. ~ 70% to members/ ~ 30% to scouts/seasonal show  | Direct selling at fixed venues  |
| Chicken keeper (3)                  | Direct sell from home (production site). ~40% to family and friends/ ~ 60% for home   | Direct selling/exchange with friends/family/neighbours/gift             |
| Community gardens (4)               | Garden→consumer. ~ 5% to market/remainder distributed between growers   | Direct selling at fixed venues<br>Collaborative growing/<br>consumption |
| Dumpster diver (1)                  | Producer→supermarket/produce store waste bin→dumpster divers. ~ 15–20% of fresh produce discarded.  | Supermarkets  |
| Farmers' market (3)                 | Most = Producer/vendor→consumer. Exceptions = Producer/vendor buys raw materials→sells value-added product to market patron. Some suppliers hire middlemen to transport/sell goods. | Direct selling at fixed venues (markets)                                |
| Food box (1)                        | Grower→Food box hub→Household ~95% home delivered/ ~ 5% workplace delivered.  | Direct selling online/<br>membership scheme                             |
| Food share (2)                      | Food harvested→consumer   | Fortnightly meeting (summer) for swap and sale                          |
| Foraging/Gleaning group (2)         | Backyard fruit trees→picked by volunteers→volunteer delivers to recipient. Fishers catch fish→keep fillets/distribute frames  | Collaborative harvesting/<br>consumption/ online<br>coordination        |
| Pick-your-own (1)                   | Patrons pick fruit direct from site. ~40% orchard sales/10% farmers' market/ ~ 20% food boxes/ ~ 30% stores   | Direct selling at fixed venues/through other vendors                    |
| Raw milk collectives/ Producers (3) | Milk produced on farm→collected by our collective on a Sunday morning and driven back [home]→collected by each member from the driving member's house.                              | Direct selling at fixed venue (farm)                                    |
| Urban/Guerrilla gardening (1)       | Raise seedlings→growers sign-up online/receive seeds/seedlings→growers harvest→bring to central point→patrons buy/consume   | Collaborative growing/<br>consumption                                   |

**Table 4.2:** Supply chain and arenas of exchange

*Arenas of exchange* (Table 4.2) and *producer-consumer interactions* (Table 4.3): Virtual markets and online methods of communication are practiced by some AFIs to improve convenience and accessibility for those privileged with online access, and to expand the spatial geography of exposure to products and networks (a “wider ... younger audience”). One AFI claimed they sold produce online.

|                                     | Producer-consumer interaction   | Motivations for participation   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Bee keeping group (2)               | Email/newsletters/field days  | Learning/educating about bees   |
| Chicken keeper (3)                  | Word-of-mouth/Trade me/sell at work   | Keeping chickens as a hobby/selling surplus eggs  |
| Community gardens (4)               | Email/newsletter/community newspapers/email/online fora/workshops                 | Creating gardening space for those without any or enough/ 'community'/growing inexpensive organic food/wanting to feed families well/ enjoyment/providing learning/teaching space/food security and self-reliance/connecting food and health  |
| Dumpster diver (1)                  | Online fora   | Addressing social/environmental concerns/awareness of uneconomical and unethical practices considering food insecurity in some Auckland communities   |
| Farmers' market (3)                 | Email/newsletters/community newspapers/online fora /annual postcard/local signage | Community. Sustainability: reducing waste/transport costs/links/overheads/profit dilution, expense of organic/food related health risks. Addresses: independence from industrial food/animal ethics/local food and support                    |
| Food box (1)                        | Email/newsletters/online fora   | Making local/artisan food affordable/convenient   |
| Food share (2)                      | Email   | Sharing growing/preparing/meeting friends/sharing surplus   |
| Foraging/Gleaning group (2)         | Email/community newspapers/Facebook/website, newspapers/magazine                  | Facilitating fruit sharing (from backyards/orchards) with those needing and not having/educating about and reducing fish catch by utilising entire fish/reducing waste/offering high value and nutritional meal for free/creating connections |
| Pick-your-own (1)                   | Email/telephone   | Business success/providing quality healthy fruit using good environmental practice/making fruit accessible/offering people fun of participating in harvesting   |
| Raw milk collectives/ Producers (3) | Email/online fora/word-of-mouth/text messages/phone calls                         | Enjoyment of working with animals/benefits of raw milk/ wanting to feed families well/capitalise on demand/reducing waste to landfill (no plastic bottles)/making quality cheese/saving money and time through collective                     |
| Urban/Guerrilla gardening (1)       | Email/newsletters/online fora /workshops/stalls at events/social media            | Educating about sustainable urban living  |

**Table 4.3:** Producer-consumer interaction and motivations for participation

Web based practices of communication were noted as “easier cheaper and quicker [than others]”, for producer and consumer — important for self-funded or not-for-profit type organisations. Types of online communication practice included email (14), Facebook (3), Trademe (a web-based, second-hand trading site), website or online discussion fora (9). One community garden mentioned that a benefit of connecting (to) initiatives via the internet was “accessibility for those who are unable to come to the garden during weekly opening hours”, suggesting that some practices of AFIs could be reproduced or taken online. One respondent stated they could “create an online community”. Typical practices of producer-consumer communication included: newsletters (10); community newspapers (7), and local signage.

*Motivations for participation* (Table 4.3) highlighted some well-versed political aspirations common to AFIs researched overseas but also identified some more novel provocations. Participant motivations ranged through political, socio-cultural, economic and ecological reasons. Critically though, responses identified performances of AFIs that practitioners and participants felt represented their motivations, as explored below.

One AFI noted management of surplus produce through exchange with another AFI as a motivation. Four AFIs discussed practices as motivated by business success or combining personal interests with local demand for AFI produce. Other economic motivation concerned value, for example, practices of accessing inexpensive but high-quality, nutritious, local/organic produce. Patrons practicing investment into AFIs through their active patronage was idealised by several AFIs, and two AFIs noted motivations of contributing financially to local community projects.

Ecologically, motivations included an awareness of organic production practices (4 responses), and the perceived environmental and health benefits of AFIs rather than industrial practices to produce these foods, as well as raw milk (3 responses) and fresh eggs (2 responses). Raw milk and fish heads were associated as being dietetically “better” or containing “high nutrition”. Practices intended for conservation (of fish stocks), and ecological sustainability messages were reported by seven respondents. A raw milk producer reported practices of reducing plastic waste when buying in bulk.

Five AFIs also reduced waste by practicing food redistribution of otherwise unwanted food, with foragers concerned for “those who need and don't have”, considering the “food shortages amongst Auckland's under-privileged/transient community”. Community gardens practiced “making space available for people who perhaps don't have land at home, or need more”. In this way AFIs appeared to be reacting against impediments to food democracy and food security/self-reliance in food procurement — this was alluded to or discussed by four initiatives. Practices that “make local and artisan food as affordable and convenient as industrial food” were raised by one AFI, but implied by several.

Socio-culturally, three AFIs (community gardens) were motivated by their enjoyment of AFI activities. Performances of teaching/learning or food production skills-sharing were motivations (13 respondents) with one AFI reflecting on opportunities for practical volunteer leadership and personally uplifting experiences in practice. Performances of communities of care are evident through a community garden's mission “to be a space in the community to come and learn with a hands on approach” and cultivate “a community feeling for loners”. Other AFIs also offer a space

for retired people and mothers and “a place for community”. Table 4.3 identifies a wide diversity of participants practicing inclusivity in these spaces.

These factors help build *individual and group identities* (Table 4.4) in AFIs, through embodied participation in these diverse initiatives. Some more structured AFIs are represented by a club or committee, board and/or trustees, contractors (in one case, a market manager), and engaged stallholders and home growers. Most groups engaged volunteers, which emphasises that key motivations for participation are not necessarily monetary. Groups advocated inclusivity suggesting that “anyone” with an interest/desire/wish/care to learn/participate/share, was welcome. This suggests group identities built on philosophical as well as performative likenesses between members may be common. However, some literature shows that work to be done by AFIs and the practices of participants are changeable depending on dynamic and constantly reforming associations of the individual, and the AFI assemblage (Sharp 2016).

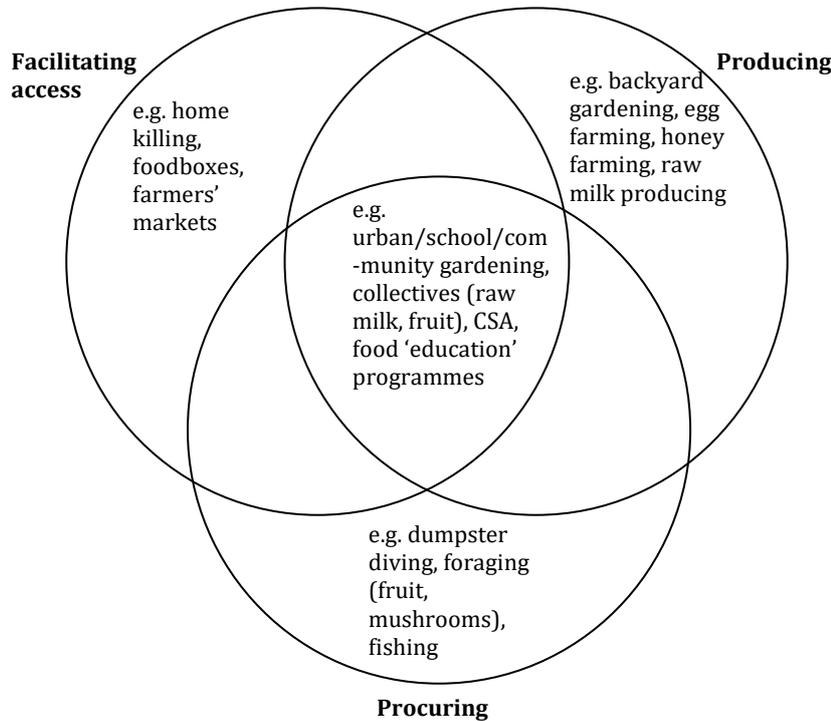
| Constitution of individual and group identities |   |
|---|---|
| Bee keeping group (2)                           | Club and committee/public/youth groups  |
| Chicken keeper (3)                              | Myself/family and friends/public/breeder of chickens/feed producers/urban Aucklanders   |
| Community gardens(4)                            | Volunteers/mothers/retired folk/local people seeking 'community'/schools/learners of gardening/immigrants/Asians/Māori /Pakeha/young/old                  |
| Dumpster diver (1)                              | Those challenging industrial food waste/less well off and needing food  |
| Farmers' market (3)                             | Committee/trustees/volunteers/contractors(market manager)/stall holders/home growers/local community/community board/women's groups/ethnic groups/patrons |
| Food box (1)                                    | Households concerned about supporting local/natural food  |
| Food share (2)                                  | Those wanting companionship/sharing of excess produce. Members of club and committee  |
| Foraging/Gleaning group (2)                     | Volunteers. Those having/wanting fish or free fruit   |
| Pick-your-own (1)                               | Public patrons/farmer   |
| Raw milk collectives/Producers (3)              | Supporters of raw milk/collective members   |
| Urban/ Guerrilla gardening (1)                  | Auckland residents  |

**Table 4.4:** Constitution of individual and group identities

#### 4.5 Creating a Typology of AFIs, Their Actors and Their Actions

This typology uses an understanding of AFI “doings” in a novel framework, of typology of practice rather than a normative politics of alterity. There is a risk in using a typology to understand urban AFIs differently, given it creates other boundaries and closes down our understandings of the more lively possibilities of AFI practices. However, we apply it here as a heuristic, to juxtapose AFIs against conventional systems and understandings and crucially, to recognise their plurality between and within initiatives and practices.

Practices of these initiatives can be viewed within three classifications of AFI practice (Figure 4.1), demonstrating practical and varied connections to our food. The categories established here, of *facilitating access*, *producing* and *procuring*, emerged from the data as key practices of the initiatives. Classifications are deliberately voiced in present continuous tense, to elicit the mode of doing, that it is active and dynamic, dependent on participation within initiatives, with potential for transforming individuals, and initiatives between them.



**Figure 4.1:** Typology of alternative food initiatives

*Facilitating access* is the part played by initiatives that encourage experiential learning by participating in their initiative, and are argued to have more enduring or transformational impacts on participants. By facilitating, the AFI performs a role (often via non-profit social enterprise or informal collective), to enable alternative food activity and create connections for information or produce sharing. Some of the individual AFIs achieve this as a consequence of their scheme and marketing methods, for example virtual social media used by a number of initiatives that incidentally encourages information sharing about produce or how it can be used in home cooking. Other initiatives undertake this effort explicitly, such as in the case of urban or community gardening initiatives where they actively provide a space for learning to grow and harvest and then prepare the fruit of their labour for consumption. Consumption of the produce however, is not the end goal for the initiatives' coordinators — rather the goal is to enable other participants to learn and share. Therefore, new avenues that enable individual and group performances of urban food have great transformational potential.

*Producing* is the act of growing and tending food production for one's own and others' consumption, upon achieving access to a means of doing so. AFIs include backyard gardening, animal husbandry for meat or milk or eggs, and honey production through small-scale bee husbandry. Pick-your-own initiatives also fit into this category. 'Production' was perhaps traditionally synonymous with embodied food practice, but appears now to be just one active component of provisioning, which recognises the labour of more-than-human others in food "production". There is notably significant intervention in food production, even in AFIs, through more intensive food processing, assembly and animal domestication practices. But philosophies (such as organic, or free range) and particularly methods of production (such as consumer participation) that are prevalent in these practices are recognised here as performances of difference from most industrial food production, as well as varying between initiatives.

*Procuring* is where initiatives perform as conduits to move produce to the consumer. Examples are dumpster diving, foraging (gathering shellfish, mushrooms, fruit), fishing, hunting. This category poses a potentially more accessible type of food practice due to typical affordability, physical accessibility to and traditional knowledges of food procuring, however in Aotearoa NZ, urban practices have waned in modern times, with loss of generational knowledge around these activities and also access to spaces on which to procure. Again, a reliance on access to these knowledges and sites is critical for their practice to take place. Examples of AFIs that perform all categories are community gardening, collectives (e.g. raw milk) and urban fruit harvesting, which embody the facilitation of food production through education and guidance about their practice, including workshops and coordinating groups, the production of food, and the distribution or procurement of food by those involved.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

Recognising plurality in AFI performances is important. This chapter dispenses with a singular notion of alterity to encompass both the diversity of activity and the potential divergent political meanings of their performance. Our proposed heuristic framework shifts our gaze from a singular political framing to an alternative framing of practice. It offers an unfolding of the political potential of practising food otherwise, revealing performances that engender a more democratic, self-reliant and secure food future. This typology views the case study initiatives within overlapping domains of *facilitating access*, *producing* and *procuring*. It allows an appreciation of both physical and virtual spaces of activity as valid arenas of exchange and places of producer-consumer interaction, providing opportunities for teaching and learning, information exchange, networking of large-scale groups, and participation. This heuristic is seen to complement existing models — as another way

to view alternative food, demonstrate the relationality and liveliness of AFIs, and recognise and value them for their practices of difference instead of their politics.

## **Chapter 5 | FOOD FIGHTS: IRRITATING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG AUCKLAND'S ALTERNATIVE FOOD INITIATIVES**

*Yet not even the weightiest of assemblages (e.g., neoliberalism) are totalizing. We are surrounded by opportunities to make and enact difference. Conventionality is littered with cracks and weak points; spaces where a social experiment can ripple out and become a social movement.*

Michael Carolan (2016b:18)

*The Very Public Nature of Agrifood Scholarship, and its Problems and Possibilities*

### **5.1 Introduction**

Recent accounts of food politics have highlighted the efforts of practitioner-activists and challenges posed by alternative food initiatives (AFIs) to the established corporate order of food provisioning (Block *et al* 2012; Goodman and Sage 2014; Stock *et al* 2015). The turn to practice in the study of AFIs and food politics (Whatmore 2002; Lewis *et al* 2016) enlivens the field and points to the political potential of focusing on embodied practices rather than further rehearsing ideological meanings in the motivations and provocations of social movements. Here we explore acts of resistance against conventional food activity in these embodied practices. To do this, we use Butler's (1999) conception of subversive performativity. Butler understands that social relations are formed through the repetition of social norms by embodied agents. An immanent subversive potential of these agents is realised in the counter-normal activities performed routinely by some AFI actors and often in direct and explicit opposition to socially and environmentally injurious elements of modern food systems. Sometimes confrontational, these initiatives more often appear as benign forms of transgression. However, in Butler's terms, they are subversive acts that perform food economies differently and encourage further transgressions.

### **5.2 Case Studies**

We examine practices from four types of Auckland-based AFI, each one a different form of irritant transgression. Each comes from a different tradition and practice of liberalism. Clearly each does something quite different, and consequently we do not assume that they are part of a close set. While these AFIs do not constitute a representative sample of subversive alternative food doings,

they do illustrate a diversity of different food practices. Although we examine Auckland cases, these kinds of activity do take place elsewhere in Aotearoa NZ. And while they do not amount to a collective social movement *per se*, we argue that their connection through networks and performances establishes wider connectivities and dynamic spaces of possibility. We suggest that it is both through these connectivities and the embodiment of subversion through transgression that makes real the transformative potential of AFIs. These transgressions present a continuous challenge to the norms that shape our foodworlds in ways that we will describe below.

### **5.3 Super(-lative) Markets and Their Alternatives**

Aotearoa NZ's urban food supply is dominated by a duopoly of corporate supermarket ownership — Foodstuffs New Zealand and Progressive Enterprises. These two actors, firmly entrenched in global corporate power relations, claim “bigger”, “better”, “faster”, “fresher” food, normatively conditioning consumers to internalise and capture food economies and the values they generate. This duopoly concentrates the reach of a global food regime that sources anonymous, scarcely traceable ‘food from nowhere’ (see McMichael 2009:147). Urban New Zealanders participate in relatively few observable relationships with the origins of their food, its producers or its production, at the expense of environmental, local economic and social values. AFIs offer varied practices of food economy, stretching from the complementary to the unconventional and the actively subversive (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). These practices have been well rehearsed in the global literature. While their expressions of difference have been widely celebrated, they have also been romanticised (Holloway *et al* 2007) and the extent of the challenge they pose to conventional agri-food regimes has been seriously questioned (see Maye *et al* 2007). Goodman and Goodman (2007:25), for example, suggest that the conventionalisation of initiatives such as organics and fair trade, and their integration into corporate regimes, corrupts ‘the potential of this movement to transform the industrial [agri-]food system’. The cases we explore in this chapter are unconventional and dynamic and seek to sustain a transgressive disposition. We aim to allow them to reveal themselves as nimble examples of a counter-movement or food fight that takes particular aim at aspects of the global agri-food system, like its characteristics of mass production, capitalocentricism (Gibson-Graham 2008) and aspects of it that are ethically meagre, through acts of subversive performativity (Butler 1999).

The four examples of subversive performativity in AFIs considered here offer neither a decisive nor an uncompromised challenge to the dominant agri-food regime. They do not threaten to bring down the supermarket duopoly in the short term, nor do they sit outside the reach, for example, of private property or current industrial food regulations and conventions (Gismondi *et al* 2016). Smaller scale

practices of domestic gardening, community scale food-sharing and niche artisanal production face the same hygiene and planning regulations as multinational supermarket kingpins (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). Small producers involved in food production, processing and procurement activities must navigate these regulations with far fewer resources than those involved in supermarket networks. Initiatives that are “more alternative”, involved in the sharing or sale of post-consumer produce, are also constrained by food regulations, even those seeking to make use of food discarded by supermarkets as waste (though still well within regulated use-by dates perpetuating the faster-than-necessary movement of produce through supply linkages). These regulatory, redistributive and competitive articulations of AFIs with supermarkets, their regulators and suppliers imply on one hand that AFIs must be understood in relation to the dominant agri-food regime (Sonnino and Marsden 2006), yet on the other that this relationality holds a promise of disruption (Butler 1999). The political economy of the corporate food regime (McMichael 2009) constrains local action but also facilitates, if not encourages, ‘local manoeuvring’ (Sonnino and Marsden 2006:189). Manifest as transgression, local manoeuvring offers a more immediate and direct challenge to policy or legal contest. It presents AFIs, social entrepreneurs and community organisations with opportunities to exert “outward pressure” by repeatedly challenging convention with novel conceptualisations and practices of food. This we interpret as subversive performativity helping us to imagine a diverse and nimble food activism that opens, performs, and keeps open, alternative food futures.

#### **5.4 Transgressing Food Boundaries**

Concepts of transgression have developed in several major theoretical movements (e.g. Bataille 1962; Hebdige 1979; Foucault 1984 [1997]). In their food movement accounts, Goodman and Sage (2014) follow Foucault’s interest in the ubiquity of divergent (resistant) practice to account for transgressive practices of AFIs. They treat transgression as boundary crossing, and observe that in food there are multiple boundaries of knowledges, practices and politics that might be transgressed by what we call AFIs, including taste, the established organisation of food business, food regulations and food knowledge (Goodman and Sage 2014).

We have sought to connect this sense of ubiquitous transgression and its materialisation as boundary crossing with the politics of alterity encompassed in the diverse economies project launched by Gibson-Graham’s (2008) post-capitalist politics. This politics challenges capitalocentrism. Gibson-Graham practice this challenge by actively fostering ‘a politics of possibility’ (Gibson-Graham 2011:2). Eschewing a framing of diverse economies as “other” to the hegemon, Gibson-Graham (2006:xxiv) prefer to see the alternative as always and everywhere

present. While they prefer the language of diverse economies to that of transgression and subversion, there is a political project, or political possibility, to be developed at points of articulation between diverse initiatives and conventional practice. We locate our understanding of transgression here.

We inform this location of our sense of transgression with Butler's (1999) notion of embodied, subversive performativity, which opposes binaries by seeing alterity or diversity, in the other. She uses this framing to highlight the liminality of categorisations and the falsity of hegemonic notions of identity. Rather than observing a crossing over from legal to illegal, ubiquitous to unorthodox, the cases that we observe in this chapter emerge as decisive shifts in identity and practice. We see a more uncertain, partial and continuously interrupted movement where the alternative disrupts the conventional through ongoing and routine transgressions. The lens of performativity helps us to see how the subversion of power emerges out of a disturbance between constraint and agency (Butler 1999). The grey area between traditional hegemon and alternative practice is ground for contested practice, where struggle must continue to be performed. Power relations that mediate this grey area are entangled in contests around imbalances of potential to enact different futures. Butler (2005) argues that these imbalances need to be contested by activists by grasping opportunities to transgress the boundaries that secure the status quo and its privileges, to benefit the (diverse) other. In this case, transgression might involve contesting the perceived boundaries around regulations or capitalist practices of food, to enhance access to environmentally or socially "caring" food. We might see such transgressions as encapsulated by Shreck's (2008) three-fold classification of activism: 'acts of resistance' through non-participation in hegemonic systems; 'redistributive acts' aimed at more equitable distribution of resources; and 'radical social action' that seeks structural transformation towards more equitable worlds. For Shreck, as for Butler (1999), these acts involve issuing a pro-active challenge to convention, power and hegemonic order, but one that is not necessarily structured or programmatic. Where we follow Butler and Gibson-Graham more closely, is by recognising that such acts may be more mundane and undramatic than Shreck's categories allow, even encompassing efforts that float and enact new imaginaries less in opposition, and more as offering alternatives. The point is important if we recognise, as Allen (2003:3) does, that 'the presence and proximity [of authority] will inevitably matter to its exercise', and thus that transgression, like power, is situated and particular.

## **5.5 Transgressions of Alternative Food Initiatives in Auckland**

Many AFIs, including farmers' markets (FMs), dumpster divers, guerrilla gardeners and raw milk collectives, all enact some degree of transgression in their routine performances of food. A broad

survey (Sharp *et al* 2015) was undertaken to capture a diversity of practice among AFIs, which also uncovered practices of transgression. Our research draws on participatory ethnography with actors involved in four types of Auckland AFI, chosen out of the 23 surveyed (see Section 4.3 for further details) for closer analysis of what was identified as transgressive activity. We attempt to co-produce knowledge with research participants through collective storytelling about embodied practices of food making, provisioning and eating. This chapter is co-written with one founder-activist who is a member of a ‘transition community’<sup>28</sup>, and who intersects a number of different types of AFI, contributing a wide scope of alternative food knowledge. While not directly participatory action research (see Kinpaisby 2008), part of the research methods are informed by ideas of enactive research — to co-produce knowledge that enacts different futures (c.f. Carolan 2015; Gibson-Graham 2008). These accounts here are based on one of the author’s experiences as they joined with AFI actors in enacting irritant transgressions, looking to account for politics of their initiatives and its effects and affect. Extended participation in food initiatives with practitioners from the four AFI case studies was complemented by studying interview and research notes, as well as documentary sources such as local and national regulation, initiative websites and media transcripts on aspects of New Zealand food systems. Below, we offer four case study accounts — of a farmers’ market, dumpster diving, guerrilla planting and raw milk procurement — that illustrate the diversity of performances enacted by AFIs to subvert authority, convention or regulation through food transgressions and the production of transgressive foods.

### **5.5.1 Farmers’ Market**

FMs are perhaps known as the most conventionalised form of AFI, if not simply food provisioning for urban elites (e.g. Bubinas 2011). However, not all FMs conform to this model and the alternative ethics that do exist can be frustrated by regulation and convention. The FM committee in our case study sought opportunities to produce and sell locally, but encountered barriers to their own conceptualisation of local food sovereignty and autonomy, primarily in the form of accessing land. The market collective had a vision of alternative practice, seeking common rather than exclusive access to local land, dedicated to food production.

While aware of urban land markets and related constraints on their vision, they did not allow that vision to be unimagined. In one member’s view:

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<sup>28</sup> Transition towns are an international movement to bring “people together to explore how we — as communities — can respond to the environmental, economic and social challenges arising from climate change, resource depletion and an economy based on growth” (Transition Towns New Zealand Aotearoa 2018).

*“The main restriction is access to suitable land to grow Auckland's food within a 50 km radius ... We need MORE open space, both cultivated and 'wild', linked by bike and walking lanes, and more 3-5 story housing developments with common ground [to grow food]”.* (FM Coordinator — emphasis in capital letters, respondent's own)

In Gibson-Graham *et al's* (2013) provocation to *Take Back the Economy*, imagining alternative possibilities, despite their apparent implausibility, queers the normal. Why is it, this coordinator asks, that there is no land available for food in the vicinity of the city, and why is this effectively prohibited by the city's regulatory authority and related ownership rights? As revealed at their monthly committee meeting, the market committee collective imagined an inclusive (accessible), emancipated and food sovereign urban foodworld. This is transgressive thinking, though, rather than action. The coordinator of one suburban Auckland FM expressed frustration at regulatory barriers that restrict AFIs from making large-scale, ethically grounded actual changes to Auckland's food system, suggesting that:

*“Food laws restrict the range of produce that can be sold and make it hard for small-scale producers to meet stringent requirements: kitchen facilities, registration costs ... A level of standard hygiene is good, but [current regulations are] excessive and designed to support big-business over local initiatives”.* (FM Coordinator)

She refers here to the existing and proposed Food Bill, the controversy around which is centred on bureaucracy that creeps into small-scale production and threatens food sovereignty without any notable public need. Both the current and new Bill appear to view bartering and selling as equal practice, as does tax law. The implications of this are that the FM's diverse economic approach to both sharing and selling community produce from backyard poultry keeping and domestic gardening (Figure 5.1) contravened Food Bill regulations. Their activity, as we experienced, was replicated more than the 20 times per year that is permissible without licensing and, based on the multiple contributors to the 'homegrown produce' table, domestic produce was on many counts sold for a nominal amount/bartered illicitly due to the fact that it was through a third party (the stall). Critique of the various iterations of the Food Bill changes suggests that its wording and meaning have been deliberately ambiguous to keep open the opportunity to curtail subversive activity. However, irritant transgressive practice here erodes any perceived constraints by just doing differently.



**Figure 5.1:** Home-grown kitchen (domestically grown) vegetables for sale at a farmers' market

### **5.5.2 Dumpster Diving**

Dumpster divers, purposefully and directly transgress regulations of land and property ownership in their recovery of still edible produce from garbage skips, typically discarded by supermarkets or other retailers. They challenge unnecessary food waste by operating often in supermarket backblocks where, according to the law, activists trespass on private land and steal goods. They also transgress dominant practice and social convention in the name of ethics. As we learned in the field, and according to one Auckland dumpster diver, 'common health concerns [of dumpster diving] remain a barrier to increasing its legitimacy as [a] viable option' of food procurement (Diver 1). He counters this cultural regulation by suggesting that it is 'just social taboo stopping you from eating it, just give it a wash, it's all good' (Diver 1). This one view points to a larger movement where dumpster diving can be seen to transgress cultural, as well as health codes, which 'appear...somewhat unethical considering food shortages amongst Aucklands under-privileged/transient community [sic]' (Diver 1). This appeared to be a pervasive opinion in the field.

A dumpster diving collective interviewed by a local radio station claimed an explicitly political project of foodsharing for the greater good: 'there is an understanding within the community where a certain group dives...one night a week, because they are diving for a homeless shelter or something. We pass [recovered food] on to friends or other people who might need it' (Bracewell-Worrall 2012). The practice creates an alternative possibility, connections that form new relationships, even a new collective that joins the homeless or disadvantaged to a wider net of divers' relations and the food that they procure. As with the appeal by the FM for common ground

to grow food, dumpster divers advocate for common spaces, where one diver suggests 'it's not about having a turf, it's about sharing [the site and the pickings] ... to everyone' (Bracewell-Worrall 2012). This is echoed by another urban diver:

*"[t]here's one particular supermarket that sometimes has stock outside stacked on pallets ready to be loaded into the shop and sold. We have the opportunity to steal that stuff, but we don't because that's against what we're doing. We recycle the waste from these corporations. We don't steal, we redistribute." (NZ Herald 2015).*

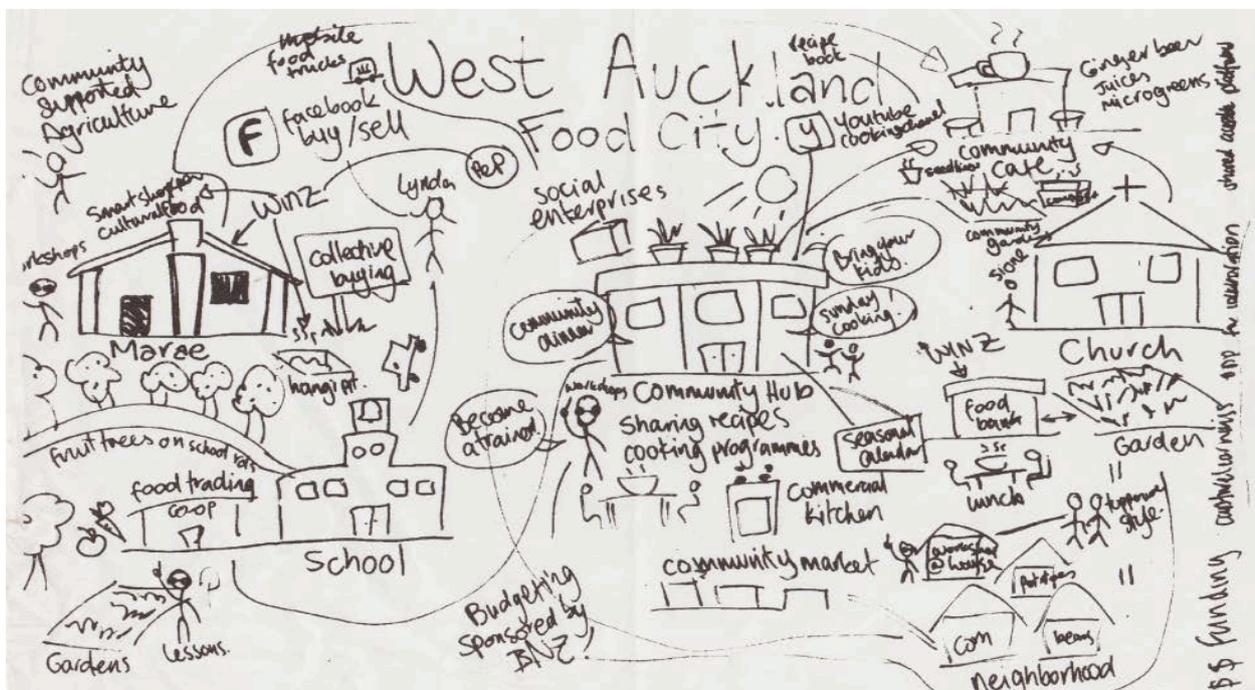
Rescued food transgresses norms of taste, social convention, class relations, private property, and health regulations, with both ethical and political projects front of mind.

Dumpster divers claim to take active, personal responsibility for their own food choices and those of society, in turn initiating social change and spatial transformation. Indeed, there is a rejuvenated sociality in their practices and identity making. They call themselves "resource recovery experts" and "foragers" and identify their cause as giving food waste another life. While the literature warns of the dangers of translating social activism into the construction of 'hero identities' (Fernandez *et al* 2011), the embodied act of rescuing urban landfill waste, redistributing and consuming it, projects an immediacy to the activism. Dumpster divers demonstrate a political corrective, which actively challenges legal and moral underpinnings of the current system. Outside of Auckland there are traces of subversive activities generating further disruptions to convention in the example of free food outlets (e.g. The Free Store 2016) which give away corporate donated food past its due date, in lieu of it being dumped in the skip for divers (activist or food insecure) to appropriate. Indeed, in each of our AFI case studies it is possible to gesture towards such activities that shift boundaries, arguably as a product of previous subversive activity.

### **5.5.3 Guerrilla planting**

Not so unique in Auckland's suburbs, illegitimately planting community fruit trees as an act of free food provisioning to suburban communities is practised in Sandringham by what some would call guerrilla gardeners. Council bylaws impede the erection of any structures or planting of any species but grass on residential front verges, claiming they threaten to obstruct access to utility services (Gibson 2014). For the guerrilla gardeners of Sandringham planting of trees therefore is a transgression of council bylaws but hardly a malevolently subversive act and one that promises little or no harm to people or property. Others have responded to such bylaws by challenging authority

institutionally. Kai Auckland, nominating itself as an urban food movement (Rock 2015:np), for example, uses the language of enabling citizens to manage their food sovereignty but adopts the approach of pursuing legal ‘access to land and permission to plant’. They suggest the remedy of creating linkages within the city council, deferring responsibility and accountability to a bespoke Empowered Communities Unit (ECU) recently established as a result of internal and external pressures to challenge slow and ineffective council responses to community voice. The ECU claims to have been set up to increase citizens’ power, influence, democracy, inclusiveness and participation over issues ‘that they care about’ (Auckland Council 2015:4). Kai Auckland aims to put access to land and permission to plant firmly on the agenda of ECU’s project to hold the council to its expressed commitment to empowered communities (Auckland Council 2015) by linking and mapping resources, disseminating information, and creating networks of food initiatives through the city, including new fruit foraging sites (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3, which illustrate a vision for community food networking as facilitated through Kai Auckland’s workshops). This food network illustration includes noticing and mapping where transgressive (informal) and more conventional (formalised economies of) food practices intersect. This includes activities like community fruit harvesting from guerrilla planted fruit trees on private but neglected land, and the fruit being processed domestically then sold to fund community projects (a practice that is on the fringes of legality in New Zealand, depending on the volumes of food handled).



**Figure 5.2:** West Auckland region’s food map which graphically represents a collective mindmap of food practitioners’ foodworlds in that location, as one in a series of ‘Visioning Auckland’s Food Future’ workshops. See the whole of Auckland assemblage in Figure 5.3.  
Source: C. Rock, personal communication, May 12, 2014



**Figure 5.3:** Whole of Auckland food mapping which amalgamated practitioner mindmaps produced at regional workshops of ‘Visioning Auckland’s Food Future’. See the collective mindmap produced at the west Auckland workshop, depicted in Figure 5.2.  
Source: Kai Auckland (2014)

Diminishing residential yard sizes and an expanding city have restricted access to healthy fruit beyond the constraints of the market (materialised in high supermarket prices for mass produced and imported fruit). Kai Auckland argue that, through public fruit trees in neighbourhoods, the possibility of community sovereign fruit is materialised, and for the guerrilla fruit tree growers this possibility only exists through illegitimate planting. Both AFIs imagine altered neighbourhood foodscapes featuring produce-lined streets and parks as a new ‘becoming’ of neighbourhood that will in turn open up consideration of what else is possible. The planting of these trees without permission involves logistical and physical work by community activists, and is always at risk of being identified and undone by council compliance workers. We observed that transgression has become iterative and tactical as participants seek to plant trees unobserved, sometimes on public or private abandoned land. It was pointed out that once established, and after putting down roots, fruit tree removal becomes difficult; more time consuming, more costly and perhaps not worth the while of a policy enforcer. Once trees are fruiting, they can be informally harvested, or foraged fruit can be sold into the community for and by local charities or community groups.

#### **5.5.4 Raw Milk Procurement**

Raw milk producers claim that raw milk yields better taste and health, and environmental and community benefits (by localising supply). The *Dairy Industry Restructuring (Raw Milk) Regulations* (New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries 2012) regulate raw milk supply by the millions of litres, restricting sales to the farm gate and to only five litres per person per day. The regulations and the high monetary cost of compliance and audit deter many small and artisanal producers. The recent changes in the law “make it much harder for small producers to sell food [and] make purchasing raw milk much harder” (Raw Milk Supplier). The benefits of raw milk are being lost, they claim.

In a submission against the recently proposed changes to the Food Act, an artisanal cheesemaker and owner of three dairy cows for this purpose, explained that she was unable to afford the ‘enormous compliance costs’ (evaluating, auditing and verifying), which she claimed were ‘geared for large dairy farms and commercial’ cheese-makers (Fraser-Davis 2010:1). These costs were prohibitive for ‘tiny, very safe, operations’ such as hers (Fraser-Davis 2010:2). The small-scale collective of raw milk advocates that we observed organised themselves to address such compliance costs for the producers. They conceded that they were actively contravening regulations by moving raw milk in bulk between dispersed collection points: “legally we should not be buying that much raw milk as one person even if it’s on behalf of others” (Raw Milk Collective Member). However, they also pointed to efforts to obscure their practices. Knowing that she could be penalised for

collecting enough raw milk per journey to supply six families, one collective member flippantly suggested that: “if I was pulled up for having excess then I would have to say I was going to bathe in it”.

In mid-2015, restrictions on selling unpasteurised milk in Aotearoa New Zealand were lifted (effective 1 March 2016) revoking limits imposed in the Food Act 1981 (New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries 2016b). The continuation of sales will be subject to testing and labelling of milk, and record keeping will be closely monitored. The government’s food safety guidance suggests that the changes ‘aim to better manage the risks to public health, while recognising the demand for raw milk among urban and rural consumers’ (New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries 2016b:np). Though it cannot be claimed irrefutably that this regulation change results from work done by raw milk collectives, the boundaries are visibly shifting and raw milk collectives continue to operate, and more recently, largely unimpeded.

## **5.6 Transgression for Transformation**

These cases highlight the generative dimensions of food transgressions. They make possible alternative practices that simply cannot ‘be’ without transgression — without the transgressive act and the authority or boundaries that make possible its becoming. By dumpster diving, for example, actors depend on the industrial food system for the food waste that is both revealed and mobilised as food by their acts of transgression. ‘Ironically divers need the very market [and structure] they are trying to resist’ (Fernandez *et al* 2011:1780). Of course, the ethical project of the divers is two-fold — to continue to convert ‘non-waste’ into food and distribute it to those in need, and to eliminate ‘waste’ and thus their own practice. This interdependence is not over until it is over.

Transgressions draw attention to inefficient, ineffective, unjust, and undemocratic conventions and practices. Dumpster divers challenge the presupposition that ownership is reasonable for goods that have been discarded, notwithstanding ethical considerations that previous owners be held responsible for discarded “bads”. Alternative food producers perform irritant transgressions like exchanging raw milk through collectives, thus crossing conventional boundaries and accepted stabilities in the dominant food system. Producers and consumers alike question and transgress norms and conventions such as health claims of pasteurisation, taste norms that surround dumped food, and foraging for wild fruits or vegetables on suburban streets.

Much of the generative potential of transgression is iterative, manifest as an emergent force. Each minor transgression, or application of pressure outward, is never fully re-normalised. Rather it stimulates (re)negotiation of terms of engagement with urban convention as its embodied

mobilisations push outward, in the form of foragers up urban fruit trees or divers in dumpsters. (Re)settlement of the conventional and the transgressive allows scope to further challenge unjust food regulation and only widen the liminal space. At the same time, transgressions can reveal alternative possibilities. By transgressing, dumpster divers reveal the possibility of a more legitimate system that re- or upcycles discarded, but still edible, food. These possibilities are also evident in access to free and healthy “fast” food, in the form of fruit from illicitly planted neighbourhood fruit trees. In the presence of transgression, codification and conventionalisation is never fully complete (Goodman and Goodman 2007) — new raw milk regulations must be made, new bylaws on fruit trees must be struck, and new ‘alternative’ food spaces are forged, however temporary. The cases above demonstrate how transgression permits the emergence of something different.

## **5.7 Wilful Transgression**

How then do we think about sustaining transgression as a force for making the world otherwise and more just, of adding new momentum to transgressive iterations and to the sense that transgression is generative? Our case studies suggest that participants are drawn to the alternative by moral imperatives and a will to make the world otherwise, and that their practices make tangible difference by disrupting various orders. At some level power and resistance are interdependent — transgression is a dynamic force co-constitutive with the renegotiation and resettlement of cultural reproduction (Jenks 2003). But, is there anything here that helps us think about how to prevent the alternative from: collapsing on itself as it expands — losing out in struggles with dominant conventions, or coming into contact with a greater force at the liminal edges of alternative economies?

The cases here might be understood as start-up or seed transgressors, irritants that may or may not go further but are an ever-present irritation to power. They point to and pick away at unresolved tensions and ongoing, low-level and restricted struggles around property rights and capitalist labour relations. While the latter is largely backgrounded, each of the cases centre on contests over these crucial capitalist ordering devices. These AFIs push for a renegotiation of property rights and the rules that secure them, but the outward pressure on both orders is only moderate and the AFIs carefully negotiate the limits of their transgression. The raw milk collective practices food economy outside the dominant industrialised system and challenges gross, industrial food discursively and through established politics, but transgresses few legal boundaries. Even the dumpster divers and guerrilla gardeners do not perform aggressive acts of civil disobedience. The guerrilla gardeners are not yet uprooting existing species to plant fruit trees.

There is a sense of conservatism in this self-moderation of AFI transgression, and a lingering liberalism and protective performance of privilege, but there is also recognition that greater disobedience may invite punishment, unwanted attention, surveillance and/or increased bureaucratic or financial burdens (see Suchman 1995). There is even a wider wariness of pushing beyond the tolerable such that transgression precipitates not negotiation but rather regressive moves and a tighter grip on food regulations that only further restrict or eliminate progressive food activities. The communication of transgression can bring unwanted attention. One of the cheese makers referred to above, for example, was investigated after a feature on television's Country Calendar in 2009, inviting all the attendant paperwork burdens of demonstrating compliance. A dumpster diver talks of counter surveillance tactics, of 'having someone on look out and keep[ing] an escape route handy'; and then in the same breath of the regressive response of supermarkets: 'even if the bins aren't locked they still consider it stealing for some f\*\*\*\*\* up reason' (TripMe 2010). Community fruit tree planting is undertaken covertly to avoid unnecessary attention. One raw milk collective member remarked that "many people will not talk to others about it because operating as a collective is in [the]...grey areas of legality".

Irritant, and often benign, transgression will not, in isolation, create the massive change required for a more ethically and socially embedded food future; but, as Gibson-Graham and colleagues argue, it is more than a start. Other politics can be played in other spheres, such as trade regulation lobbies, the activism of anti-GMO protesters or the work of La Via Campesina for land reform. The work of AFIs in pushing out the edges of food that is "good"-for-all is valid, vital and irritating for authorities. It is also affective, encouraging citizens to seek opportunities to ethicalise their behaviour and responsibilities.

That AFIs manage their transgressions is only one side of the story. They must also reproduce themselves. They must encourage the collective, reproduce moral commitments, and imagine and enact new practices in the face of self-interest, apathy, exhaustion and generational change. Kai Auckland, for example, could disband, or the dumpster divers and guerrilla gardeners could simply go home and become composters and organic consumers, respectively.

Finally, AFIs must manage their transgressing, their moral imperatives to transgress, and their internal politics and reproduction so that regulation has positive health, environmental and social values. Carolan (2011) and Goodman *et al* (2010) remind consumers and activists of the food adulteration, environmental negligence and hierarchical power structures that can come with local foods and community provisioning. Food production and social organisation black boxes require dis- and re-mantling through a regulatory architecture. Frames of order that overcome paralysis of

distrust need not put food sovereignty beyond reach. Through irritant transgressions, AFIs not only challenge the attrition of ethics and integrity in food practices, and advocate for a more progressive social reproduction, they also practice this food in sustainably different ways.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Irritant transgressions in the food economy cases considered in this chapter foster political agency and make visible power relations and the constraints of being and doing otherwise in food relations. By challenging power relations materialised in regulations, conventions, norms and imaginaries they cross boundaries such as the Food Act or private property, “pushing them outwards” and “working them around”. In this way, the irritant transgressions of AFIs in the liminal edges of practice do both visible and invisible work, both directly disruptive and performative. But in its mindfulness of the potential for regression or collapse of the food movement, they are also often both strategic and tactical. Just how politically benign or subversive any particular AFI or specific act becomes is unclear, but each has a performative potential and leaves a material trace.

We argue that irritant transgressions have potentiality in the context of food provisioning in Aotearoa NZ. Not just an Auckland phenomenon, within and across the cases given here, these AFIs do quite different things, with practices located in different traditions of liberalism. The multiple characteristics of these diverse activities offer evidence of AFIs: promoting responsibility and autonomy; materialising ethical will and practice; challenging taken for granted food knowledge and norms; and increasing democratic participation in consumption and production. They appear to stimulate rapidly punctuated political challenges to the status quo. They also have an agitating iterative dynamic that impels (re)negotiations of order by regulation, planning and market. In short, we argue that these transgressions enhance collective food practice and related political capability, destabilise norm and convention, and, through iterative progress, reveal new possibilities, shift boundaries, erode constraints on practice and bring new food things to be.

## Chapter 6 | (RE)ASSEMBLING FOODSCAPES WITH THE CROWD GROWN FEAST

### 6.1 Introduction

In March of 2014, Auckland’s corporate-led inner-city promotion agency Heart of the City (HoC 2016) advertised the Crowd Grown Feast (CGF) as a world first, crowd-sourced, crowd-funded, ‘peasanting’ of slow food (HoC 2014). The event was touted by organisers as an exhibition of live music, social bonding and food where participants and their home-grown produce would come together for a collective pop-up meal in a refurbished silo near Auckland’s city port. The CGF was one of a host of what have been called “alternative food initiatives” which have become a small but vibrant feature of foodscapes in Auckland and many other cities in the global north. In this chapter, I use the case of the CGF to ask what might be made of these initiatives in terms of current trajectories of agri-food scholarship.

The food studies literature has positioned initiatives like the CGF as “alternative”, bundling them into a category understood as collectivised, grassroots, politically motivated challenges to corporate food chains. “Peasanting” as used in CGF advertising stands as a paradigmatic example of such alternative initiatives. Yet the CGF is far from the radical, farm-based challenge to capitalist production posed by La Via Campesina and the food sovereignty movement who have popularised the term (Wittman 2009). This chapter examines the contradictions that emerge from understanding the CGF as alternative in these relations. It argues that locating food spaces in binary categories such as alternative/capitalist restricts efforts that foster a vital food politics. Instead, I examine the CGF as a food encounter — a temporary assemblage of commodified, non-commodified and differently commodified elements and relations.

### 6.2 From Categorised Foodscapes to Relational Assemblages

Critical food scholarship across the post-structuralist-political economy divides has highlighted the blinkering and damaging effects of politicising food in binary ways (see Goodman *et al* 2010). Popular and celebrated alternative food movements are argued to ‘universalise[] and elevate[] particular ways of eating as ideal’ (DuPuis and Goodman 2005:362). In doing so, they entrench class privilege and individual rights even as they appear to challenge them, whilst distracting from structural inequalities in agri-food systems (Johnston 2008; Guthman 2008a). We see this in examples such as “good” organic farming versus “bad” industrial farming (e.g. Alkon 2013), or,

consumers' rights ranked above those of farmers' (e.g. Guthman and Brown 2016). These scenarios are presented as a limited suite and juxtaposed against each other, constraining understandings of food practices and relations. These examples also ask food subjects to position themselves in binary terms politically and ethically.

Goodman (2016b) has issued a call to geographers to embrace a 'more-than-food' approach to examining production-consumption relationalities in agri-food scholarship. He points to the value of a framework that addresses the interplay between 'epistemological, methodological and ontological' questions and potential analytical entry points (*Ibid*:258). With its focus on relational agency, practice, emergence, and the simultaneities and spontaneities of knowing and doing, assemblage theory offers opportunities to draw together these different domains of knowledge making, which are at the same time space making. Lewis and colleagues have taken up this potential to make a similar point, applying analytics of assemblage to agri-food questions in their New Zealand based *Biological Economies* project (see Lewis *et al* 2013, Le Heron *et al* 2016; and, the *Biological Economies* Special Issue of the New Zealand Geographer 2013). They suggest assemblage refers to 'a socio-spatial formation that is brought into being by knowledge production, notably by assembling economic practices, relations and trajectories of thought and action' (Lewis *et al* 2013:185).

In fact, as Lewis and Rosin (2013) observe in an overview of the *Biological Economies* project, the "who", "what" and "how" of epistemological, methodological and ontological framings of knowledge making respectively, are always both overlain and underpinned by the question of "why?", or the *politics* of knowledge making. Again, they emphasise that each of these four entry points to, and domains of, knowledge and its making are inextricably and inescapably entangled. For geographers, there are a fifth (spatial) and a sixth (temporal) question of "where" and "when" might be seen as pivotal to the nature of knowledge and space and their interplay through knowledge making. Despite being premised on practice and knowledge co-production Lewis and colleagues' examples are stubbornly institution-bound and pre-scaled. An explicit practice-oriented turn is required to realise the potential political value of the CGF through assemblage thinking.

Elsewhere in geographical literature, influenced by similar ideas of post-structural political economy, Baker and McGuirk (2016) turn to 'ethnographic sensibility' as a way of realising the potential of assemblage thinking to capture *multiplicity* and *uncertainty* in policy research. They insist that 'adopting an ethnographic sensibility' and 'tracing sites and situations' (*Ibid*:1) will allow researchers to capture (by both knowing *and* enacting/extracting) political possibilities in the moment, and escape prior categorisations of action and knowledge making. In this chapter I

operationalise assemblage thinking in a similar way, aligning these epistemological commitments to multiplicity and uncertainty with a relational ontology that presents the world as *diverse* and *unexpected*. The subtle difference in terminology encapsulates two feminist imperatives, which, whilst implicit in assemblage thinking, demand explicit attention in a politics of food. These are: first, noticing and politicising marginalised thinking and practice in any discussion of difference; and, second, theorising that actually existing, yet unrecognised or unpredicted, aspects of any field have valid political agency. In this way, the notion of diversity as opposed to multiplicity emphasises that framings can be mixed and co-constitutive rather than simply manifold. Further, pointing to the *unexpected* rather than uncertainty, allows for a more radical conception of emergence and the application of a methodology that is unashamedly exploratory and experimental.

The inclusion of a feminist and ethnographic approach, amongst other methods, in this research is significant (see Wynne-Jones 2015). It underlines a commitment to a particular form of enactive research practice, one informed by a feminist ethics of care (see Lawson 2007). It also shows a commitment to researching these concepts of diversity, the unexpected, and actually existing things and practices in the wild (Carolan 2013). These approaches are, of course, firmly grounded in Haraway's (1988) idea of situated knowledges and Gibson-Graham's (2011:2) feminist methodological approach of 'starting where you are'. My 'wilds' in this chapter are the CGF. Already immersed in the activities of various AFIs in the Auckland region, and increasingly committed to living and creating foodworlds beyond the supermarket, I took part in the CGF as a researcher-participant. I grew tomatoes to contribute to the feast, visited others' gardens and kitchens and assisted in tending and harvesting crops, collected produce from growers' homes and workplaces, helped to set-up the event venue and shared the collective meal with other producers. Taking part in these practices offered me opportunities to observe and co-produce the event over a five-month duration as well as specifically on the day of the event.

Ethnography also gave me a particular vantage point from which to incorporate other research methods and sources, including drawing from maps of growing sites provided by the event coordinators, and discourse on event websites and Facebook pages. Similarly, my shifting positionality as an affected researcher-participant gave me a "productively unstable" position from which to read and re-read transcripts from discussions and interviews, and research notes that I took throughout the timeline of the event. Discussion included unstructured interviews before and after the event with three initiative coordinators, the head cook, and participatory sessions with two grower participants in their gardens, and conversations over the CGF meal with another two of the 100 attendees on the night. I brought these materials together with anonymous secondary data acquired from a post-event feedback questionnaire on the CGF that queried their practices. My

efforts towards, and attention to, practice in this case was a performative engagement, which led to unexpected encounters and outcomes and altered and shifting subjectivity (see Butler 1993; 1999; Foucault 2001). I came to experience in my own self as well as in relation with other subjects (human and more-than-human), the agency of enactive bodies and worlds. I did so, as Michael Carolan suggests, through method (Carolan 2016a).

This kind of approach has understandably come under fire from those interested in more stabilised conjunctures of power-knowledge and causal relations (e.g. Peck 2014). While structural forces are clearly at work in shaping, for example, relative capacities to take part in the CGF or possibilities of scaling it up, my aim here is not to confirm their work but to highlight diversity and the unexpected in any research object(s). The idea of ‘actants-in-assemblages’ (Bennett 2007:138) highlights diverse and unexpected socio-material constructions. It ruptures a hegemonic order that sees human subjectivity as discrete. And it disturbs the view that objects are inert, immutable and apolitical. To see objects and their relations as enactive is to consider the processes of turning objects into food as ‘equally political, economic, cultural and affective as they are material’ (Goodman 2016b:262). By viewing, researching, and practicing the CGF as an assemblage I also introduce my own personal politics by performatively co-producing new knowledge, ways of thinking and different (food)worlds (Law and Urry 2004). I allow myself to notice and be changed by what is diverse and unexpected in a feminist politics and method open to different possibilities of world building (Gibson-Graham 2008; Cameron and Wright 2014), that generates hope in new imaginaries of food.

### **6.3 The Crowd Grown Feast: Diverse and Unexpected**

According to one coordinator, the CGF emerged to enable participants to be actively “participating and creating the kind of [food] city that they want to live in” where there is “definitely room for more people to be doing alternative food” (Coordinator, pre-event interview). The CGF’s synchronisation of urban and backyard fruit, vegetable, egg and milk production for the feast was described as ‘[r]eally slow food’, so much so, that ‘you have to grow [it]’ (Crowd Grown Feast 2014). I had bought my ticket to the CGF in December 2013. My five months of preparation for the event included learning to grow certain vegetables myself. I received guidance on weeding, watering, harvesting and pest treatment from the coordinators and other peer CGF growers, as mediated through a CGF social-media webpage. As I worked with coordinators on preparations for the event, it became clear that while the event schedule was more or less predictable, there were still ‘little and big surprises, [ruptures,] that performatively happen as bodies seek to solve the problems encountered in everyday life’ (Kaiser 2012:1048). In this case the problem perceived by coordinators was the increased disconnect between producers and consumers, urban and rural, at the

hands of the industrial food system, a problem regularly tackled by “alternative” food initiatives (AFIs). The solution, as often seen by AFIs, was to pursue “an alternative foodscape” or “alternative food system”, which I problematise below.



**Figure 6.1:** Assemblage of Auckland’s industrial port, disused concrete silo and immaculate tableware on the evening of the Crowd Grown Feast.

Source: Alex de Freitas



**Figure 6.2:** Interactive map of growers’ and the produce’s “localness”.

Source: Alex de Freitas



**Figure 6.3:** Surplus produce grown for the Crowd Grown Feast, “free to a good home”.  
Source: Alex de Freitas



**Figure 6.4:** Homemade fruit bunting above one of the silo’s dining tables.  
Source: Alex de Freitas

*White tablecloths, gleaming glassware, candlelight, lapping water. Chatter, live music, a stocked (carbon-zero) wine bar courtesy of the sponsors. (Author, field notes).*

*There was a pin board of vegetables on a map of the city, a pile of surplus produce free to take home, home-made multi-coloured bunting in the shapes of fruit, and a pop-up ‘kitchen’ constructed in the centre. The backdrop was a cavernous room of reinforced concrete, carved into the interior of a silo by Auckland’s port. (Author, field notes).*

My field notes here were two consecutive observations of the CGF (visualised in Figures 6.1 – 6.4). The feast was contingent on the assembly of a number of unexpected components, some of which might be seen to juxtapose surprisingly (see above). For example, in typical food studies literature, an alternative food experience complete with DIY and/or grassroots components would seem to contradict conventional elements of say, corporate sponsorship and a lavish table setting (Figure 6.1). Auckland Council had facilitated the event’s use of a derelict, abandoned cement silo (Figure

6.4) in Auckland's waterfront area, recently refreshed for public use. The context of the silo for a non-mainstream food event was an interesting juxtaposition given the silo's historical reference as an industrial vessel for holding the concrete with which Auckland city's commercial centre and port were built (Silo Park 2017). It appeared that elements of the rural such as growing produce and tending animals, were being blurred unexpectedly with urban industrial spaces and technologies in ways that were intended to be alternative to mainstream food practice.

While the CGF established a set of event protocols to mitigate against poor or lost crops during food production, there was still something surprising about the misfit home-grown produce we grew:

*Home-grown, misshapen fruits and vegetables, garden dirt still intact, of varying ripeness. These, as well as backyard chickens' eggs and goat's milk are expertly reconstructed into a multi-course vegetarian meal. De Certeau wrote in "The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking" about classes of objects chosen — meats, fruits, vegetables, dairy — to be folded into each other to produce a meal that can never be disassembled. (Author, field notes).*

As the coordinators and I made our way around pick-up points of participants' homes, gardens, and workplaces to collect produce that would make up this assembled meal, I considered that the diversity of ingredients that I was gathering represented a more complex politics than a social movement against the dissociative effects of industrial food. As an example: while supermarket vegetables are typically reliably shaped, sized and surfaced, it was impossible to expect the forms that the predominantly home-grown CGF food arrived in, even though *some* diversity was expected. When picking fruit with one grower to provide his quota of produce for the meal, he enthusiastically expressed, "This apple is [unusually] pink in the middle! ... I also like that it's a weird shape." A few days later at the pre-feast assembly point, as I unloaded the produce that I had collected, the CGF coordinator and I noticed some vegetables had arrived frozen, as the growers' way of dealing with produce that had ripened too soon. Some fruit had succumbed to mould in transit. We noticed imperfect vegetable skins with discoloration and scars constructing a representation of 'good' food in this context, in contrast to smooth, glossy offerings of the industrialised food system.

As a diner at the feast, like others, I was attuned and accustomed to the different sizes and shapes of produce that I had grown. We looked for distinctive items of produce within plated dishes, and told stories over the dining table of how that produce came to be. Individual participants became identified by their contribution to the meal. "Tomato Tim" for example, had found the season hard-

going and had to supplement his cherry tomatoes with distinctively shaped ones that a friend was already growing on an established vine. We conceptually constructed these fruits and vegetables as “artisanal”. This classification inverts conventional notions of the aesthetic values of food, by signalling that urban and/or home-grown ‘inglorious’ (by typical consumers’ discernment) fruit and vegetables are not the substandard produce that supermarkets might have them believe. Despite our celebration of this diversity of ‘artisanal’ food I read a parallel project by the coordinators, to “fancify” the food:

*“... we didn’t really want to have [the meals] just coming out as rustic. Not that there’s anything wrong with rustic, but we really did actually just want to take that home-grown produce and elevate it up to a really fancy kind of level just to show people that that can happen, that it’s not just ‘home-grown food is just crappy [and] knobbly and you have to use it [for] crappy knobbly home things’, I guess.”* (Coordinator, post-event interview).

Does this coordinator’s intent further an elitist project of fancy food or normalise the alterity of inglorious produce? Or does it actually show that these spaces are neither and both, and complex? The ingredients for the feast were further imbued with what some might view as a conventional flavour, where purchased vegetables were assembled into the mix of produce. In instances of significant crop failures, coordinators of the CGF had recommended purchasing supplementary produce from farmers’ markets, organic stores or employing alternative, diverse economic strategies (see Cameron and Wright 2014) of swapping or foraging produce. I had managed to grow just enough tomatoes for my contribution to the feast. I had collected one grower’s apples that were bought from a store and receipts were included in the bag. I had also collected purchased cucumbers that growers had attempted to pass off as their own home-grown supply. This meant that cooks and eaters could not know exactly what form of produce and what relational politics we would be assembling, cooking and eating for the feast.

The produce was not only unexpected and diverse in its physical and economic form but also in the places in which it was grown. Structural supply chain thinking does not expect that food eaten in the city is grown on-site or nearby, much less by its urban residents who are producers-as-consumers. I observed participants tending produce in their various growing locations, where the CGF had engaged us in growing produce in our own backyards, on our balconies and, more controversially on our berms (see Sharp *et al* 2016), the public grass strips in front of our residences. While diverse

locations of production<sup>29</sup> were used, some of the purchased food (while perhaps organic, or “local”) was grown in rural, industrial farms, again assembling the conventional with an event that is seen by some as an alternative project.

A diversity of food growing locations also meant diversity in the growers themselves. I observed food grown on rural industrial farm locations, which connected us with rural, industrial farmer participants. The majority of the participants, including myself, were urban dwellers. My discussions with them revealed them as a mix of paying volunteers, Auckland Council members, corporate sponsors, and social enterprises including Enspiral<sup>30</sup> for its network development focus, and WeCompost<sup>31</sup> as a provider of materials for growing ingredients. Some participants had histories of protest, some worked closely with corporate food, and some were voluntary and focused on grassroots education. Survey results and observation indicated that participants were predominantly white, middle-aged, middle-class Aucklanders with a self-declared food interest. They ranged from ‘newbie’ to ‘experienced’ in a self-assessment of their food growing knowledge. Participant producers/eaters were asked why they took part in the CGF and most reflected on the imagination involved in the encounter: “[I] like to be part of developing new systems — this is a great alternative ...”; “I wanted to be part of something that I thought was truly unique”; “... to do something different”, “It encouraged us to try growing things we perhaps hadn't before” and “Because it was a little crazy! But possible!”. The unexpected and “unique”, attempts to “try” new things expressed hopeful food futures, but what was materialised was perhaps never even considered as a possibility. This is perhaps best summed up by a CGF coordinator who, before the feast, stated “once you get a little bit involved in [this] kind of stuff you ... come to learn and realise ... that a lot of stuff is a lot more possible than you maybe thought before” (Coordinator, pre-event interview).

#### **6.4 Disruptive (Re)assemblages**

Studies of alternative food have historically focused on the consumer and their disconnection from ways in which their food has come to be (e.g. Sage 2010; Turner 2011; Tornaghi 2014) — disconnections that alternative food systems have been framed as able to repair. That type of research suggests that an increasing reliance on industrial food processing means that consumers are physically separated from food production practices which might be peripheralised in the city

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<sup>29</sup> Some of these are the same as Cameron and Wright’s (2014) documentation of properties on which ‘diverse, alternative’ food is produced.

<sup>30</sup> Enspiral is a social enterprise “experiment to create a collaborative network that helps people do meaningful work” (Enspiral 2015)

<sup>31</sup> WeCompost is “a network of New Zealand businesses committed to reducing and recycling organic waste” (WeCompost 2015)

margins or hidden in factories. It also infers a flawed logic that a perfectly alternative food system would meet our environmental, human labour and animal welfare ethics. If we recognise that foodscapes are more complex than this we must concede that discounting potentials for change in and around ‘conventional’ practices is short-sighted. Indeed the conventional articulates with the ‘alternative’ and emerges as something completely different. In the CGF, I experienced unexpected diversity in economic food practices, where I myself swapped and grew produce, and noticed the connections of purchased food. I also saw interplays between diverse spaces of food production, where suburban backyard plots, potted-plants on inner-city balconies, and rural industrial farms were assembled together to create a foodscape that was greater than the sum of its parts.

Marrying the empirical example of the CGF with assemblage thinking moves us to recognise that foodscapes can include unexpected and diverse relationships. The idea that the juxtapositions of these food objects and practices are awkward or merely co-existing is disrupted, to instead reframe objects within assemblages as having validity and agency in the spaces that they are found. As we have seen, an assemblage framework does not only fold people (our conventional referent) together in relational space. Objects and technologies such as the silo and corporate sponsorship can also be seen as parts of an assemblage and as having political influence via ‘the capacities of bodies [both human and more-than-human] to affect and be affected’ (Müller and Schurr 2016:224). By (re)assembling foodscapes in these ways, we see how these sites and bodies of practice antagonise dominant structures, as diversity is revealed in demonstrations of difference, as boundaries are blurred where unexpected events happen and spaces of practice are made indiscrete. The assembling of the CGF blurs the edges of producer/consumer, urban/rural, alternative/conventional and good/bad food. Viewing foodscapes this way, we see that purist political projects of food are misplaced. Overlaps between classifications such as alternative/conventional suggest that AFIs’ intent to “fix” the disconnect between producers and consumers is also misguided, where these connections always existed and can be traced.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Geographers are significant contributors to the multiple disciplinary fields that make up agri-food studies. There is something in their openness to experimentation (Peck 2014) and their training across the cultural, the economic, the environmental, and the inquisitive ways that they approach the structural/post-structural divide that positions them to uniquely identify generative potential in what might appear to be a homogenous, elitist, corporate urban project. In this chapter I have drawn on geography’s generative openness to address contemporary debates in the alternative food

literature, which are animated by deep-seated contestations. The disruptive potential of both post-structural framings and that of AFIs, are key axes of such contest.

Throughout this chapter, I have called attention to the additive and disruptive potential of assemblage to conceptualise and practice agri-food systems differently. Rather than allowing structuralist rationality to continue to define possibility, why not seize the opportunity that a different lens and practice offers us, to make new realities? Rather than potentials of ‘either/or’, can we learn to see diverse possibilities and consider those that we never expected? Paul Chatterton’s account of ‘the urban impossible’ calls for a wide political imaginary that contemplates and actively explores the reach of a city: ‘what it could become, what it has never been’ (2010:234). Viewing and practicing the CGF as an assemblage allows one to be the “critical urbanist” and create opportunities for the unexpected with the messiness that is being simultaneously ‘within, against and beyond the current urban condition’ (*Ibid*:236).

This chapter highlights the value of leading with a ‘more-than-food’ approach that recognises ‘relationalities of food, space and place’ (Goodman 2016b:258). It takes advantage of ‘rich resources for helping us understand how challenges are mounted against conventional thinkings and doings’ (Carolan 2016b:142) that more holistically capture, think through and frame complex systems. Campbell (2016) asserts that regardless of the approach to studying agri-food, structural or post-structural, the political intent is the same, of ‘rewriting, resisting, rethinking and redirecting agri-food concepts away from the untheorised “thinkings and doings” of conventional, agriculture, conventional food systems, techno-centric agricultural science and depoliticized consumption’ (*Ibid*:221). However, while the objectives might be similar, I contend that the politics of conceptual and methodological framings must be carefully considered. Structural approaches alone neither accommodate the fascinating and rich connections that actually exist between and amongst embodied and more structuralist accounts of food supply, nor do they grasp the political. Thinking through assemblage, there is no avoiding the kinds of entanglements that are important to our understanding of food and how it is politicised.

By making diverse and novel practices visible where they are found, and by reading for and practicing difference we can ‘undertake a reparative motive that welcomes surprise, tolerates coexistence, and cares for the new’ (Gibson-Graham 2008:619) while as researchers, taking part in both an academic and a political project. An assemblage methodology offers progressive food scholarship a framing that enables diverse foodworlds, which value those phenomena that ‘cannot be counted’ (but which count) (Carolan 2016a:141). This chapter moves forward emergent post-structural and enactive food research to include relations that are more dynamic, diverse and

unexpected, rather than discounting practice that might seem “out of place”. Interrogating the example of the CGF identifies ruptures in the logic that sustains “the alternative”, “the conventional” and other false dualisms — a logic that contributes to limited visions of the possible. Investigating these spaces, reframing contradictions and revealing blurry boundaries enables critical food scholars to make realities visible, and use these as our bases of discussion and reimagining to reconfigure a politics of what *is* possible.

## Chapter 7 | CARE-FULL KALE: ATTUNEMENT AND EMBODIED POLITICS OF AN ALTERNATIVE FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates the idea of a politics of affect that we might play out by coming to know and practise food differently, by becoming ‘attuned’ to it. Like Latour’s (2004a:207) depiction of ‘becoming a nose’ — where a formerly ‘dumb’ nose learns an awareness of subtle odours in the perfume industry — practices of working with food allow one to become attuned to it. Through this process of one becoming conscious of food’s relations, food simultaneously requires and acquires ‘a sensory medium and a sensitive world’ (*Ibid*:207). As Latour describes the ‘*malette d’odeurs*’ (p206) — the odour kit which is systematically smelled to train an impressionable nose *to become* — enactive food practices enable a similar familiarity with, for example, knowing the produce one harvests from the soil, or the food one savours in eating it. The point here is that food only really becomes food in certain contexts, when we are bodily attentive or attuned to it as food, through practice. ‘The notion of embodiment ... is grounded in the idea that we know and experience the world through our bodies’ (Turner 2011:510), through the tactile, olfactory, taste, auditory and visual (see Rodaway 1994), or “sensed”. Attunement is important because its capacity to sense difference makes the crucial link between a “dumb nose” and an affected body. It opens up a capacity to be affected, or to act differently, where the translation of attunement to affect materialises as change, both at an individual and collective scale. This chapter engages the dual interests of transforming food politico-epistemologies and food studies methodologies to connect ethical practices of ‘alternative’ food to a new politics of affect.

Attunement for affect offers a counterpoint to Michael Carolan’s (2011) work on ‘tuning’, where he discusses how our bodies have become tuned to a particular brand of taste, as “Global Food” has become conventional in our everyday. Reasonably then, our bodies could become (re)attuned to a more ethical, just system of food by performing the ‘art of noticing’ (Tsing 2015b) — honing a curiosity for life and methodological practice — along with the art of enactive and reflexive attentiveness. In this chapter I reflexively ‘more-than-follow’ (Goodman 2016b) a farm-to-fork journey of organic kale, grown for a foodbox social enterprise, and interrogate this food object for its affective encounters. I do this to argue that attunement cultivates bodies to become perceptive to differences between objects and things through practice, by ‘taking the body seriously’ (Hall 2000), and by using the researching body as an instrument of measurement (Longhurst *et al* 2008). Getting

at the attunements of kale allows us to: consider complexity of the object and practices around it; eschew binary thinking; and instead, think of the possibilities around the edges. Exploring the politics of attunement in this case is important for recognising how different food knowledges translate into altered practice, which transforms our food system materially. An attuned “learning to be affected” gets beyond food facts, to an embodied, diverse and different knowing of our food that is experienced by and through the body. Further, transformed food practices generate hope for new and other possibilities of food practice.

Anderson (2006) usefully draws a trajectory between the conditions of affect and hope, and then goes further to consider how an enactive politics of knowledge production can fulfil this hope. He directs us to ask ‘what can a body do when it becomes hopeful? What capacities, and capabilities, are enabled?’ (p734). Premised on the idea that affect can be theorised to relate to a body’s change in agency, where each change ‘is accompanied by a feeling of the change in capacity’ to act (Massumi 2002:213 original emphasis), I propose that the foldings (multiplicities that situate a body in larger assemblages) that make up the kinds of attunement traced empirically in this chapter, allow the development of a different sort of affective food politics. This difference is manifest where: 1) hopeful actors and their behaviours are changed through their embodied attunements to food; 2) food is changed or “made differently” through our attunement to it; and, 3) these changes can be translated trans-individually towards collective food system change and hopeful new imaginings of food futures. As we negotiate resistance to our multiple and varied political projects we can *feel* constructs that are ruinous, or that close down possibilities. ‘What pushes back against our political imaginary and techniques of thinking we employ are quite different stances toward theorizing the world that, for many, stand in the way of a politics of ... possibility’ (Gibson-Graham 2006:1). This chapter unfolds the furls of an alternative food chain of kale in particular, tracing attunements to see what might be materialised if we theorised and practiced food differently: enactively and reflexively.

I more-than-follow: an organic kale grower, a social enterprise foodbox coordinator, a foodbox packer, a kale consumer (foodbox customer), and the kale itself, whilst also locating myself at each interstice (and beyond). This set of connected, empirical cases in this chapter are presented in a way that is both like and unlike standard ethnography, with the theory between the lines, tangible in the description but organised into vignettes of practice and object. It speaks to Carolan’s (2011:21) intervention that ‘research about the senses must also be *for* the senses and avoid the dullness of overly formal, overly analytic, and overly anonymous scholarship’, in that the narrative is sensory and descriptive and *performative* of a more-than-following of more-than-food (Goodman 2016b). There is also an auto-ethnographic dimension to this research. I don’t talk in depth of my own

journey of learning to be affected however, but rather the relations of affect and attunement, from which a politics might be forged.

## **7.2 Attunement: A Diversity of Foldings**

The recent affective turn in geographical work, has engendered an embodied food politics that incorporates enactive and visceral aspects of knowing food (e.g. Probyn 2000; Mol 2008; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2008; 2010). This literature connects to the vital materialities that theorise food as an actant (e.g. Bennett 2009). Manning (2013) goes further, thinking through attunements of humans to more-than-human things, and more-than-human to more-than-human, using sound as her referent. Probyn's (2016) in-depth observations and reflections in *Eating the Ocean* provoke us to think about food as enacted out of sensed, lived experiences. In cultural studies food literature, such perspectives have developed out of post-structural understandings of food object relationships, for example Michael Carolan's (2011) pivotal *Embodied Food Politics*. Even in more gritty material food literature a reductionist view of attunement might be presented as just about feelings or emotions.

However, there are clear material transformations that can emerge out of the human and more-than-human relationships made with food when attunements are read as a multitude of particular non-representational foldings, with an associative 'capacity to sense, amplify and attend to difference' (see Ash and Gallacher 2016:np). Perceiving objects through this lens of enfolded attunement as an extension to readings of text and discourse, is itself an act of difference, as is the object's process of becoming as it is assembled through new and different food knowledges. Engaging the concept of foldings offers a way of articulating how bodies become perceptive to differences between objects and things through practice — or, attuned — in order to enact particular worlds into being.

As a philosopher of becoming, Deleuze (1988; 2006) interprets the idea of *foldings* in particular ways that are useful for conceptions of attunement: 1) *material* foldings, or the folds of the body, acknowledging that we have bodies that the outside environment has relations with; 2) the foldings of *relations between forces*, or conflict creating potential for change; 3) foldings of *different knowledges* or 'the fold of truth in so far as it constitutes a relation of truth to our being' (1988:104); 4) the folding of *the outside (into) itself*, where the inside is no more than a fold of the outside, in the self-production of one's own subjectivity. These types of folds are inherently connected, themselves folded together and accommodating emotions and feelings, sensory attunements as well as tacit understandings of difference. Let me elaborate on how attunement might be seen as an enaction of these four interdependent ontological, epistemological and methodological foldings.

Deleuze's first folding considers that our bodies have discrete zones of expression that constitute a relation with the body (Deleuze 2006:98). Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008) suggest that through food, 'memory, perception, cognitive thinking, historical experience ... all intersect with individuals' sensory grasp of the world' (p465), inferring an epistemological junction with what is materially sensed (such as tasted and smelled). The second folding is of relations between forces, or social conflict. This troubles the concept of a passive or distinct body (e.g. Mol 2002). Third, the folding of knowledge of the object, of multiple epistemological understandings, involves allowing oneself to notice new possibilities of knowledge production. This includes enactive research (see Lewis et al 2016; Carolan 2013c). Deleuze's fourth folding is a process of personal change that folds the outside-in, rather than a positivist folding of the inside-out.

In reading a food supply chain of kale through Deleuze's foldings, we can bring to bear insights from scholars working in different food traditions. I suggest that these cognitive elements are all rather folded into experiences through sensory attunement, and become imbued into the observer/participant. So too, does the active body enact a reality of food. The problematic of a distinct or passive body is clearly unpacked in Annemarie Mol's *The Body Multiple* (2002), where she critiques the concept of one, *real* object, where a body's performance varies contingent on the particular moment, object and site of its condition. In her examples of disease, depending on which medical body (clinician, examiner, discipline expert, or indeed, carer, family member, owner of the object-body) is performing their evaluation, different realities are simultaneously witnessed, enacted, or relegated to the background. Mol muses that 'we may wonder which of these "bodies" is mobilised in which sites and situations — not just in but far beyond the hospital' (*Ibid*:36), including in the way that we articulate bodies with theory, which is part of the untidy complexity, and politics, of the object. In food supply, we might question what food and other relational bodies are mobilised in what contexts. The folding of knowledge of the object can be seen in an alternative supply chain of kale. It concerns what we know about kale and how we construct it. For a researcher, new encounters of knowledge are performed alongside subjects' routine practices, so an enactive researcher and subject can co-perform and produce knowledge.

Following these epistemological lines of flight is to 'be able finally to think otherwise' (Deleuze 1988:119) for all participants. Crucially though reality of the object is not merely something to be revealed, but is regularly produced by enaction, or doing. Finally, by participating in the story of an object (in this case, kale) through enactive research, researchers are affected by their embodied performance in relation to it. By internalising the external, we are modified relative to our environment, and attuned to its context. Through this folding, we encounter power relations that contextualise the way we live materially, and reciprocally enfold facets of our own positionality

into ourselves. I conceive of attunement as an enaction of these connected folds, translating an expression of affect, through practice.

### **7.3 A Reflexive Following of Kale**

Empirics here are based on five months of in-depth enactive (e.g. Lewis *et al* 2016; Carolan 2013a) and performative (Gibson-Graham 2006) participatory ethnographic research that follows the hands that handle, and the mouths that eat, kale. I interviewed, observed and worked alongside a grower of organic kale who supplies a foodbox scheme, a coordinator of that foodbox, a foodbox packer, and a foodbox eater. I also make explicit links to spaces of kale as well as its connections to and between more-than-human objects, by exploring the knowledge construction of kale. Whilst I interviewed and observed the human actors related to kale, enactive and participatory research methods meant that *I* was also a grower, a foodbox packer, a foodbox eater, and by eating and then metabolising the kale *I am* also the eaten. A focus on attunement confronts methodological and epistemological universals that have been pervasive in geographical thought, whilst attending to an academic and social ‘ethics of attunement, a more sensitive, experiential mode of assembling’ (Gibson-Graham 2011:4) that materialises a change in our foodworld.

A turn to methodologically “following” commodities in the early 2000s moved agri-food scholars into a new geographic territory, connecting growers with consumers internationally and across north/south divides (see review in Campbell 2016). What my accounts below provide is an ‘alternative’ food analogue to Ian Cook *et al*’s vignettes in *Following the Thing: Papaya* (2004), which interspersed documentary sources and interviews with field notes about the political economy of a conventional papaya supply chain. Being wary of overextending the term and producing “very wordy worlds” (Crang 2003:501) I think of the *more than* ‘more-than-following’ (Goodman 2016b) approach of this chapter as a *reflexive following* of kale. My narrative here does not merely trace a kale food chain but looks outward to human and more-than-human relationalities and inward to personal reflections of food. This includes my acts of organising fieldwork and being present in the field, sensing and thinking about food through an enactive, participatory methodology.

#### **7.3.1 The Grower**

For six hours I work alongside Tom on the farm: picking, carrying, washing, stacking, packing, feeding, eating, observing, and contributing my own thoughts and practices. I felt distinctly “other” before I arrived. “You’d better bring gloves if you’ve got townie’s hands” Tom’s wife had told me over the phone. And then a conciliatory, “our daughter wears them sometimes. She [goes] up to the

city to study”. This made me question my contribution and the basis of her regard for me: as a researcher? A woman? A non-farmer? When I shake Tom’s hand his skin is like cracked leather, tanned dark and his nails were caked with soil. I admire them for my imagination of their history of years of hard graft. In Tom’s calloused hands, I read hard physical work to grow the kale that I would eventually eat. And in comparison I read, in my own skin, an absence of farm experience. It was as if, affectively, ‘bits of the body ... [were] patterned together with feelings and thoughts, interacting patterns and relationships, narratives and interpretative repertoires, social relations, personal histories, and ways of life’ (Wetherell 2012:13-14). That these types of relations might be read from a handshake spoke loudly to the affectivity of sensory encounter.

When I arrive, Tom has been up and about for 6 hours. We pick chokos off the vine and bag them in hemp sacks. As we work he tells me of the farm’s history. Tom’s family bought their property as a conventional farm. Over 25 years he and his family worked hard and sacrificed financially to convert 10 acres to certified organic production. Amongst other enterprises they sell to a foodbox scheme, which means that Tom, his wife and daughter pick-to-order from the farm, and then deliver the produce to the foodbox packing hub. It pays Tom and his family 50% of the total retail value, however business is tough. Tom and his family are growing not just kale, but also leeks, choko, parsley and broccoli, working over 30 crops a year. Tom’s relatives run an organic produce wholesaler and a honey farm. He wakes at 4am regularly to either make the run to the foodbox delivery/packing depot, or deliver produce to other community markets. I sense that this kind of working conversation is unusual, as it is punctuated with many distant pauses and requirements to range out of eachothers’ earshot.

I am brought back to (present) life when I hear chickens clucking around me. I feel the elements including the cold and lulling white noise of rain with intervals of deafening raindrops on my raincoat. This full quietness — itself a sensory engagement — and the steadiness of our work gives me a sense of being one cog in a series of cogs that are made up of my own immediate doings and those around me.

*Silence and slowness are openings, of course, opportunities for the body to shift its stance, to meld a little more with its surroundings; chances for the mind to mull over what floats by on the affective tide, or to swerve from its course as momentum decreases. Undoubtedly these are openings for learning. Not learning in the sense of increasing a store of knowledge but in the sense of becoming other, creating connections and encountering possibilities that render us newly constituted beings in a newly constituted world.*

Gibson-Graham and Roelvink (2010:322) *An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene*

We pick kale in the rain but I am warm in wool, and my feet are dry. It is repetitive manual work. The condition of my own hands others me. I brought my gloves. The rain and the work are calming and meditative and permit me a sense of flow. In my mind's eye, I am a bright blue waterproof beacon in what I initially see as a sea of uniform Pantone green 18-0117. I feel as artificial in that environment as I believe I look. My senses are receptive to new experiences. I have little idea what is relevant in this context — how to think, act or be. I have no concerns about chemicals as I am working on an organic farm. I feel unthreatened in these honest surrounds; that I can trust the people, the food and animas here. My unaccustomed muscles burn carrying many crates and bags of produce, hiking up and down hills to the washhouse. My skin shocks at the cold water when immersing the vegetables to liberate insects and dirt. I am learning to be affected as I am learning of affect, and some lessons are uncomfortable.

Tom works in silence, casually attentive — already attuned in the way of Latour's account of specialist teachers in the perfume industry — to the colours and shapes of kale around him. In a way he is teaching me to be affected and attuned to kale through his own attuned knowledge. For example, when picking kale it is satisfying and, I learn, a mark of good quality when the leaves snap cleanly from their stalks. We discuss the discerning customer. I become attuned to the variation of colour in the kale fields as we scrutinise individual leaves for browned edges or yellow spots. I do imagine the consumer, when picking the kale. So does Tom, he tells me. He imagines their impression of this A+ grade kale with the tightest folded, greenest leaves (Figure 7.1). These commercially valued leaves are underlain with ground cover of rejected, faintly yellow-tinged leaves (Figure 7.2). I learn from Tom that about a third of these harvestable leaves are left to mulch, to meet customer (or foodbox) expectations of visible quality. With this knowledge I feel saddened, almost angered, when I find softer, yellowed leaves because it seems wasteful — of effort, of resources to grow the kale, and of time. I exclaim this to Tom and he nods. My experience alongside Tom's routines is short-lived and experimental, but I do get a sense that learning is co-

affective. I also consider the fact that of any consumer, subscribers of an alternative food initiative might be sympathetic to the plight of a struggling small-scale organic farmer, which is what these yellowing, kale leaves represent to me in my attunement with them.



**Figure 7.1:** Tight furls of dark green, crunchy A+ grade kale.



**Figure 7.2:** Yellowed leaves on the edges of “quality” kale.

We stop for a break and Tom’s daughter joins us in the house after working the soil that morning. She is nursing a sore back. I admire her routine exertion on the farm, but quickly sense that she is dispassionate. She puts her gloves on the kitchen table and tells me she wishes that the family used more efficient technology on the farm but that it does not match a farm philosophy that is lighter on the earth. A more delicate touch than heavy equipment is needed for the furrows of seeds, seedlings and saplings to maintain quality and values to which Tom is attuned. It later transpires that she is impatient to finish her University degree, to quit farm work and move to the city. Foldings here are far from neat.

There is tension in the fabric, where folds threaten to pull taut exposing Tom's daughter's reluctance to continue work on the farm, his wish for stewardship of their organic land, their economic need to get out, and a sense of his obligation to help create a more responsible foodworld. My new attunement to these realities disturb a less attuned construction of a cheery, organic farmer working the land in the perpetual sunshine. But this disturbance is what is needed to reveal inconsistencies in power relations and more complex relationalities of the food system. There seems to be a crumpled disappointment in the reality of what, on the outside of the fold, appears to be a utopian food solution. Or perhaps, reflexively, that is my own disappointment folded into the encounter.

### **7.3.2 The Foodbox Coordinator**

When the kale is being 'handled' by the foodbox logistics coordinator, the vegetable seems to sensorily disappear. Its capacity to teach affect gets lost in the middle of the chain to a certain extent, represented as numbers, a weight and a price. Equally my (subject-led) opportunities for enactive participatory research diminish in my interactions with intermediaries like Matthias, who plans the foodbox "food chain". We discuss the foodbox practices at a café that he sometimes works at. I notice his hands look more like mine than Tom's. As Matthias tells me, the foodbox customer base started off as a group of people who enjoyed 'getting their hands dirty' by gardening and supporting local food. He was part of the initial collective that assembled on an online forum as a food community. I considered whether this was the modern way to collectivise food — online, disembodied, and virtual? Or attuneable, but through what sensory inputs? The online food movement of foodbox subscribers that Matthias coordinates (together with the producers and transporters) therefore emerge in this assemblage as a socio-technical phenomenon that promotes an embodied, "earthy" product. It seems that the role of the foodbox coordinator is as much occupied by the performances of the logistics technology as it is by the person. Matthias made these logistics visible to me by sketching them for me on a piece of paper. In search of embodied food practice I take my ethnography online.

The foodbox's website speaks of the initiative's political projects, with a choice of organic and local, and the inherent benefits of seasonality, freshness, and a two-step supply chain to reduce food miles and support a local economy. These qualities all fold into the construction of the kale that I look to select online. Virtually "consuming" the food attunes me to it in some ways. Viewing images of food blogs, recipe websites and bountiful vegetable gardens fosters a sensory immersion of sorts, activating my salivary glands and conjuring mental imagery and flavours of a meal yet-to-be-prepared. Pictures of perfect, green, tightly-furled kale generate memories that elicit conflicting

feelings. By choosing it, am I only perpetuating supply chain waste of the not-so-green, not-so-furled kale? I revisit these senses later in my auto-ethnography as *the eater*.

Matthias lamented that the coordination of the foodbox is constrained by the volume and variety of available food that falls into their philosophical criteria — “there aren’t enough farmers”. Having worked through Matthias’ sketch and on the farm, I feel something of Tom’s frustration. As Matthias tells anecdotally:

“[Tom] was up at 3am to pick the rest of the kale crop for the boxes this week. He is a typical [smallholder] farmer, works really hard and then struggles to sell stuff ... [for some] it makes more sense to sell up the farm and move into the city” (Matthias, late 20s, conversation in Mt Eden Village)

Having experimentally enfolded, or co-enacted-into-being elements of Tom’s sacrifice, knowing his economic reality and understanding the foodbox’s need for smallholders, I see how foodbox and farmers’ objectives can be oppositional.

Matthias has a direct relationship with all of the foodbox growers. He puts in orders to farmers several days prior, with an embodied “knowing” (in many senses) that results from having visited the farms and handled the produce. Matthias tells me that often kale is picked the morning of delivery, to save it from wilting. The (conventional) alternative to this is a 3-week interval between produce-picking and supermarket shelf. Since customer orders are placed in advance, Matthias orders only those volumes required, unlike in a supermarket environment which orders surplus food based on estimated purchases. On days that I packed boxes, Matthias was there, himself a participant. He replenished produce on the packing line as packers boxed-up customer orders. There was no perishable fruit or vegetable produce sitting on shelves at the end of the day — no waste. Two crates of red and green kale were included in the factored-in surplus, for produce damaged in transit or on the line which was used or parcelled up for the City Mission, by donation. I sensed a difference between this surplus food that was destined for a homeless shelter, and the surplus that I have witnessed being relegated to a supermarket dumpster. Matthias says the foodbox’s work is inherently political but logical given the conventional food system and climate. Their goal is to make the foodbox as accessible and easy to deal with as a supermarket, to make it a viable alternative to conventional food. As I have felt the change in my capacity to act (Massumi 2002) from “doing” on the farm I consider whether the foodbox scheme’s relations are truly attuneable — making it an *affective* alternative to conventional food and encouraging collective care. I sense from Matthias’ storytelling of the foodbox coordination that he has genuine hope for change.

### **7.3.3 The Foodbox Packer**

#### ***7.3.3.1 At the packing depot***

Like farming, packing foodboxes is an early morning activity. Tom would have been awake 3 hours before I got up in the dark to be at the foodbox distribution depot at 6:30am. Early morning robotic tendencies are quickly supplanted by lively encounters, springing the senses wide open. The cold, high ceilings of the steel packing shed, the stop-animation of forklifts transferring pallets to the vans, and the mixed odour of diesel, soil and citrus, at once offensive and uplifting. Efficient but convivial food box packing is sustained for 4+ hours. Efficiency is interrupted by running out of packing tape, or contending with a series of boxes that have inadequate volume for the size of produce (such as the seasonal occasions when large produce are being grown, like when cauliflower and cabbage are being packed on the same day), restocking of produce onto the packing tables, or when there is a gear shift to a different foodbox type (for example, from Box A: only organic produce, to Box B: only local produce) and packers need to quickly attune to new weights/counts of different produce. I consider that these disturbances would never be satisfactory in a corporate food distribution arrangement, where these processes of enacting food might be more mechanised than manual; more separated-from than sensed. We cannot ignore that these conventional food relations and knowledges also stimulate attunement. The politics of practice emerge, however, as we are imbued with (sensory and other) information as we notice food's differential performances and constructions. This includes the feelings they elicit, and our capacity to act, for example, to choose, or eat, or replicate some behaviours and curtail others.

The double-boxes are heavy. There is a variation on the packing line for this particular week, as each customer received two large lettuces this week and the chard was cut with such long stems. Additional boxes are needed to contain all of the produce for each customer. This prompts me to contemplate the "regular", pre-ordered shapes and sizing of most conventional produce for international standards and shipping. I became attuned to the feel of different produce. When packing conventionally produced, predictably sized tomatoes I can sense that 6 of them would amass to about the right weight designated for each foodbox (800g of tomatoes per box) that week. A bunch of 5 conventional Cavendish bananas, a fruit made of very complex relations (Jangård and Gertten 2009) reliably weighs about 1kg. With these conventional products, it becomes easy to predict weights by turning produce over in my hands as they learn a kind of muscle-memory. I sense their political relations through their 'perfection' as commodities, just as I can feel the relationality of 'inglorious' fruit and vegetables: it is less easy to predict weights for organic, or conventional but non-uniform, mixed size and grade potatoes, kumara, carrots, apples, casimiroa or

backyard-grown feijoas. Their shapes are unexpected and diverse. I consider how efficiencies of a corporate food system demand consistency. Kale is an exception to the alternative/conventional rule. It is consistent, conventionally grown or not. It feels very light for its volume. Kale fleshes out a foodbox, filling and stabilising the spaces around other irregular shapes.

Packers remark on the beauty of some of the produce. It tends to be the conventionally farmed items. Equally, packers marvel at the strange shapes of the organic produce. Materiality of the food seems to be folded into its politics. I find the variety of colours, odours and textures that move down the packing line diverse and arresting. Autumn colours of rainbow chard stalks evoke appreciation, and the smell of passionfruit stimulates the salivary glands. We enthusiastically get to know new (to us) fruits and vegetables — like the first time we encounter a casimiroa. It is educational and memory making. It is, as Anna Tsing remarks of the nomenclature and taxonomy of mushrooms, ‘easy to feel the pleasure of naming. Here, through naming, we notice the diversity of life’ (2010:192). By naming and noticing, we are attuned to and affected by this produce, where we had seen it, and in its context. This includes noticing the life that lives amongst the produce.

*“[There were] lots of bugs in the lettuces – worms, snails and spiders. Should I leave them so that the customer is similarly pleased, or remove them like I do the softer, brown outer leaves, in case consumers are averse to the ‘earthier’ side of the foodbox? The lettuces today — each one was small and weathered. They were a very good price and from a regular, loyal grower, so according to Matthias it was a responsibility of the foodbox to buy these from the producer so that they weren’t dumped or turned back into the soil” (Author, field notes)*

Among the foodbox packers we have lots of conversation about preparing meals with the foods that pass through our hands, imagining the food being consumed, particularly commercially uncommon items like chestnuts, choko or presently popular produce like kale.

*“I love greens, especially kale. These are in such good condition. You couldn’t tell they were organic” (Celeste, 50s, packing boxes at the foodbox hub, Mt Wellington)*

As Celeste, one of the packers, handles the produce she verbalises a commonly held sense of difference, that organic somehow makes concessions for poorer presentation or a lesser quality. Discussing her relations in and around packing and eating foodbox food she seems attuned to her food. Celeste’s outside seems folded-in, ingested, as she (re)produces her identity and subjectivity around food. Working for a food related social enterprise is part of that affectedness and consequently, (self-discloses) her identity. After 4+ hours of packing, perhaps she also feels my

sense of remorse while sweeping up and disposing of spent lettuce leaves and squashed berries, as well as some ‘perfect’ leaves of unwieldy kale dropped in the packing routine, destined for a worm farm.

### **7.3.3.2 At the foodbox packer’s home**

At Celeste’s home, we come in from the kale planted in her garden, discussing our mixed use of the foodbox and home-grown food, and the home economics of food wastage. She has a glut of rice that her son had cooked the night before, but with a texture not to her liking. We discussed salvaging it by stuffing capsicums with it:

*“I don’t have a capsicum, that’s the problem. And I am trying to [only] use vegetables from [the foodbox]. If my box is empty I’m not going to go out and buy [other things], that’s my commitment. And ... not having any rotten vegetables to throw away. We live on kimchi and seaweed until we get [foodbox] ingredients so we can cook some hot food ... [And] I don’t waste kimchi juice — I make soup. [I mix it with] any vegetable [broth], and also you can make kimchi soup with just kimchi and water and that’s really nice”* (Celeste, 50s, in her kitchen, Titirangi)

The foodbox and her garden are representative to Celeste as contexts of good food, and her resource limits. Celeste is cognisant of waste and the temptation to purchase unnecessary excess as a manager of a household kitchen where she regularly reuses ingredients and upcycles leftovers from previous meals into new ones. Further, she describes how she attunes to locally available food in her own cultural interactions with the foodbox, and hopes for a future working with organic food. Celeste’s reflexive attunement here also seems to be constituted of folds of hope. Korean by birth, she makes kimchi at home and aspires to build a business around making it with traditional methods, but traditionally unconventional ingredients like kale, in Aotearoa NZ. We go through the steps of making her version of kimchi in her kitchen: rinsing and squeezing pre-soaked greens; coarsely chopping garlic and ginger and the greens; adding fish sauce and sugar; using our hands to mix flavours and produce together; packing the vegetables and some brine into a crock.

*“Ginger, garlic, onion and some [local] kelp ... I am trying different results using different ingredients like kale, for my future business. I’m looking for organic ... No Korean people who live in New Zealand are interested in organic kimchi — as long as they get kimchi they’re happy — [but] I am consciously choosing this path.”* (Celeste, 50s, in her kitchen, Titirangi)

We eat some of an earlier batch of kale kimchi, with rice. It is delicious — tangy, sour, hot and savoury. The smell is pungent and the taste is different to the kale from Tom’s field. Culturally

infused, it also articulates with the latest western food fetish of fermented food and as I interpret, acts as a cultural mediator, or a translator of custom, for Celeste. But Celeste is attuned to her food in more than just sensory ways, and discusses her sense of difference in power that kale affords her through being a provider. Celeste hopes to make a business out of organic kale kimchi. She also speaks of her participation in the foodbox's alternative methods of paying staff. They enact diverse economies (Gibson-Graham 2008) through the option of either wages, or foodbox credits which equate to a box of food at the end of the packing day. The 'provider' status that Celeste refers to below, is not as per convention, of bringing of money into the household:

*"I have to keep my [foodbox] job. Food is for me the most fundamental thing. And then not just [being paid in] cash, you can bring [home] your food in a box — it is so fulfilling. I can proudly say [to my family,] "I am feeding you!" Not just money, money. I feed you, I [have] become a very powerful person, since I started to work with [the foodbox]."* (Celeste, 50s, in her kitchen, Titirangi)

Having made kimchi with Celeste in her kitchen, I feel a sense of the difference in power afforded by this new different, and contextual knowledge of kale. I have learned to be affected through being taught her labour for, and in, kale. Celeste's personal attunement to foodbox food exerts an influence of accumulated power and an aptitude for change beyond herself. For example, her work with food implicitly folds in affect and care for her family as well. Celeste's affectedness is conveyed as hopefulness, enacted and then fed back into her attunement to and through food. The value of food, therefore, is not conventional for Celeste. Through embodied experiences with (foodbox) food, the value of her food is in affording her power, and joy, and fulfilment. I consider my own transpersonal influences in my work with the foodbox, bringing produce (along with my own food stories) home to be shared with my family, in a similar way to foods I had previously dumpster dived for, foraged for, and collected. My attunement to this food enfolds taste, new cultural constructions, diverse kale identities and my own experiences.

### **7.3.4 The Eater<sup>32</sup>**

Foodbox subscriber and backyard gardener Mark describes his relationship with food. The foodbox is open on the bench top. We discuss the list of foodbox items over a dinner made with foodbox

<sup>32</sup> See Michael Goodman's *Eating Bioeconomies* (2016a:241) where he makes a conscious 'rhetorical and conceptual shift that moves from those rather narrow, economic notions of "consumers" and "consumption" to those of the more messy, complex and perhaps theoretically and empirically deeper notions of "eaters" and "eating"'.

kale. He explains his attempt to source his vegetables and fruit from his own garden or from the foodbox initiative. He explains that:

*“there are always unseen people preparing your food. It causes more reflection about where your food comes from ... what does it mean and what has happened to it. When did they get it, who’s in the chain, who drove it first ... These are the kinds of things I get slightly worried about”.* (Mark, 38, Waiheke)

His remarks echo the idea of ‘food from nowhere’ (see McMichael 2009:147), a black box that hides the lively materialities folded into processes that bring food to the point of ingestion.

*“Fresh off the tree always tastes better. [Foodbox fruit] often has been pulled off the tree not too long before I get the box. It doesn’t last that long. Supermarket food seems to act totally different. It’s a remarkable success of progress and technology that allows supermarket food to last an incredibly long time”.* (Mark, 38, Waiheke)

I chew the kale and consider Global Food, which might be seen to inhibit sensory aspects of attunement and regulate the food I eat. I look around the kitchen and see examples. Even for fruit and vegetables, within packaging I cannot smell it. In the supermarket I am discouraged from pressing it for ripeness. Does this encourage us to be dumb, unsensing noses (Latour, 2004a:204) and abandon our corporeal sensitivities (Carolan 2011)? This provocation is not to suggest that only foods that are deemed ‘alternative’ incite attunement but rather that the capacity for sensory connection is enabled by being in touch with food in a way that is more than just ingesting it. Again, I am not suggesting that attunement only applies to alternative food. Attunement is universal in food that is sensed or embodied, but knowing and understanding food through these sensory encounters allows us to enact food knowledge and food objects differently — care-fully.

Mark’s further comments seem to hope for provenance and touchability in the food system via the foodbox. He considers the apple he is holding:

*“[There is] something strangely nice about see[ing] that if I leave the organic food for a week it actually starts shrivelling and rotting ... seeing that microbes are willing to eat that food suggests that it’s probably good for me. It’s edible and recognised as food. It means I need to eat it faster. I notice that if I pull carrots out of my veggie patch then I can’t leave them long or they’ll wilt. The organic food behaves like food out of the backyard. ... I fight with the rest of nature to try and eat it first”* (Mark, 38, Waiheke).

Mark has been attuned to the behaviour of food animated in its natural aging and he engages with it on that basis. There are important folds in here of a pre-enlightenment animism. One might read into Mark's comfort with eating overripe fruit, elements of the accounts given by Rose *et al* (2002) and Cameron and colleagues (2011:44) of 'country' speaking to indigenous groups and telling them how to work with the land. That is, food might be seen as speaking to eaters and teaching them affectedness through signals of flowering, fruiting, ripeness, rotting, or desirability by other living things. Food is speaking of its environmental or living conditions, its nutrients and its lifetime, whether bruised, fleshy or desiccated.

I reflect again on my own eating of the same foodboxes. I recognise that Mark and I are acting politically as we customise our foodboxes in our positionalities as middle-class consumers. As an eater myself, in choosing kale over another item of produce for this foodbox and plate, and as one of only 500 customers in Aotearoa NZ, I contribute to the viability of a fraught organic kale farm rather than a struggling smallholder avocado grower, or for that matter, a conventional producer on a larger farm who likely endures other complex pressures, frustrations and hardships through the conventional system. This is not ignorant to the politics that indicate that localism and 'voting with your food dollar' (Wilkins 2005:271) can be seen to further racialise and class-ise access to food whilst conveying a particular morality about what is (good) food (Guthman 2007).

I too am an eater of kale. I am a white(ish), privileged eater of kale. This matters because:

*... often, the body that eats has been theorised in ways that seek to draw out ... sociological equations about who we are ... But rather than taking the body as known, as already and always ordered in advance by what and how it eats, we can turn such hypotheses on their heads. In the act of ingestion, strict divisions get blurred ... it becomes harder to capture the body within categories, to order stable identities. This then forcefully reminds us that we still do not know what a body is capable of.*

Elsbeth Probyn (2000:14) *CarnalAppetites*

So while my and Marks' participation in the foodbox scheme make us complicit in an unjust economy of food into which our privileged positionalities are enfolded, I reflect that the examples I describe here are particular to a context. This context is a specific place and time, and structural systems that have dictated Tom's decision to sell to an "alternative" organic foodbox. Further I reflect on which of my "bodies" is mobilised in the site of packing a foodbox or choosing its

contents, or in researching this subject matter? And which body of kale is mobilised, not just in, but far beyond the farm? I am hopeful for the proliferative potential of this type of work, and my newly noticed connections to my food. I am affected by the folds of kale that I eat and hope for change to support a system of more ethical food.

### **7.3.5 The Eaten (I Eat Kale)**

While I can't speak for kale, I can document its various manipulations and depictions in relation to us/to me. Kale has been variously perceived as a food for the masses and the middle classes. As a Kenyan 'indigenous food' *sukumawiki* (kale) is grown and eaten by others in the yards of slums, as well as consumed by the wealthy (Richardson 2013). It is still eaten as a modern staple in some European countries. It has been eaten as an object of emergency food provision (Hutchinson 2013) and an object of resistance in the making of guerrilla gardens, sometimes to the disappointment of its users based on its, sometimes, elitist persona (Crane *et al* 2013). Our multiple representations of kale — as a health food, a staple, a source of dense nutrients, an easy-to-grow crop, a luxury food item — have both determined and been determined by the complexity of food related political projects over time. In modern day, its greenness, its furling, its enfolding with storytelling of its growing conditions, producers and consumers, are all agentic for *our* proliferation of its species (see 'the grain joke' in Mol 2008). When I eat kale I eat and then metabolise the politics and relationships that make it up. In eating it, I also *co-produce* its politics and the multiple knowledges that make it, as food.

I am eating kale now. Its smell and flavour invoke memories of the farm, the foodbox, kimchi, and my-and-kale's relations with the world around us. When Annemarie Mol (2008) famously 'ate an apple' she spoke of Chilean apples tasting of Pinochet's spilled blood. Psychology literature suggests that the witnessing of social injustices can generate emotions, which have the sensory effect of changing one's sense of taste and smell (Skarlicki *et al* 2013) as experiences are folded into oneself. One can infer then, that if such sensory channels are open, depending on the context the kale that one eats could taste of interpersonal (in)justice, and our attunement to it could open up opportunities and capacities for change.

In exploring the 'I' who eats kale, and in theorising my own subjectivity, before I ate from the foodbox, kale to me tasted expensive and luxurious in my experience of its situatedness. I used to taste it as the stuff of bourgeois dieters and faddish health nuts who regard it as a superfood. Of course taste is done over and over again (Teil and Hennion 2004) in a continual process of attuning to one's food sensorily, contextually, through multiple knowledges and reflexive encounters with it. As affect 'gives the body's movements a kind of depth that stays with it across all its transitions –

accumulating in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in tendency' (Massumi 2002:213), *attunement* for affect is the sense, feeling or understanding that is accumulated. My engagement with kale from the organic foodbox — from Tom's farm, Matthias' facilitation of its mobility, Celeste's care in packing and preparing it, and Mark's consumer choices — embodies material folds. Different knowledges (and politics) of kale are folded together as I learn of its peasant past, as well as knowing its modern, fetishised, superfood status. And my own taste of kale folded my own personal politics and encounters inside out — attuning me to kale. To me *this kale* tastes vegetal, earthy and good, of caring for bodies and land, and also of conflicts of economics, and different hopes. My attunement to foodbox kale folds its many complex relationships including my memories of it into my own subjectivities. I like to like the taste of kale.

#### **7.4 Learning to be Attuned for a Different, Care-full, Hope-full Knowing of Kale**

*How do we know what a mushroom is? ... what a food community might be? In short, how do we as thinking, tasting, eating, doing bodies come to know what food is? And, importantly ... what might this mean both ... practically for doing, living with and imagining food differently?*

Michael Goodman (2014:272) *Becoming More-Than-Food*

How are our understandings and appreciations of food represented by our lived experiences of them? We know food through being attuned to it. Methodologically, a focus on attunement demands that we calibrate to new, beyond-representational measures of what might be noticed and folded in at sites of engagement between and amongst food and its relations. Where an inattention to these different methods and data has served to extract food objects conceptually from the food system, the type of following performed in this work opens spaces to pay ethnographic attention to both production and consumption parts of the process, and to the attunements that give context to particular food practices. Attunement itself is noticeable throughout the assemblage of the alternative foodbox if you are sensitised to experiencing it. Folded into kale are stories of livelihoods, waste, accultured food, and of food's political ecology. Methods of reflexive following here have accessed folds of kale through sensing, sensitive and sensitised bodies; by using the body as an instrument of measurement. Tacit understandings of kale are presented here as different units that we might use to enact food, such as the feelings elicited by the cold water washing the harvested kale, the spent kale on the packing hub floor, or the smell of kale kimchi. But more than feelings, kale in its different guises is constructed and performed here through practice.

I sensed differences between the foodbox surplus that I parcelled-up for a homeless shelter versus out-takes I left for mulch on the farm, as much enacted through emotions, tactile sensing and tasted politics as through written word and discourse. What felt different is that the commitment to “alternative” practice that de-centres the commodification of food seems to be informed by, and an expression of, an ethic of care. Attuned engagements with our food therefore help us to close in on and confront our relations with it, practicing ‘[a]n ethic of attuning ourselves more closely to the powers, capacities and dynamism of the more-than-human’ (Gibson-Graham 2011:23) instead of ignoring or externalising injustices done to food-related humans and more-than-human. Attunement through post-structural understandings of the self in relation to the world therefore overlays practice with several epistemological commitments: a responsibility towards diversity and the unexpected (Sharp 2017); and, an ethic of care (Cameron *et al* 2011; Gibson-Graham 2011) in all relations with kale.

To name different or unexpected bodies is to notice them. My experience of the ‘pleasure of naming’ (Tsing 2010:192) is new (to me) and unexpected produce brought about an emotional response to noticing and caring to know about food. This attention to food and its relations acknowledges a diverse (multiple, different) understanding of kale. Thinking of kale through Mol’s “body multiple”, bodies are contextualised by space, time, conventions, expectations or language around the kale and its observer/s. Of kale’s human relations that I notice, all feel frustration, anger, joy and wellbeing, in some sense, from their interactions with kale. Further, being attuned to the diversity of kale also involves noticing what is absent. Mark and Celeste spoke in little detail about the human labour that produces kale. Matthias did not mention the taste of kale, and the kale seemed to physically vanish in tracing the foodbox coordination and logistics. Kale, to all of my co-participants is variously the material of their work, a hardy staple, good eating, an experimental item of produce, and a symbol of difference. My co-participants’ respective politics of hope extend to their own experience of the produce they encounter. Having sensed, been attuned to and affected by the tracing of kale myself, I know kale as a version of all of these diverse things based on a diverse assemblage of proxies.

I became an object of knowledge building through practice. Folds of personal change are evident in the way that I experienced and felt a change in my knowledge, my engagement with food and in a feeling of a change in my capacity to act. Probyn ruminates that the act of eating ‘places different orders of things and ways of being alongside each other, inside and outside inextricably linked’ (2000:32), so that the gut though obscured inside our bodies, is an enfolded extension of the outside world. This anatomical reality is also experienced through sensory affect, in knowing food by tasting it; and through naming, in knowing food by noticing it. In a sense, when digested in these

ways, food becomes a political agent in its new capacity to reconfigure subjects and their relations. These forms of academic activism (e.g. Chatterton *et al* 2007; Wynne-Jones *et al* 2015) for an embodied food politics make me consider the multiple bodies of kale and related actors that are mobilised in these stories, advancing a feminist politics that is open to different iterations and possibilities of world building (Gibson-Graham 2008; Cameron and Wright 2014). Consequently while the food of my fieldwork has affected my own body, I also affect multiple disciplinary fields — geographical, anthropological, sociological, and political — in my (co) production of spaces of experience and research, at multiple nodes, scales and sites.

That attunements are diversely felt does not mean that they are dispersed or disparate, however. For participants in this study, affect was cultivated differently by each participant but the feeling that we were doing differently *altogether* was unmistakable. These overlapping affective practices and attunements can be attributed to the encounters of kale being performed *trans-individually* (Anderson 2006) where ‘lines of force [or hope] ... augment or diminish’ (p741) as they move between bodies; and *trans-situationally* (Anderson 2006:736; Massumi 2002) where affect is experienced diversely and in multiple temporal locations.

Likewise, where individual food practices present opportunities to notice difference and choose, eat, replicate, or curtail particular behaviours in a way that is different to the status quo, there is potential for collective change. When I open my foodbox box, and bite into a crisp apple or the textured kale I perform a particular food politics that is expressed through unique emotions and feelings on a personal level, in amongst many others’ individual, diverse and different expressions (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2010). The trans-individual and trans-situational expression of personal attunements to kale relations, are a collective disruption to a dominant, exploitative food order. Consider Hanisch’s (1970) refrain that ‘the personal is political’. As an individual consumer of the foodbox my choices might change the fortune of the kale farmer for the better or worse, in a project that works towards a “better” food system. While personal politics and the privileged position of the individual have been heavily critiqued by food scholars (e.g. Guthman and Brown 2016) it seems clear that personal attunement of the consumer can be translated trans-bodily and trans-individually towards collective change. And so, if ‘taste orders society’ (Carolan 2011:19) then a different “taste” of kale that attunes relations of history, production contexts, fetishised food culture, and critically, personal but collectively translated food experiences, suggests a new order: a hopeful, diverse and different understanding and practice of food.

My co-participants’ experiences suggest that it is not just attunement, but also *hope*, that is co-transformative, increasing the ‘collective’s capacity for action in a more highly differentiated

world’ (Roelvink 2010:112). Hope has threaded through all of these encounters. Affective engagements offer us hope that can be generated in food spaces that feel, imagine and perform difference beyond the conventional, where in practicing food differently, ‘hope is enacted by a body that senses “[this] outside” on the horizon of what has become’ (Anderson 2006:735). Hope matters because it reveals the creation of potentiality or possibility: learning to be attuned to, hopeful through, and affected by food allows us to imagine food differently, awaiting something else yet to become. Participants in this research told of being driven by a “call to action” against the conventional food system. For example, Mark’s wistful recount of the animation of food as a sign it is good. Or Celeste’s discomfort with the measures of supermarket related food systems and waste in the home, and her acts of resistance to buying and throwing out conventional food. Celeste engages readily with what I read as a hopeful and caring practice of food economy that helps her articulate the power that food allows her, and her valuing of it relative to monetary income. These attunements offered me some insight into the affectedness of the individual with hope for larger-scale change, and of a feminist, care-full, politics of the other (Cameron *et al* 2011; Rose *et al* 2002).

## **7.5 Conclusion**

Attunement here describes enfolded sensitivities to details in our world that are knowable as sensed (tangibly, olfactorily, audibly, visibly and by taste) through practice. Acknowledging attunement demands different ways of measuring our world, and also cultivates our bodies to become perceptive to differences between objects and things through experience. An attuned “learning to be affected” gets beyond food facts, and considers a more-than-human enriching of food spaces, objects and their relationships, that counters the less-than-human spaces of Global Food that contribute what ‘diminishes the human, cribs and confines it, curtails or destroys its capacities, silencing its affective grip, banishing its involvements: not what renders it lively, but what cuts away at that life’ and ultimately ‘subtracts from the human in the picture’ (Philo 2016). It helps us position ourselves relative to empirical research and novel research methods, through sensitising our bodies to notice and focus on difference (Ash and Gallacher 2016). This ethnography and auto-ethnography of a foodbox food chain provides a conceptual shift that moves us from a place of forgetting or neglecting food relations, to actively noticing and then being attuned to them.

Vignettes of subjects and objects here offer a certain taste of kale that both connects representational and material engagement with food objects; and, creates a forum for reflexivity around conflicting practice. Getting at attunement through foldings of self, other humans and more-than-human others, gets at more than what is or isn’t good to eat. By developing Deleuze’s foldings

here I show how living and storytelling more proximate, sensitised food relations can offer a narrative of food that we internalise, that we map messily and multiply, and that we politicise. The idea of attuned assemblages of food reveals complexity in an otherwise simplified neoliberal rhetoric. It takes us from a place of normalising consumer focused framings of food in a purely market context, to being attuned to possibilities of what we might envision and create to solve food system problems. It recognises that the food system is embedded in larger structural systems and governmentality that is responsible for social equity. The translation from the individual to the collective gets at the consumption and cultural aspects of food (Goodman and Dupuis 2002) that ‘make [individual] people feel like they ought to organise, struggle, and act collectively’ (Carolan 2011:144) in the pursuit of more progressive food systems. By bringing objects and contexts to attention, I open new spaces in the public imagination and mobilise food citizens to re-configure foodscapes.

Both my research approach and my practices of alternative food in the context of this study can be understood in terms of an attuned ethics. I respond to Michael Goodman’s (2016b) call for a more-than-following of (relational) more-than-food as a methodological intervention that aims to uncover complexities that affect can offer a traditionally oversimplified agri-food scholarship. I make relational connections through attuned research that includes the ‘politicized and political economic routes through which foods become “vital” ’ (*Ibid*:263), sensed and visceral feelings and emotions, and difference in food and food relations, by pursuing an imagination and enaction of food systems that is also different to the status quo. At the centre of these efforts is the “enacted” of food rather than the construction of it — the reality of food and not simply its representation. To fall back on ‘constructions’ and ‘makings’ of food would be to ‘over emphasize epistemology and to neglect ontology’ (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010:162; Carolan 2004) where this work points explicitly to the equal valuing of these frameworks.

Critical to this attuned study is my own relations — those of the self-aware, thought-full and care-full, enactive researcher — woven into the encounter. I narrate this chapter through ethnography and auto-ethnography, and make visible my own and others’ multiple senses of self, and food identity. It is here that a theory of attunement and a practice of noticing meet up — in post-structural understandings of an enfolded and affected self, in relation to our (food)world. I suggest, through (en)actively noticing, and sharing reflexive attunements widely, we draw in new and hopeful connections, and ways of caring and being.

## Chapter 8 | CONCLUSION: TRANSFORMING FOODWORLDS

*The goal of research is not the interpretation of the world,  
but the organisation of transformation.*

Antonio Conti (2005:np) *Metropolitan Proletarian Research*

### 8.1 Introduction

Carolan (2013b:148) cautions that we should refrain from offering up ‘fully formed food alternatives’ as answers to food systems problems. To find a diversity of difference, he argues, we should instead plough our energies into making spaces that disrupt routine, thinking, affectivity and being. On this premise, the diverse case studies of “alternative” food initiatives in this thesis offered an opportunity to explore different communities’ (the food insecure, the privileged middle classes, the youth activists, struggling farmers or policy makers) enactments of difference, affect, and care in the different contexts in which they arose. I explored and enacted actually existing food practices at the shared edges of “dominant” and “alternative” food practices, and reproduced them in their stories of disruption, affect and hope.

To revisit the transformative journey of this thesis, for myself as a researcher and for food politics, I looked first at the history of food research and knowledge constructions of food. I explored how traditional agri-food scholarship has taken the form of producer-consumer studies based on analysing capitalist systems of global and domestic food supply. As a counter politics, this thesis started with an exploration of what have been called “alternative food initiatives”, (instead of these normative food commodities), as an agri-foods project in Aotearoa NZ. This led me to consider that food was not an inert economic object without agency, and without other relations. A subsequent tack in my journey challenged the term “‘alternative’ food initiative” (as introduced by Allen *et al* 2003), whose work queried whether AFIs were acting *in opposition*, or *alternatively* to, conventional food systems (discussed in detail in Section 1.3: Moving Beyond a Normative “Alternative”), given the pervasive nature of the term *alternative* food initiative, in contemporary agri-food scholarship.

I took up JK Gibson-Graham’s framing of diverse economies at this point in my exploration (see Section 1.5), as inspiration to view AFIs as “diverse alternatives” to capitalist food. At the same

time, however, I questioned the fit of the framing to plot alternative food, noticing: firstly, a problem of representation (where it shows divided categories of capitalist, alternative capitalist and non-capitalist economic activity); and secondly, a problem with its conceptual intent to suspend a focus on capitalist hegemony to preferably see non-capitalist alternatives. What I saw, and *lived*, as I progressed in my fieldwork was that these economic modes all worked together, and in messy ways.

After attempting my own (and still problematic, given the inherent problems of representation) modelling of affective food economies, I tried to make modes of economy less relevant to my focus. I changed direction to see what I could make of the lived, affective and ‘more-than-food’ relations of these systems, through food practices that *enact difference* and newness, and food systems that *affect* us in particular ways based on our attunement to them — through how we frame food, what we notice, and what we sense in foodworlds.

To summarise this project’s trajectory, I looked at a subset of these diverse food experiments through a lens of economy, I then turned to practice, then affect and care, to understand how our constructions of food are shaped by our lived experiences of them. I began to think that the transformative potential of the work that AFIs do for us to live well in the world is generated through the embodiments it generates, the knowledges that it cultivates, and the senses and feelings about food that it creates and sustains.

These ideas, and the different case studies presented in this work all address the question I posed at the beginning of this dissertation: ‘What political work do “alternative” food initiatives do?’. This question has been explored in the context of food and geography scholarship that has struggled to make sense of ‘AFIs’. With the exception of diverse economies studies, the literature has generally dealt with this question from a single viewpoint, often presenting “alternative” food as a type of identity-politics for the consumer. The food itself, its “production”, and the social lives of the things and people at work in food economies are often left out of the stories that are written. In the context of the political work that AFIs do, I outline each of this preceding chapters’ contributions, below.

## **8.2 Thesis Contributions**

It became clear as my project evolved that representational methods only were not going to get at the lived experience of alternative food initiatives. My theory and methods started incorporating embodied and visceral aspects of food that could not be captured by surveys and questionnaires alone. Chapter 2 charted these diverse methods in a heuristic, which also charted the evolution of the research project. Using Gibson-Graham’s conceptual lens of diversity allowed me to think

through possibilities of difference in my methodological enquiry of agri-food scholarship that might help us better understand how foodworlds might be constructed.

Independent of the conceptual contributions of this thesis, there are methodological contributions too (detailed further in Section 8.5: Methodological Contributions). This dissertation stepped through multiple methodological tools to elicit multiple readings of doing differently, understanding different constructions of food, and the different ways in which food and foodworlds are transformed. It culminated in the development of a novel method of ‘more-than-following’ that allows us the capture of data on ‘more-than-food’. More-than-food is theorised as a relational approach to constructing food, which includes its human, and more than human (relations), spatial, and cultural relations. My methodology of more-than-following starts from a traditional political economy model of tracing food commodities, but pays particular attention to: how affect is generated through ethnographic and auto-ethnographic reflexivity; and, tracing human and more-than-human relations, and interdependencies as considered in Tronto’s (1993) conceptualisation of care (like concerns of and for farmers, soils, technologies and logistics, and/or animal bodies). As a researcher practicing these methods my work has bearing on the politics of knowledge production around food, in that I enact different foodworlds in thinking through and using these different frames and methods.

Each empirical chapter (chapters 3 to 7) dealt with its own unique AFI case, and what these cases have in common is that the examples of raw milk collectives, dumpster divers, guerrilla planters, farmers’ markets, collective growing and eating experiments and foodboxes threaten uncaring food practices by introducing competencies, knowledges and sentiments that make problematic the uncaring artefacts, practices and feelings which might conventionally be found in corporatised, industrialised food.

Chapter 3 was my positionality chapter and also the first empirical chapter of this thesis. As the primary knowledge producer of this work I placed myself and my field experiences at the forefront of this thesis, even though my subjectivity changed over time, and I revised my position retrospectively as I studied the field, including myself. My positionality explained my physical limitations in fieldwork, such as how pregnancy during some fieldwork (following kale, in particular) restricted me from some sensory encounters. It also changed my feelings on some constructions of “good” food for example my feelings about raw milk consumption. This chapter’s auto-ethnographic descriptions outed my privilege as a white-ish, middle class, educated woman. Self-disclosure in this regard was important for my project based on its focus of enacting different

foodworlds, as it highlights the importance of who takes part in knowledge constructions around food.

Chapter 3 also explained my multiple focus on publicly demonstrating care for myself, and for food production and consumption that includes the more-than-human (for example with raw milk: care might be exhibited for cattle farmers, and also cows, and/or soils and rivers), which echoes Tronto's (1993) attention to the interdependent nature of caring relationships. As a visibly pregnant researcher engaged in food-work, I found that the researcher, field and subject were all affected and affective and that care in the field was demonstrated for me by research participants, and by me for participants in unpredictable ways and places. Particular to this unpredictability was the fact that care seemed to be exhibited through the regulation of bodies, and this theme translated to Chapter 5, on the transgression of regulations or convention, for and by participants, field and researcher.

Chapter 4's departure from a framing of AFI research in terms of economy to focusing instead on the scarcely used "data" of embodied practice, was an act itself of enactive difference. The focus on practice also gives helpful insight into what has been neglected — that which can be read as what is uncaring and uncared for (c.f. Puig de la Bellacasa 2011) in food studies and geographical research in general. Emergent from the typology of practices that was established as a disruption to the way that AFIs are normatively classified was a category of *facilitating access*, which could be read as illustrating practices of care such as 'engendering teaching/learning practices', and 'creating community connections' which look to pedagogies, and the ethical coordinates of political practices.

Chapter 5 was a fascinating exploration into the transgressive practices of various AFIs, which in all cases demonstrated a transformational politics. This chapter illustrates practices of enacting difference, of both imagination and action: by disrupting power imbalances, and demonstrating where AFI practices sometimes articulated with institutional change (for example, changes to raw milk regulations, or laws on the sale of domestic produce). Participants acted differently (subversively) when they were affected by their attunement to what is neglected (as per Puig de la Bellacasa's reading of care) in their food relations, and their own context of relationships with regulatory frameworks. To be specific about what has historically been neglected in these examples, I refer here to care for animals, for the food insecure, and for the environment, and I refer to this neglect in the conclusion of this chapter as "challenging taken for granted food knowledge and norms". The subversive acts that perform food differently encourage further transgressions. These acts of difference highlight breaks in hegemonic thinking which offer us the opportunity to hopefully recognise new potentials and possibilities (c.f. Gibson Graham 2008). Working with a

community food activist in and out of the field (and other academic colleagues, in thinking through empirics) we co-performed and co-constructed ‘knowledge with resisting others to produce critical interpretations and readings of the world which are accessible, understandable to all those involved, and actionable’ (Chatterton et al 2007:218), itself different practice, performed and documented as an alternative act of resistance to research that merely observes from the edges.

Chapter 6 described the 100 person Crowd Grown Feast initiative which engaged urban dwellers to buy a ticket which came with seeds to grow their own food over five months, and then take part in a community meal that assembled together the produce they grew. This case study highlights the multiple relations that animate and constitute conventional and alternative categories. It shows that not only do these categories — such as producer/consumer, urban/rural, conventional/alternative, and good/bad foods — have blurred boundaries, but they are also assemblages of emergent relations among multiple subjects and objects. This way of thinking and doing research is much needed in critical food geography as a platform for imagining and practising food spaces differently. There was a complex assembly of relationships, values and objects, such as the disused silo which was the community meal location, folded in with the AFI’s marketing of ‘peasanting’ as “food sovereignty”, a high ticket price, and homegrown “knobbly” food. In this chapter I began to engage with affect through my methods of ethnography and auto-ethnography, and as a Crowd Grown Feast member, growing tomatoes. By looking at where the conventional and “alternative” are blurred, this case takes up opportunities for more caring relations that can be found on the edges of economy and ontological category. I refer in this chapter to the value of assemblage to highlight the interdependency inherent in complex, multivalent food systems, which relates to care in Tronto’s (1993) terms.

Chapter 7 was the final empirical case study of this dissertation. I ‘more than followed’ kale as a ‘more-than-food’ (as I described in Chapter 2 and in Section 8.7 of this concluding chapter) to reframe food as relational and agential rather than merely a commodified object. Presenting attunement as the pathway between ‘learning to be affected’ and foodworld transformation, I drew together an assemblage of post-structural concepts to think through “attuning” as an assemblage of: framing food epistemologically and ontologically differently (as relational); noticing difference in food practice (i.e. diversity, the unexpected, the experimental, the transgressive); and, using the body as an instrument to “measure” food (in sensed, emotive, visceral ways). I described attunement as contingent on a set of folded subjectivities: of how the material, the biosocial, knowledges, and versions of the self are all folded together. Through auto-ethnography I become complicit in knowledge production in a deeper way, enacting difference in method and in the production of my own foodworlds of difference. Affect is centre stage in this chapter, by

deconstructing what it is to be attuned, and therefore affected by food and its relations. Care is seen in this chapter, as the concern for the foodbox's (noticing of) what is neglected in relational connections — connections that make up the AFI's practices that extend beyond just growing, logistics and eating.

I suggest of this final empirical chapter that critical to this attuned study is my own relations — in post-structural understandings of an enfolded and affected self, in relation to my (food)world. By (en)actively noticing, and sharing reflexive attunements widely, we might draw in new and hopeful connections, and different ways of caring and becoming. To recap, real difference is materialised where: 1) hopeful actors and their behaviours are changed through their embodied attunements to food; 2) food is changed or “made differently” through our attunement to it; and, 3) these changes can be translated trans-individually towards collective food system change and hopeful new imaginings of food futures.

### **8.3 The Political Work that AFIs Do**

So, what political work do AFIs do? A political economy view of foodworld change as a result of AFI practices might be seen as relations shifting along supply chains, or, consumer pressure placed on producers, or, producers changing their practices, or, a change in scale, for example a proliferation of AFI practices. But, by accounting for other, caring interdependences, we might also see relational constructions of food that practice and enact other differences.

I will refer to the case of dumpster diving to reiterate how these initiatives enact different and new foodworlds. Transformation, of food systems, food actors and food objects (food assemblages more broadly) is demonstrated where, for example: actors are reconfigured (dumpster divers become producers); waste is noticed, framed and sensed as being “good” and is actually removed from the waste stream (waste is reconfigured as food); and, individuals are fed, which enacts difference in a caring way. The practice of dumpster diving generates hope for new possibilities of urban food provisioning, by enacting difference that is unexpected. By eliciting feelings of being moralised or outraged, it shows us the value of the senses, emotions and the body for our knowledge of food and its systems, and how we might become affected to do differently.

In other examples in my thesis I noted how I was affected in noticing and understanding the context of the yellowed kale leaves. I talked about the sensory affect of appreciating and naming misshapen (and therefore neglected) vegetables grown for the Crowd Grown Feast. I was attentive to the contextual framing of the benefits to cows of raw milk, but this concern was in tension with my own care for self. By demonstrating a commitment to care — where the food box pays farmers 50%

of sale profits rather than 30% for supermarket sold food, or where community fruit trees are planted to feed poorer families — practices of AFIs attune us to care-fully repair our world so that we can live well within it (Tronto 1993) by creating spaces and enactions that help to make uncaring, exploitative practices of food ‘out of tune’ with bodies that encounter them (Carolan 2011). In short, the work of attuning to AFI food introduces competencies, knowledges and sentiments that make problematic the artefacts, practices and visceral experiences of food *that are less caring*. They show us that there is work involved in conditioning/attuning us to more caring forms of food. Thus, each of my case studies is political. By performing different (and diverse) methodology in agri-food work, by noticing and documenting the affect and the care-work done, by being transgressive and actually reducing waste, by noticing the mixed up nature of capitalist and non-capitalist practices so to not miss potentials, *Affective Food Initiatives* as I (re)name them, and the study of them, do political work.

### 8.3.1 Caring Interdependencies

Given Tronto’s (1993:103) depictions of care as what we do to ‘maintain, continue and repair our “world” so that we can live in it as well as possible’ based on an understanding of our world as a vast interdependency of human and non-human relations, this thesis weaves together a performative project of care for food and food systems. The different food relations of multiple actors who are presented as embodied and political actors (foragers, underprivileged eaters, growers, and so on) are all presented through different concepts, theories and cases, but they all open up food’s complex histories and geographies, relationships among humans and more-than-humans (cows, dumpsters, a concrete silo, kale), politics, and potentials. This thesis provides an account of rich, messy, enactive and affective food economies that resist categorisation into pre-determined capitalist and non-capitalist forms, and point towards ways of making more diverse, socially and environmentally just food futures.

From a theoretical perspective, this dissertation brings to bear a series of different concepts acknowledged by post-structural and feminist political literature. The concepts used were those of: assemblage (used to acknowledge and identify the diverse and inter-related human and more-than-human connections within foodworlds, foodscapes and food economies); incorporated into which were foldings (that considered multiple, situated and subjective readings of food relations, including my own positionality in the larger food assemblage); and, affect (and the ways in which it is generated) based on feminist theoretical foundations of embodiment and the senses, performativity and body politics.

This research derived its theory from the field, and focused attention on a diverse set of actually existing food initiatives and the multiple objects, sites, moments, embodied actions and affective experiences that constituted them. In the different cases and narratives developed in Chapters 3 to 7, I employed theoretically-informed *diverse methods* described in Chapter 2 to notice details of the practices (including specifically demonstrations of diversity, the unexpected, transgression or care) of these foodworlds.

The chapters traced a pathway through this suite of food initiatives, presented as differently framed examples of Auckland's experimental food economies. Participatory, embodied practice in these initiatives showed them to be plural in form and politics, and to be emergent, dynamic and performative. Each case study pointed to how those enrolled in the initiatives both enacted and valued the experiments for their difference, and to the vital politics of possibility and making the world otherwise that this engenders through affect. The examples also pointed to a food knowledge that is made across the borderlands between difference, transgression and the mainstream, and to a politics that is more unstable and open to diversity than we credit it with being when categorising foodworlds as “alternative” and “capitalist”.

This dissertation thus prises apart the tangled concept of food relations in several different ways — researching unfamiliar cases, adopting different methods, and using unfamiliar concepts — all of which have proven constructively disruptive in their transformative potential.

## **8.4 A Return to the Research Objectives**

This work's research objectives (listed in full in Section 1.7) can be summarised in two key points. First, to challenge the binary and closed categories of “capitalist”/“alternative” food relations, and in so doing, to reveal the actually existing, possible food relations at the blurred boundaries of what is known as the conventional food system, through different forms of representation. Second, to identify and develop the practical and political potential of these diverse initiatives, by taking into account the affective purchase of food economies. I explored my particular case studies to understand what enabled ‘learning to be affected’ — serving as a pathway to transformed foodscapes — and what it was that enacted material transformations in these foodworlds (Figure 1.1) Concluding this research, I revisit these objectives and consider the ways in which I approached, and realised them.

### **8.4.1 Breaking Down Binaries, Noticing Diversity**

To address the first point above, of challenging the dogma of a “capitalist/alternative” binary, and seeing what actually lies at the blurred edges, this dissertation has made decisive interventions in

the study of nominally “alternative” food economies. Firstly, I reasoned different ontological and epistemological framings of food that opened up different understandings of practice and knowing, as opposed to the restricted thinking of binaries or closed categories. These were represented as a model of typologies to emphasise varied food economies practice, and a new framework of *affective food economies* (Figure 1.3) that leaves intact the connections between diverse economic practices. While featuring only minor graphical changes to the Gibson-Graham’s (2008) diverse economies framework (DEF), this heuristic better illustrates my thinking, and enables others’ thinking beyond closed categories. The affective food economies model quiets unfair critique of the DEF (see Section 1.5), by proposing a focus on embodied affective practice rather than that which is economic. While this model could have been adapted more in the style of the diverse methods framework (DMF) (Figure 2.1) that I proposed, which shows a complete absence of inner boundaries or edges, it was important to acknowledge both Gibson-Graham’s suspended view of capitalist practices, as well as finding ways to see fissures and think possibility from a narrow imagination of capitalism, in this project of difference.

Secondly, I applied the conceptual framings discussed above, and carried out the theoretically-informed *diverse methods* described in Chapter 2, to *notice* practices (specifically of diversity, the unexpected, the experimental, transgression or care) in the different cases I developed in Chapters 3 to 7. I showed that the label “alternative” initiative or network, used to portray certain food activities as other to capitalism, might be more productively re-thought by understanding these initiatives as sites of enactive difference. For example, Chapter 5 showed food initiatives performing ‘irritant’ transgressions across conventions of regulation, economic practice or cultural norm as disruptive and performative enactments of difference. And Chapters 6 and 7 assembled multiple normatively “capitalist” or “alternative” practices in non-normatively “capitalist” or “alternative” spaces, making specific economic categorisations obsolete. Store bought vegetables in a crowd-grown meal, a community supported foodbox influencing farm waste, an acceptance of insect-hitchhikers on expensive organic produce. Noticing these diverse, simultaneously performed practices at the blurred boundaries of what is known as the conventional food system, revealed the actually existing assemblage of these food relations.

## 8.4.2 Attuning to Foodworlds of Care and Possibility

*if we change the world we change ourselves, and if we change ourselves, we change the world*

Gibson-Graham (2006:xxi) *A Postcapitalist Politics*

The conceptual work to develop themes of assemblage and affect as they are generated through food practice offered up a new language for understanding food constructions, their connections and their political possibilities, as affective. This thesis uses the framings discussed in Section 8.2 and my focus on embodied experience in experimental food initiatives to inscribe an ethic of care in my projections of foodworlds. This ethic applies to research and the mobilisation of a new food politics as much as to the relations I observed in the field by placing myself into the diversity of food initiatives. While care is enacted in multiple ways (including *non-acts* of care (c.f. Tronto 1993), which I follow up in Section 8.6) as dependent on the political relations of the carer and the cared for (Chapter 3), acts of care require a noticing of these relations — a thought-fullness or attunement that generates a different knowing of the subject and object of care. Where Gibson-Graham suggest that transformative possibilities can comprise capitalist devices provided there is a prioritisation of care, I add that the care demonstrated must prioritise the cared for subject rather than control, protect or regulate the cared for in non-specific ways that are not thought-full of their contexts, or “care-less”. I consider these initiatives in returning to my proposal (illustrated in Figure 1.1) that the relationship between being affected and enacting new foodworlds may be a feedback loop, where affect is generated, and then further propagated, in acts of *attunement*.

As Le Heron and Lewis (2011:1) suggest, ‘for acting to become enacting translation has to take place ... There are always moments of translation, and they are shaped by affective responses.’ This can be rearticulated in four distinct ways that related to my findings regarding attunement. First, methodological work that is enacted with care, enables an attunement to other acts of care practised in the field — care that focuses on the needs and choices of the cared-for. I recognised this in the examination of, for example: my own positionality (Chapter 3) in relation to care in food fieldwork; the act of dumpster diving to reduce food waste and simultaneously feed underprivileged eaters showing acts of care for more-than human and human others (Chapter 5); and, in the product of care that was kale, based on innumerable caring relations in the foodbox chain of affect (Chapter 7).

Second, attunement to empirics that blur boundaries of alternative/conventional, urban/rural, good/bad food, and post-structural feminist political commitments to rich (assembled, folded, affective) ethnographic work, direct attention to and then allow us to frame unfamiliar and different

practices. They direct us to challenge accepted norms (academic and lay) around food provisioning. For example: I showed in Chapter 4, how I was able to dismantle conventional thinking in agri-food scholarship that presents these kinds of binaries, in favour of a typology that prioritises and represents practices and what those practices enact; and, in Chapter 6, where I noticed capitalist and “alternative” food economies practiced together, showing this binary to be false, and revealing the actually existing, diverse and unexpected practices that were enacted at these blurry boundaries of home-growing purchased vegetables to be served at a ticketed, corporate-sponsored urban and community food knowledge and practice. Both of these examples were hope-full demonstrations of how we could “do” food differently, by looking at the future possibilities in these practices that we now “know” differently.

Third, while I have established that working with and in the register of post-structural theory and approach can help us become attuned with food objects that are our objects of study, I also offer that working with embodied subjects, such as growers, pickers, packers and eaters, rather than producers, distributors and consumers, widens our lens on food practices and relations. This more comprehensive outlook directs attention to feelings, affect, ethics and value — or care. Attunement to post-structuralism sees politics, ethics, knowledge and methodology as the making of the world, and as more entangled with bodies, so by researching food enactively we are in turn creating new and hope-full foodworlds.

Finally, attunement asks us to think and act with an ethic of care, and to project that ethic into future foods through affective food practices. These attunements to difference, seen in all chapters throughout this dissertation, enact a care-full, hope-full politics of possibility that mediate the relations of the initiatives that make up the foodworlds we experience. It is the attunements, or, ‘moments of translation’ (Le Heron and Lewis 2011:1) that transform our foodworlds.

## **8.5 Contributions to the Field(s): Affective Food Initiatives**

This work makes a number of key contributions to the agri-food literature. It adds a series of new cases, each of which is derived and theorised in different ways to established approaches. It builds on the empirical repertoire of food studies with each new case, to enrich the theory, rather than attempting to strengthen a theoretical stronghold. In so doing, it presents the first thorough treatment of diverse food initiatives in Auckland, and in Aotearoa NZ.

This work also enriches the theoretical repertoire of food studies by expanding on Gibson-Graham’s conception of diverse economies, Michael Carolan’s emerging engagement with experimentation, the Hayes-Conroys’ engagement with affect, and Michael Goodman’s turn to the embodied subjects

of food. Moreover, it strongly develops the notion of attunement in this field, and its relation to affect, and in doing so promises to significantly enrich agri-food studies, and contribute to feminist scholarship that deals with the politics of the corporeal. The case studies frame food's affect differently, and demonstrate how we might do food 'affectively' and therefore differently. They bring to the wider geographic literature a focus on the way that affect is generated and materialised, and offer up a methodology of more-than-following everyday encounters as an approach to access attunement. Attunement, learned from a sensed experience through doing, constructs knowledges that have been perhaps untapped and certainly seldom articulated in contemporary food scholarship.

Indeed, this dissertation itself, the final representative object of my research journey, might be understood to be affective and care-full. It assembles conceptual shifts to thinking through practice, real-world examples of breaking with convention, and participatory research. It performs difference in ways that I as a researcher, and that those readers attuned to it, might be affected. Its contribution to food scholarship is a study that is more than applied, it is affective, and an act of performing greater care for research subjects and objects (in being attentive to them and examining and noticing them in ways that are commonly not considered), and to the process of the evolution of the researcher.

It is in this sense — and that of playing trickster in adding to the agri-food repertoire — that I propose a last-minute shift in the terminology that I have used to produce the papers incorporated into this dissertation. In recognition of having been affected by my own work, intellectually and politically, I have ended up by reworking the AFI acronym to represent *affective food initiatives* (AFIs). That is, affect as the value that we might place above economy. It is where not just the people but, more broadly, the *lives* are in all of this.

*Affective food initiatives* more faithfully reflect the multiple political projects of this thesis, as I have unpacked in the preceding chapters. This renaming also reflects the political influence of a choice of language and terminology on ontological understandings and the production of social realities, for example in 'speech acts' also known as performative utterances (see Austin 1962) and Butler's performativity of language (1993). By naming these initiatives for what they do rather than for what they are, I aim to liberate their generative potentials. The shift of a new name also recognises the hard work of post-structural feminist scholars to influence understandings of plurality, relationality, embodiment and difference in the everyday, by dispensing with "alternative", which, as I have discussed at length, only serves to further engrain binary thinking. Further, the name-change focuses on the importance of the politics and transformative potential of these food practices by the incorporation of "affect", as I have developed in this thesis.

## 8.6 A Platform for a New Politics of Agri-Food Research: Enacting Other Foodworlds

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the research is to point to a new platform for practising a *politically productive* food research. This dissertation has at its heart a commitment to enactive knowledge-making, actively imagining and making the world otherwise, and practising the tenets of Gibson-Graham's Community Economies project. The commitment is recognised in three pivotal ways. First, by rethinking food practice through attunement — as emotional, sensory and affective as well as economic — I bring into being a new framing for actualising more just food economies that *make visible* diverse experiences of a diverse collective. Second, by embracing the complexity of actualised food economies, I *practise* a diverse economies research in which 'we [enrol] and [resubject] communities and individuals (including ourselves) in new worlds of possibility' (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009:2). Third, by training a lens on the trans-individual attunements of the collective that are afforded by the feelings of the individual, my research advocates food knowledge that is collective, and co-produced through community food economies. Critically, in the pursuit of a more equitable and ethical food system, this politics of knowledge production recognises that community food economies may not be 'defined by geographic or social commonality; instead they are ethical and political spaces of decision in which interdependence is constructed as people transform their livelihoods and lives' (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009:2). This research brings together the tentative moves that have been made around enactive research, activism, and a practical practice and output-focused politics in alternative food initiatives.

Embodiment and practice have been used here to close the gap between economy and politics. Economy — understood as the stewarding of resources and capabilities — is enacted here as sites of political possibility, rather than a singular, closed space of capitalocentric economy. Effective economies can also be affective economies, which enable the emergence and flourishing of affective food politics. Actors can practise affective and effective food politics through economy. At the same time, conceptual and material assemblages are shown here to be entangled rather than mutually exclusive. In considering what happens in the overlapping and co-constituted spaces of "alternative" initiatives and the dominant food system, the preceding chapters showed actually existing food economies that broke down categories, tiers and binaries of 'capitalist or other', 'alternative-capitalist or other', to add complexity to diverse economies and efforts to represent them. Actors, objects, practices and knowledges are instead constructed — *enacted* — around, between and across diverse/capitalist boundaries. This research presents a call for the proliferation of affective economic practices that accept these linkages and seek to make the most of them, and

for a research that is attentive, sympathetic to, and enabling of, the articulations that define diverse economies.

Critical in this feminist political food project, I draw attention to my voice as a woman geographer in the field. Feminists have made vital contributions to scholarship that highlights women and the body, yet with few exceptions these arguments have not been examined fully by food scholars. My research project, my research encounters, my experience and my knowledge-making have been those of a woman geographer in the field, studying and being affected by food. This situated notion of knowing, and of knowledge, as *embodied*, relocates women in the production of geographical knowledge. Chapter 3 makes significant comment on my positionality in care and fieldwork, and Section 8.6 on what opportunities might be afforded by it. The commitment I make to diversity in my research has echoes across human geography as it grapples with diverse object-multiples, and more-than-human agency. My research suggests that it is both possible and politically productive to create multiple new permutations of connections among people, objects, practices and sites of food to enact different, ethically informed food practices. Such a politics opens more spaces for negotiating, debating and cultivating mutual understanding at the intersection of many different bodies and social lives of things in different settings.

The point is that an emphasis on diversity in research directs attention to difference rather than a single settlement on what is good/ethical/fair. Rather than “good” food, food practices are context-specific. This does not imply an approach grounded in cultural relativism. Rather, all contexts are connected to others, providing spaces for an active political negotiation over ethics and material things. A context may, for example, refer to a certain body, but that certain body is an object-multiple that is made up of multiple problems in relation to our food system (and therefore requires multiple responses). For example, even if we were about to crack the problem of animal ethics in meat production through the synthesis of lab meat without animal source cells, we can still assume that food systems issues will persist, as we will have just tackled one of the many food objects (meat) in our world today. And we will have tackled its ethics from only one direction, at that. Many other concerns will endure, such as how to deal with the industry’s waste, the global problem of uneven food distribution, the fact that dairying creates some of the same animal ethics and environmental ethics problems as meat production. Food is part of a complex assemblage encompassing numerous concerns, and demanding a complex, and more or less coherent set of responses. Engaging with this assemblage as an object-multiple helps us work on this complex assemblage as it actually exists.

## 8.7 Methodological Contributions

The attention I pay to the co-constitutiveness of thinking and doing is a reflection of the feminist and post-structuralist underpinnings I discuss above, and the enactive disposition I brought to it. My methodology was guided by feminist, political principles of the community economies project and its commitments to participatory research and an ethic of care, a mindfulness of the researcher as a body multiple, as Mol (2002) might argue, and the gathering interest in ethnography within geography and food studies. I assembled these influences into a different, enactive and more-than-following form of ethnography.

There are two observations to make here that constitute a distinctive contribution to the methodological repertoire. First, my approach took me to attunement as a concept that helped me to make sense of the field, and then realise my research objectives. The research revealed just how valuable it is to take an approach that *attunes a researcher to attunement*. Second, while in the field I adopted *diverse methods* (Section 2.7) to interact and enact, become attuned, and gather material. I used these diverse methods to examine a number of different empirical examples to re-read for difference, accept the unexpected and experimental, and reorient food research towards an ethic of care in practice and overall political pursuits. A diverse methods approach is fully in the spirit of Gibson-Graham's (2008) conception of diverse economies, and helps to bring marginalised and alternative praxis to the fore, and to validate and value non-traditional and unfamiliar ways of observing and coming to know. It is in itself a performative ontological project that enacts diverse subjectivities in its making.

To deal with the variety and complexity in my case studies, I followed different objects and economic practices in different settings. Significantly, this 'following' was rhizomous as per assemblage thinking (Section 1.4) and therefore did not presume a linearity to the food experiments' structures, the transformations of food within them, nor to my approach to them. Rather, I returned more to the multi-sited ethnographic tradition of Marcus and Appadurai, and departed from the way that Cook *et al* and others have used the approach in geography. I placed myself into the different experiments in different ways, and followed the food encounters that developed *in situ*. In doing so, I got my hands dirty through practice, and engaged with multiple actors in the enacting of food economies: working at a farmers' market, diving into supermarket dumpsters to retrieve food waste, volunteering at and growing tomatoes for the Crowd Grown Feast, planting and harvesting kale, and packing foodboxes. Rather than tracing food supply chains, I followed diverse economic chains of embodiment and affect derived from human and more-than-human actors.

I used my body, as well as the bodies of others with whom I engaged, as instruments to measure and calibrate food data, which in turn involved a sensory ethnography where taste, smell, touch and emotion were as critical as observation through seeing, listening or reading. I encountered difference, engaged with it as it was produced, and experienced its affective grip. Ethnography merged with auto-ethnography as I followed myself and my own sensory and emotive engagements and reactions with people, things, foods and more-than-human beings, which meant that the ensuing experience was always deeply reflexive and affective.

One such encounter/engagement with a subject of these experiments led to an extended co-production of knowledge *in situ*, of co-researched transgressive things, concerns and performances. My co-production of a piece of writing with a community food activist (Chapter 5) showed how experimental and transgressive food practice mediates the borders between capitalism and non-capitalism, and creates new spaces of practice and possibility. The experience demonstrated how even seemingly minor performances of difference (of convention, regulation, policy or culture) contribute to building different foodworlds. In a sense, the value of the thesis project and its success in meeting its objectives is demonstrated in this final bleeding of enactive research into a co-produced theoretical contribution to knowledge production about food economies, the political potential of difference, and the nature of generative, everyday transgression. In these ways, the academic activism of enacting the foodworlds presented in this thesis, is made apparent, where both the theory and practice of this work are evidently political through their performance of something different what is expected.

## 8.8 Opportunities for Further Research

As with any research, there are some tensions around the scope of the study. The cases are situated, and therefore lead to a particular reading of the foodworld. There is a necessarily limited spatial and temporal scope of research, but this has the virtue of cultivating engaged relationships with a concerted and repeated attunement to difference that ‘accumulate[es] in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in tendency’ (Massumi 2002:213), and therefore brings the theory of this work to practitioners. Despite working through theory with one community activist on the ideas and real performances discussed in that chapter, it is of great importance — yet a significant challenge — to communicate these ideas amongst practitioners. I have started to do this in other fora, but the next stage of this action research is to bring ‘practivist’ sentiments of this thesis full circle by enabling further reflexivity on the ground, post-theorisation.

The set of ideas in this thesis has moved knowledge and practice on food, care and affect in different directions, to scholarship that is embodied, enactive, activist and care-full — attentive

research with intent. These ideas point to two future research directions for food: I see opportunities to build on areas of a feminist politics of care and attunement for affect (in and more broadly than food), and food scholarship around ethics and regulation.

I outline, below, particular potential projects that build on the theoretical and methodological capacities that I have developed and employed in this work. These are particular examples of where the research in this dissertation now drives me.

### **8.8.1 Women, Mothers and Embodiment in Relation to Food**

As discussed in Chapter 3, embodied research by and for mothers in any number of research fields (in this case, food) is hard to come by. For this reason, it is vitally important that women researchers, mothering researchers and these same researchers who develop theoretical insights into embodiment and attunement need to be read and heard. These under-represented perspectives have much to offer the fields of affective scholarship with great potential for social movements work. I can imagine work into the care-full practices of the further under-represented group: women and/or mothering food producers and procurers. Their spaces and practices of care are complicated by a normalised account of them as nurturers, but their capacity as growers, harvesters, dairy farmers, butchers, fisherwomen can seem a dislocation from this image. Work of this kind would elevate the profile of these co-enactors of knowledge and practice in a form of feminist intervention. This also compels me to consider using diverse economies rationale to think through “diverse feminisms”, to challenge the norms of “radical” feminism as the primary narrative in lay thinking. Ultimately, though, I would like to explore further the transformative capacity of *care*, for existing food relations.

### **8.8.2 Attunement for Affect, Ethics and Pedagogy in Food Economies**

The generative potential of the idea of attunement deserves to be developed further in relation to ethics and affect in food studies. These might be developed in various settings. I have a number of empirical case studies that did not make it to final analysis in this thesis. The complex economies of fish heads is one example, where attunement may help to recast the experiment as an affective food initiative, both in our knowledge of it and in its political performance. A feminist, post-structuralist approach to industrial fishing has already been the subject of recent academic attention. Elspeth Probyn’s *Eating the Ocean* (2016) did an excellent job of teasing out some complex relationalities that point to these possibilities. However, the informal economies of seafood present different forms of value compared to those of commercial fisheries, and have yet to be investigated as cultural economies. The sites of recreational fisherpeople in Auckland’s foodworld is a contentious topic.

Treating other empirical examples in a similar way and highlighting them in public discourse could be helpful to confront and provoke discussion on normalised views.

The second example is the link between ethical systems, education and practice, which is also underexplored in food scholarship. The pedagogy of food ethics is a potential location of new political imaginings to inform and re-energise our thinking and practice of food. Sites of change, therefore, could be where: food ethics is learned, taught and practised differently; food practice is learned and taught with a different ethics; food pedagogy is practised and ethicised differently, and the processes in between. These relations can be called into question by applying a theory of affect to conversations between accounts of class-based political economy and approaches that focus on ethics, pedagogy and new forms of attunement. This could provide some answers to the questions: How is learning about/of food relevant to transformative ethical practice? How might we approach multifaceted food issues and political projects (animal ethics and environmental ethics, to name a couple) through different ways of learning and knowing about food, and different food practices? How might we understand the world in ways that can engender transgression or difference as a counter-politics to particular food behaviours in different food relations? Are there practices of teaching that catalyse a different ethics and/or practice of food? In what ways can new food knowledge transform societies, subjectivities and ways of organising? I suggest that this work could also be considered in the context of my observations of being noting food practice (in a form of attunement) and then choosing to ‘make eating absent’ in aspects of my research practice (see Chapter 3). The performance of *not eating* (or more broadly, *not acting*) based on particular attunements, moments and food objects, enacted a different foodworld in prioritising an ethic of care for myself (in this case, but it could be equally applied to animals, in not eating factory-farmed meat, or to other humans in boycotting foods associated with poor human-labour practices). By being attuned and *not acting*, I changed the politics of my work. While this observation was noted briefly in this dissertation, I believe that this is a concept that could be developed further. The work done by posing the above questions, and by bringing notions of ethics together with the learning and teaching of food practices, is to explore how foodworlds are enacted based on embedded moral and cultural codes. It proposes that a care-full attunement to food practices, might foster ethico-political beliefs and practices that disrupt anthropocentric thinking.

## 8.9 Conclusion

To return to the question: ‘What political work do “*alternative*” food initiatives do?’, I see these initiatives performing their politics through their diverse practices, to create particular food knowledge and particular foodworlds. They serve a need, make a political statement through their

practices, and are performative, as they transform existing foodworlds through practice. Affective food initiatives in Auckland perform their politics through multiple disruptions to what is known as food economy. First, they “do” food in ways that reconfigure our understanding of who and where growers, procurers, facilitators and eaters are in Auckland, undermining our accepted categories of actors and the relationships among them. Second, in some of these different ways they transgress conventions, laws and regulations, and jar with cultural norms. Third, they experiment with forms of resourcing, production, exchange and consumption, with many of those experiments being short-lived, or transient, reforming at different sites with different objects. Fourth, they are all defined by a sensitive ethic of care, for environment, society, human and more-than-human others (including those that we eat), or some or all of these concerns. Auckland’s AFIs are undeniably *affective* food initiatives, with a determined focus on care and embodied practice. Rather than representing a single politics, they are diverse and experimental and do “alternative” in many different ways.

In food terms, transformation happens via these diverse understandings of food — different sensory measures of food are attunements which are translated into affect. These different ‘method-making-knowledge-and-realities’ (Law and Urry 2004:12), or methodologies-making-epistemologies-and-ontologies, are not confined to performing different points of view on one single reality; they enact multiple, though overlapping, realities in revealing multiple worlds. The many empirical examples and their varied theorisations in this dissertation dealt with the fundamental question: ‘What political work do alternative food initiatives do?’. When understood and practiced in terms of their affectiveness, their diversity and their capacity to generate hope and care for more just foodworlds that prioritise human and more-than-human wellbeing in facilitating these concepts, their political work is a generative transformation of foodworlds.

In coming to this position, my dissertation answers Le Heron’s call for a more ‘critical lens on a much vaunted but woefully underconceptualized, undertheorized and underinvestigated field of “alternative” responses to present-day food challenges and issues’ (Le Heron 2010:696). In response, it engages up-to-date calls to action on thinking through and doing practice-based geography, and challenges common beliefs about food provisioning. The attention paid to the multiple contradictions and antagonisms between people, practices and spaces of food are much needed in critical food geographies at this time.

This situated account — my starting where I was and charting my journey of thinking and doing through many different food and other encounters — journals my transformation and the transformations of foodworlds around me, and around my research subjects and objects. I am hopeful that food as an object of study continues to attract such situated, affective and care-full

storytelling, to account for practices of its diversity and difference and its potentials to be different in ways that we do not anticipate — but more importantly, so that these practices of disruption, care and hope might be reproduced in different ways.

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## APPENDIX I: PHASE ONE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

### Founder/Coordinator – Participant Information Sheet

**Title of Project:** Study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives

**Researcher:** Emma Sharp, School of Environment, The University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn. 89917 or 021 212 0931  
Email: [el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz)

Dear [Founder/Coordinator of Initiative],

My name is Emma Sharp, and I am a PhD student at The University of Auckland.

I would like to invite you to take part in an initial study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives. Your organisation was selected for this research as it has been identified as an Alternative Food Initiative in Auckland. Your contact details were obtained from online information on your organisation. Your participation in the study is voluntary.

Alternative Food Initiatives demonstrate practices of producing and distributing food, that sit outside of conventional methods of food production and distribution (such as through supermarkets). This study aims to develop a picture of Alternative Food Initiatives in Auckland and their current and future potential role in Auckland's food landscape. This is important because we currently know little about what these interesting food initiatives look like in our city, the work they do and why it is done. This is the first collective study of Alternative Food Initiatives in Auckland, and by participating you will be contributing to novel research that will tell us about our city's current and future food networks. This study is conducted solely for the purpose of scientific research.

I therefore, kindly request your, and your organisation's participation in this research. This research will take place in two phases. The first requires the information below in a straightforward questionnaire. If you are willing to participate, the questionnaire should take you about 30 minutes to complete. The second phase involves an interview that would take no longer than 2 hours, as well as interviews with and observation of those involved in your organization, for me to understand the processes and steps in the supply chain that your organization is linked to. I hope to be able to take a participatory research approach, which would involve actively assisting with day-to-day routines in your organisation, to build a picture of who and what is involved. This would require gaining your permission, and subsequently their permission, to work with employees of your organization, as well as gaining your assurance that your employees' participation or non-participation will have no effect upon their employment status. Their participation in the study is also voluntary.

With regards to interviews, audio-recordings would be made only with the consent of those recorded. Interviewees may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. Sections of the recording will be transcribed and you employees and participants of your organisation are entitled to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information, at your request. A summary of results can be made available on request.

Personal/identifying information about you as a participant in this research will remain confidential. It is necessary to record your name and contact details so that your consent form can be matched to your questionnaire and transcribed interview, and I also require your details so that I can contact you if you would like to take part in future components of the study: the interview and observation of further aspects of the Alternative Food Initiative with which you are associated. I will be contacting a sample of such organisations again, in the second phase of this research.

Your and your organisation's/participants' personal details will be stored separately from all research data. Your and your organisation's/participants' identifying information will be converted to anonymous numbers in a secure data file. Only the researcher, Emma Sharp, and her academic supervisors will have access to your responses, and your identity remains separate from your questionnaire and any recorded or transcribed interviews at all times. Your questionnaire, interview transcripts and personal information will be stored separately in a secure room in the School of Environment. Your and your organisation's/participants' responses will be stored for 6 years (after which time they will be destroyed) for research purposes but will not be identifiable as yours. You and your organisation/participants may withdraw interview data from this study up until one month after your/their interview respectively, and you may withdraw your questionnaire data up until one month after returning the questionnaire. The research will be published but anonymity will be maintained in the reporting of findings. Your data will form part of an in-depth case study where there is possibility that your organisation may be identified.

If you as a coordinator of your initiative are willing to participate in the first, or both phases of this research, **the completed questionnaire and the signed consent form can be sent back through email/post or in person, as appropriate.** You are free to leave blank any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You may be further contacted if any clarification of data is required or if you have indicated interest in the second phase of research. Indicating interest in the second phase of the research on the attached 'Phase One Consent Form' does not yet commit you to any particular activity in Phase Two. This merely gives the researcher the indication to follow up with you after the questionnaire, and an additional consent form will be presented then, allowing you both personally and on behalf of your organisation to consent to different types of involvement (interview/observation/photographs) in Phase Two. If you have questions regarding this project, please contact me, Emma Sharp (details above) or my primary research supervisor:

Dr Ward Friesen,  
The University of Auckland,  
Private Bag 92019, Auckland.  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn 88612.

For ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair  
The University of Auckland,  
Human Participant Ethics Committee,  
The University of Auckland,  
Private Bag 92019, Auckland.  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn 87830.

Your cooperation will be of great value to us and will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Emma Sharp

## APPENDIX II: PHASE ONE CONSENT FORM

### Founder/Coordinator – (Questionnaire) Consent Form

This form will be kept for a period of six years.

**Title of Project:** Study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives

**Researcher:** Emma Sharp, School of Environment. The University of Auckland.  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn. 89917 or 021 212 0931  
Email: [el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz)

This form is to gather your consent to participate in the initial phase of a study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives (AFIs). Only Emma Sharp and her research supervisors will have access to your responses. Your personal information will be kept separate from your responses at all times. Your questionnaire will be identified by an anonymous code. A copy of all responses will be stored for 6 years (after which time they will be destroyed) for research purposes but will not be identifiable as yours in a secure room in the School of Environment.

#### Consent form and contact details

I have read and understood a description of this research project. On this basis, I agree to take part. I understand that my data will remain confidential at all times. I understand that only Emma Sharp and her supervisors will have access to my contact details I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved. I understand that I am free to withdraw from phase one (questionnaire stage) of the research up until one month after returning the questionnaire. I understand that my contact details will never be shared with anyone. I understand that Emma Sharp may use these details to contact and invite me to complete a follow up interview and observation of the Alternative Food Initiative with which I am associated.

|   |                      |                          |                             |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
|   |                      | ID#:                     |                             |
| Name:   | <input type="text"/> |                          |                             |
| Signature:  | <input type="text"/> | Date:                    | <input type="text"/>        |
| Home phone:   | <input type="text"/> | Mobile phone:            | <input type="text"/>        |
| Email address:  | <input type="text"/> |                          |                             |
| Postal address:   | <input type="text"/> |                          |                             |
| Would you like to receive a summary of key findings from the study?       | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are you willing to be involved in phase two of the research?              | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you permit your employees to participate in phase two of the research? | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

## APPENDIX III: PHASE ONE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Title of Project:** Study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives

**Researcher:** Emma Sharp, School of Environment, The University of Auckland.

Phone: 09 373-7599 extn. 89917.

Email: [el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz)

***This questionnaire below is to be completed by the coordinator/organiser of your Alternative Food Initiative (AFI). Feel free to use additional sheets of paper if required, but please identify the information with the question number. Please overwrite greyed text.***

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| 7) In what ways does this initiative trade goods? Please tick as many as relevant.   |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> exchange? Please elaborate <i>e.g. with another producer</i> _____<br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> sell? Please elaborate <i>e.g. farm shops, markets</i><br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> gift? Please elaborate <i>e.g. gifts to neighbours</i><br>_____<br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> koha? _____<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> alternative currency? Please elaborate <i>e.g. staff tokens</i> _____<br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> forage/gather/hunt? Please elaborate <i>e.g. fish</i><br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> trade in kind? Please elaborate <i>e.g. produce for childcare</i> _____<br>_____<br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> other(s)? (please specify) _____<br>_____ |   |
| 8) Who participates in this initiative?  |  |   |
|  |  |   |
| Comments:  |  |   |
| 4) How many different producers / growers / harvesters does this initiative represent in total and how   |  |   |
| 9) Does your initiative have links to:   |  |   |
| a) Conventional food <i>producers</i> ? Please specify if able:  | b) Conventional food <i>distributors</i> ? Please specify if able:   | c) Other conventional parts of the food system? Please specify if able: |
| <i>e.g. what companies?</i>  | <i>e.g. what restaurants/supermarkets?</i>   | <i>e.g. couriers for transport of produce</i>                           |
| 10) What are this initiative's food production methods? Please tick as many as relevant.   |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> conventional farms/orchards<br><input type="checkbox"/> organic<br><input type="checkbox"/> consumer participation  | <input type="checkbox"/> permaculture<br><input type="checkbox"/> other(s) (please specify): _____<br>_____  |   |
| 11) Approximately what proportions of produce go to what buyers/traders/consumer market?   |  |   |

**Context:** A few things about the structure of your initiative:

*e. g. approx. 20% sold to supermarkets, approx. 50% sold at farmers' markets, approx. 20% produced for food boxes, approx. 5% gift giving, approx. 5% waste*

12) Please describe the supply chain(s) of your initiative and how many steps are between producer and consumer.

*e.g. internet marketing --> local selling/procurement --> transportation to hub*

13) Where in Auckland are patrons/consumers of this initiative based?

**Context:** A few things about the networks involved in your initiative:

1a) How does this initiative trade with existing potential patrons in Auckland? Please tick as many as relevant.

- direct selling at fixed venues
- direct selling online
- through other vendors

- subscription membership schemes
- other(s) (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1b) How does this initiative engage with existing/potential patrons in Auckland? Please tick as many as relevant.

- email
- newsletters
- community newspapers

- an online forum
- workshops
- other(s) (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1c) If you use online methods, what is your reason for this?

2) What is the mission/motivation of this organization? Please be specific.

*e.g. business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, leisure, pleasure, etc.*

3) Do you believe that your initiative can change Auckland's current food system? If so, how?

4) Do you perceive any barriers to restrict 'alternative food initiatives' from changing Auckland's current food system? If yes, how?

5) How can 'alternative food initiatives' scale up their initiatives to support an alternative food movement?

6) Can *new* initiatives easily enter the market or are there constraints?

7) What other similar minded organisations is this initiative connected to?

8) Can you suggest any other alternative food organisations with Auckland activities that I should contact?

**Thank you for taking part in this research.**

## APPENDIX IV: PHASE TWO PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

### Coordinator – Participant Information Sheet

**Title of Project:** Study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives

**Researcher:** Emma Sharp  
School of Environment, The University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn. 89917.  
Email: [el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz)

Dear Founder/Coordinator,

Thank you for your involvement and interest in my research.

I would like to invite you to take part in the second phase of the collective study on Auckland's Alternative Food Initiatives. Your organisation was selected for this research as it has been identified as an Alternative Food Initiative in Auckland. Your participation in the study is, of course, voluntary.

To recap from Phase One, Alternative Food Initiatives demonstrate practices of producing and distributing food, that sit outside of conventional methods of food production and distribution (such as through supermarkets). This study aims to develop a picture of Alternative Food Initiatives in Auckland and their current and future potential role in Auckland's food landscape. This is important because we currently know little about what these interesting food initiatives look like in our city, the work they do and why it is done. This is the first collective study of Alternative Food Initiatives in Auckland, and by participating you will be contributing to novel research that will tell us about our city's current and future food networks. This study is conducted solely for the purpose of scientific research.

At this stage of my research, I am looking more deeply into the everyday practices, motivations and nature of the individuals and groups involved in Alternative Food Initiatives in Auckland. This also involves a degree of 'participatory' research, which involves taking part in some of these day-to-day practices as appropriate. Therefore, I kindly request your participation in an interview. If you are willing to participate, the interview should take no more than 1.5 hours (but likely less). This will be audio-recorded with your consent, however you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. Sections of the recording will be transcribed and you are entitled to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information, at your request. You may be further contacted if any clarification of data is required. A summary of results can be made available on request.

You are free to decline to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Personal/identifying information about you as a participant in this research will remain confidential. It is necessary to record your name and contact details so that your consent form can be matched to your interview responses, and I also require your details so that I can contact you if you would like to take part in future components of the study, which include observation of the Alternative Food Initiative with which you are associated.

Your personal details will be stored separately from all research data. Your responses will be converted to anonymous numbers in a secure data file. Only the researcher, Emma Sharp, and her academic supervisors will have access to your responses, and your identity remains separate from any recorded or transcribed interviews at all times. Any interview transcripts and personal information will be stored separately in an encrypted electronic database in a secure room in the School of Environment. Your

responses will be stored for 6 years (after which time they will be destroyed) for research purposes but will not be identifiable as yours. You may withdraw interview data from this study up until one month after your interview. The research will be published but anonymity will be maintained in the reporting of findings. Your data will form part of an in-depth case study where there is possibility that you may be identified.

If you are willing to participate in this research **the signed consent form can be sent back through email/post or given to me in person, as appropriate.** If you have questions regarding this project, please contact me, Emma Sharp (details above) or my primary research supervisor:

Dr Ward Friesen,  
The University of Auckland,  
Private Bag 92019, Auckland.  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn 88612.

For ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair,  
The University of Auckland,  
Human Participant Ethics Committee,  
The University of Auckland,  
Private Bag 92019,  
Auckland.  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn 87830.

Your cooperation will be of great value to us and will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Emma Sharp

## APPENDIX V: PHASE TWO CONSENT FORM

### Founder/Coordinator – Phase Two (Interview & Observation) Consent Form

This form will be kept indefinitely but at least for a period of six years.

**Title of Project:** Study on Auckland’s Alternative Food Initiatives

**Researcher:** Emma Sharp, School of Environment. The University of Auckland.  
Phone: 09 373-7599 extn. 89917.  
Email: [el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:el.sharp@auckland.ac.nz)

This form is to gather your consent to participate in the second phase of a study on Auckland’s Alternative Food Initiatives (AFIs). Only Emma Sharp and her research supervisors will have access to your responses. Your personal information will be kept separate from you responses at all times. Any Sections of interviews that are transcribed will be identified by an anonymous code. A copy of all responses will be stored for 6 years (after which time they will be destroyed) for research purposes but will not be identifiable as yours in a secure room in the School of Environment.

#### Consent form and contact details

I have read and understood a description of this research project. On this basis, I agree to take part. I understand that my data will remain confidential at all times. I understand that only Emma Sharp and her supervisors will have access to my contact details. I understand that I will be audio recorded, and that I may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved. I understand that my contact details will never be shared with anyone. I understand that I may withdraw data from phase two (interview/observation) of the research up until a month after the final interview/observation.

|  |                      |                          |                             |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  |                      | ID#:                     |                             |
| <b>Name:</b>   | <input type="text"/> |                          |                             |
| <b>Signature:</b>  | <input type="text"/> | <b>Date:</b>             | <input type="text"/>        |
| <b>Home phone:</b>   | <input type="text"/> | <b>Mobile phone:</b>     | <input type="text"/>        |
| <b>Email address:</b>  | <input type="text"/> |                          |                             |
| <b>Postal address:</b>   | <input type="text"/> |                          |                             |
| <b>Are you willing to complete an interview?</b>   | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Do you permit photographs of your organization?</b>   | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Do you permit observation of your organization’s participants?</b>  | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Do you permit interviews of your organization’s participants?</b>   | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Do you permit employees (if relevant)/to participate in this research?</b>  | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Do you give your assurance that the decision of employees (if relevant) to participate or not will have no effect on their employment status?</b> | Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

## APPENDIX VI: PHASE TWO SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

### SCHEDULE

#### Schedule for Semi-structured Interviews – Coordinator

**Title of Project:** Study on Auckland’s Alternative Food Initiatives

**Interview Guide for Alternative Food Initiatives**

ID#:

---

**How long have you been with [initiative]**

**What is your role with [initiative]**

**Why do you spend your time here [initiative]?**

**How is [initiative] different from other AFIs in Auckland or nationwide?**

**Is there an online component to this initiative?**

**What are the benefits?**

**What type of experience can you get from participating online?**

**(How) is it comparable to taking part in the activities here?**

**How does exchange take place? Can you give me some examples**

**Do you feel that people in Auckland have control over/know where their food comes from?**

**Does [initiative] reflect citizenship (engaging in food-related activities)?**

**Does [initiative] reflect sovereignty (right of people to define their own food systems)?**

**Do you believe [initiative] speaks to political projects — which ones? If yes, how? If no, why not?**

**How does this initiative provide opportunities for transformation of our food system?**

**Is transgression part of the transformation?**

**Operating in the alternative space has its challenges and there are, I’d guess, barriers for expansion. How much do you see this in your initiative?**

**Do you think other initiatives like this one have the potential to *start up* or are there constraints? If yes, how? If no, why not?**

**Do you feel [initiative] has the potential to grow?**

**What would limit its growth?**

**What would aid its growth?**

**Would you want it to grow?**