

Ontological Possibilities: Rhizoanalytic Explorations of Community Food Work in Central
Appalachia

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, the community food movement has been put forward as a potential solution for a global food system that fails to provide just and equitable access to nutritious food. This claim has been subject to the criticism of a variety of scholars and activists, some of whom contend that the alternative food movement is complicit in the re-production of neoliberalism and is therefore implicated in the making of the unjust system. In this dissertation I use theories of Deleuze (and Guatarri) and science and technology scholars to enter the middle of this dichotomy. I argue that both readings of community food work, as just and unjust, rely on realist epistemologies that posit knowledge as representative of an existing reality. I alternatively view knowledge as much more contingent and plural, resulting in a multiplicity of realities that are much less fixed. The idea that reality is a product of knowledge, rather than the inverse, raises the question of how reality might be made differently, or of ontological politics. This is the question I set out to interrogate: how might the realities of community food work be read and made differently, and how this reading might open new possibilities for transformation? To explore this question, I conducted interviews with 18 individuals working for three different non-profit community food organizations in central Appalachia. I used an appreciative inquiry approach to capture stories that affected these individuals—stories about their work captured their visions and hope for food system change. I then used a (non)method, rhizoanalysis, to code the data affectively, reading for the interesting, curious, and remarkable, rather than attempting to trace a strong theory like neoliberalism onto the data. Drawing on Delueze and Guattari, I mapped excerpts from the data into four large narrative cartographies. In each cartography, the narrative excerpts are positioned to vibrate against one another; my hope is that these resonances might open lines of flight within the reader and space for new ontological possibilities. For adult and community educators, I posit this rhizoanalysis as a poststructuralist contribution to Freire's concept of the generative theme and of use to broader project of agonistic pluralism.

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At the beginning of, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1988) wrote, “The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd” (p. 3). In the same way things are quite cozy within the assemblage that is this dissertation. Rather than being product hammered by Phil, the lone and isolated researcher, this document is truly the effect of a multiplicity of others. Here, I hope to mention some of those who had a significant impact on the writing of this dissertation and the process that is was and is.

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ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction: Laying out the Case.....	1
The Makings of Madness: Enlightened Alternatives and Mythical Conventions	2
The roots of the alternative.	2
Enlightenment, myth, and discourses of enlightenment.	5
Conventional food system as ‘myth’.	5
Alternative food system as ‘enlightenment’.	7
Myth as enlightenment; Enlightenment as myth	8
Conventional as alternative; Alternative as conventional.....	10
Re-making the madness	12
Problem Statement	12
Research Setting.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Conceptual and Methodological Framework.....	16
Significance.....	18
Clarifying terms and locating myself.....	19
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	27
Introduction: Made-ness and critique	27
Conceptualizing Social Justice	28
Community Food Work: Making the discourse.....	31
The Externalities of a “Maddening” Food System	31
A History of U.S. Agriculture: Madness, food security, and community food security	32
Community Food Work as a Theory of Change.....	36
Supply-chain re-development	37
SCRD: Indicators and measures	39
Community food work	39
CFW: Indicators and measures	43
Rights-based development	44
Rights-based development: indicators and measures	45
Theories of Change and Making Discourses of Development	46
Post-development theory.	47
Making discourses of agro-food system development.....	48
Supply-chain re-development.	48
Community food work.....	49
Rights-based approach.	51
The theories of change within a U.S. context.	52
Neoliberalism, a Theory and Practice: Made, done, and critiqued.....	53
Making Neoliberalism	54
Doing Neoliberalism: Two specific impacts on U.S. agriculture	56
Farms, farmers, and crisis.	56
The entrepreneurial consumer.....	60
Critiquing neoliberalism: Theories and theorists.....	62

Neoliberalism and wealth inequality and social justice.....	63
Neoliberalism as governmentality.....	66
Conclusion.....	68
CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	70
Introduction.....	70
Arranging the Stage: Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.....	71
Anti-foundationalism.....	72
Anti-essentialism.....	73
An Ontological Turn?.....	75
Performativity and ontological politics.....	76
Thinking the Ontological with Deleuze.....	78
Difference and Identity.....	79
Assemblage.....	79
Territorialization/deterritorialization.....	81
Rhizome.....	81
Thought and Knowledge.....	83
Lines of flight.....	84
Becoming.....	85
Affect.....	85
Deleuze, Ontological Politics, and Community Food Work.....	86
Small Systems and Becoming.....	89
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN.....	91
Introduction.....	91
Problem Statement.....	92
Research Questions.....	94
Methodology – Using Narratives to Think and Map the Material-Semiotic Relationships of Localized Community Food Work.....	95
Institutional Ethnography.....	96
Narrative Inquiry.....	97
Appreciative Inquiry.....	100
Narrative Environment.....	103
Research Design.....	103
Defining the Case and Unit of Observation.....	103
Unit of Analysis.....	104
Data Collection and Procedures.....	106
Participant selection.....	106
Participant organizations.....	107
Interviews.....	107
Interview questions.....	107
Participant observation.....	109
Data Analysis: Reading for Difference.....	109
Reading for difference.....	112
Thinking and reading data.....	113
Data as transgressive and rhizomatic.....	114
Rhizoanalysis.....	115

Affect as an element of analysis	116
Coding strategies.....	116
Reporting Findings: Cartography/Mapping Narrative Rhizomatic Assemblages	118
Returning to Praxis and Possibilities	120
Validity	120
Researcher Ethics and Reflexivity	121
CHAPTER 5: NARRATIVE CARTOGRAPHIES: BECOMING DATA, BECOMING ANALYSIS	125
Introduction.....	125
Assemblages, Analysis, and Meaning	126
Guide for plugging into the mappings	128
Research context	133
One Organization	133
Two Organization	135
Three Organization	137
Cartographies	139
1. Cartography - Addiction	139
Interlude	149
2. Cartography - Child	150
Interlude	159
3. Cartography - Astrology	160
Interlude	174
4. Cartography - Experimental.....	175
Analysis, post-Rhizoanalysis	185
A Question of Method	185
Cartographies	185
1 – Cartography: Addiction.	185
2 – Cartography: Child.....	186
3 – Cartography: Astrology.	186
4 – Cartography: Experimental.....	187
Conclusion	187
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	189
Introduction.....	189
Return to the Research Questions.....	191
Research Question One.....	191
Research Question Two	195
The Networked Quality of Meaning.....	196
Looping Back to a Totalizing Neoliberalism.....	196
Praxis.....	198
Return to Ontological Politics.....	199
Experimentation	200
Praxis - Potential Directions	202
Heterogeneity and Generative Themes	202
Generative themes, Paulo Freire and beyond	203
Madness, Composition, and Agonistic Ontology Flattening	205

Limitations of the Study.....	207
Future Directions and Considerations.....	207
Conclusion	210
CODA.....	211
REFERENCES.....	215
APPENDICES	234
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter	234
Appendix B: Informed Consent	235
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Script.....	238

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Laying out the Case

As Melissa Orlie (2009) has noted, “The madness of the global industrial food economy is increasingly difficult to deny” (para 4). And, indeed it is. Over the past several decades, a considerable amount of community and scholarly work has gone into creating a narrative of a broken and dysfunctional food and agricultural economy—a system that provides for some, while impinging upon the well-being of others—non-humans included. This lack of equitability in the material benefits provided by the food system can be seen on many levels, which have been well documented (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). In response to this “madness,” there has been increased effort, on the part of governmental and non-governmental organizations, to modify the agro-food system, to create alternatives and new possibilities. These activities might be seen as a product of this discourse of madness and the material and corporeal impacts that adversely affect marginalized communities.

Though these inequitable impacts are very real, (something I do not intend to diminish) I want to begin by suggesting that the discourse of madness is something that has been made—something that has been put together to enable a certain way of apprehending reality which then points toward a certain array of potential solutions. While this is not a wrong way to make the world, in this dissertation, I want to suggest that it might preclude other ways of making the world (or worlds) and therefore limit those solutions that seem most appropriate and possible. As Law (2009) has pointed out, if the world can be made in different ways and so can its problems and solutions, then the decision to make the world in a certain way is fundamentally political. In this introductory chapter, I will lay out one example of how this madness has been made, and subsequently use that story to provide the context for an overview of my dissertation research.

The Makings of Madness: Enlightened Alternatives and Mythical Conventions

To lay out a case for the “made-ness” of the madness, I draw upon the work of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, two first-generation critical theorists who penned the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944/2002). Though the text is theoretically fecund and ripe for a variety of social analyses, I work from their use of myth to critique realities of Enlightenment progenerating from the likes of Francis Bacon. To put it another way, it is to use the ideas immanent in Enlightenment to produce a critique of the very concept. I will further elaborate as I move through the example.

The roots of the alternative. The alternative food movement in the United States has its roots in anti-urbanism, emergent environmentalism, and bioregionalism of the 1960s counter-cultural movement. In these beginnings its adherents were focused on the small and local as “beautiful” (Conn, 2010; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). As it has traversed the past 40 years, the movement has continued to re-identify and shape itself, and today the activist academic discussion around food systems frames their localization as a mechanism for greater environmental sustainability and social justice. Its opposition to the “global, big, environmentally degrading food system” is a defining characteristic of this discourse (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 360). Though the local food movement has done much to challenge the conventional food system, it is not clear that they are entirely free from the criticisms most sharply leveled at their stated opposite.

The notion of eating more locally and sustainably entered the mainstream public discourse with the publication of *Diet for a Small Planet*, by Frances Moore Lappé, in 1975. In this seminal text, Lappé argued that greater environmental and social sustainability could be achieved if individuals made a commitment to ‘eat lower on the food-chain.’ Around the same

time, author/essayist, Wendell Berry (1977) published a book entitled, *The Unsettling of America*. In the text, Berry eloquently articulated the negative impact of the post-war agricultural industrialization. The introduction of chemicals and intensive cropping practices, Berry argued, created costs that were externalized to the environment, but further, this agricultural approach also eroded the cultural foundation of farming, estranging people from ‘the land.’ As a matter of recourse, America was in need of a “resettling” movement back toward a more place-based, agrarian mentality.

While these works played a significant role in forming a public discourses around a local and alternative food system, the scholarly roots of food system activism emerged from the academic conversation around sustainable agriculture. An outgrowth of the environmentalism of the 1960s and 1970s was a concern with agricultural or farm-based environmental issues. This movement led to a dichotomization of conventional agriculture and sustainable or alternative agriculture. In the mid-1990s, scholars within the social sciences began to argue for “a social analysis of food extending far beyond the farm gate” (Kloppenburg et al., 2000, p. 179). The dominant academic outgrowth, in its summative form, is revealed in the work of Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson (1996), in their article titled, “Coming in to the Foodshed.” Building on the work of their food activist colleagues and predecessors, the authors intoned a concern with the increased globalization of the food system.

For virtually everyone in the North and for many in the South, to eat is to participate in a truly global food system. In any supermarket here in Madison, Wisconsin, we can find tomatoes from Mexico, grapes from Chile, lettuce from California, apples from New Zealand... We cannot, however, count on finding Wisconsin-grown tomatoes, grapes,

lettuce, strawberries, or apples in any supermarket in Madison, even when those crops are in season locally. (pp. 33-34)

The authors problematized the average 1300 miles that food travels from the producer and the half dozen times it changes hands before it reaches the consumer. The result of such a process is that it eliminates the feedback loop for consumers. How can someone know of the environmental and social costs of food's production if they are located far from its source? Their solution to this situation is the creation of local and regional "foodsheds."

The concept, which tropes on natural science's concept of watershed, amounts to an argument for local and regional communities that produce and consume their own food. In the same way that geographic features naturalistically determine the communities to and through which water flows, the spaces in which food is produced should similarly determine the proximity of its consumption. "The term 'foodshed' thus becomes a unifying and organizing metaphor for the conceptual development that starts from a premise of the unity of place and people, or nature and society" (p. 33). While this term is not necessarily used with frequency in the literature, this local foodshed concept is the vehicle for much of the work around what has become known in the literature as 'alternative food systems.' (Slocum, 2007).

It is important to note that in Kloppenburg et al.'s conception, the foodshed approach is proffered as a mechanism for not just internalizing the environmental costs of production, but also the inherent injustices associated with a food system, on the ends of both the production and consumption—workers, consumers, and hunger. Not only does the localization of a food system provide a mechanism for addressing these injustices, but it is also economically beneficial to local communities—recirculating monies within the community.

Enlightenment, myth, and discourses of enlightenment. The concept of Enlightenment is foundational in Horkheimer and Adorno's, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The authors refer to the historical concept of Enlightenment, citing its lineage to Francis Bacon, and arguing that, "Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world. It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge" (Horkheimer & Adorno, p. 1). The goal of Enlightenment was to discover the world that truly is—to dominate nature in such a way as to eliminate the fear of it from humans and install the latter as masters. For Bacon and his like-minded thinkers, Enlightenment was defined by its opposition to myth. Under Enlightenment, anything that was not calculable by its measurements of utility and rationality was suspect, and in this way, myth was its opposite. For Enlightenment, myth represented and valorized that which was unseen and incalculable, and was therefore, comprehensively rejected.

The criticism of Enlightenment put forth by Horkheimer and Adorno was not simply directed toward the intellectual cultural movement bearing that name, it was also directed toward other dominating discourses that assume the role and relation of Enlightenment to myth. As did Horkheimer and Adorno, I use the "small-e" enlightenment to distinguish between the intellectual movement and other discourses of enlightenment.

Conventional food system as 'myth'. Thinking with Horkheimer and Adorno, the work around establishing alternative food systems can be viewed a discourse of enlightenment, or to put it in different terms, it is non-madness. In the same way that Enlightenment defined itself by its opposite, so does the alternative food movement. They are by definition an alternative or reaction to the conventional food system—the myth, the mad.

In order to establish this argument, I will first characterize the conventional food system as described in the alternative food movement discourse. As noted previously, the alternative

food movement has its initial roots in sustainable or alternative agriculture. As such, I begin my characterization of the conventional food system with an examination of its agricultural counterpart.

Following World War II, U.S. agriculture underwent a period of rapid intensification. Technologies that had been developed during the war were used to dramatically increase the production of agricultural commodities. The intensification reached new levels during the global recession of the early 1970s (Beus & Dunlap, 1990). In 1972, in the midst of the recession, the USSR experienced a harvest failure (Maxwell, 1996). In response to the increased supply shortage, the U.S. Department of Agriculture made direct efforts to increase the scope and scale of U.S. Agriculture. The resulting environmental and cultural consequences prompted Wendell Berry's response in the *Unsettling of America* (as noted above).

Beus and Dunlap (1990) characterized much of this process in their article, "Conventional versus alternative agriculture: The paradigmatic roots of the debate." As the title implies, the authors used this foundation to describe two different paradigms in agriculture; the alternative and that which defines it, the conventional. To frame the discussion, Beus and Dunlap cited Knorr and Watkins, who defined conventional agriculture as, "Capital-intensive, large-scale, highly mechanized agriculture with monocultures of crops and extensive use of artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, with intensive animal husbandry," (p. 594). Beus and Dunlap then go about unambiguously setting up a series of binary relationships that they use to define and construct the two 'paradigms' of conventional and alternative: centralization vs. decentralization; dependence vs. independence; competition vs. community; domination of nature vs. harmony with nature; specialization vs. diversity.

While these characteristics do present a clear binary of conventional and alternative agriculture, it is not until the early 1990s that this dichotomy was extended beyond agricultural systems to include the ‘whole’ of the food system. The “whole food system” was argued to include issues of social justice (class, gender, and hunger) (Allen & Sachs, 1991; Clancy, 1993). The argument for the inclusion of these characteristics in an alternative food system was premised on an observation that these elements are not characteristics of the conventional food system.

Alternative food system as ‘enlightenment’. Much in the way that myth was not myth until Enlightenment termed it so, the conventional food system was not such until the alternative food movement declared it so. This raises a question of how the two are made as such. Going back to Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/2002), the lens for framing this part of the discussion is found in the Enlightenment thinker’s view of the world as calculable. In the case of Enlightenment, this meant that any incalculable phenomenon was summarily dismissed. “The reason [for this] is that enlightenment...recognizes itself in the old myths” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 3). Within the enlightenment thinking lies a fear of its similarity to myth. Therefore, its intellectuals tend to go to great ends to be sure that similarities remain obscured and its mechanism for this end is “totalitarianism” (p. 4). While this may seem an overstatement, Horkheimer and Adorno further nuanced this supposition by adding, “Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent he can manipulate them” (p. 6). This same theorizing can be applied to the alternative food movement. Its thinkers have largely constructed its agenda by its difference from the conventional food system. This is done, primarily, by making present differences between the conventional and alternative systems, while simultaneously making absent all else, including

similarities. In other words, the madness of the conventional system is, arguably, made more stark by the way that both the conventional and the alternative are represented by thinkers of the latter.

As noted in the previous section, in the early 1990s, scholars defined key elements of alternative food systems as: decentralization, independence, community, harmony with nature, diversity, and social justice—including issues of class, gender, and hunger (Allen and Sachs, 1991; Beus & Dunlap, 1990; Clancy 1993). To add further complexity to these characteristics, food activist scholars have more recently argued for the inclusion of embedded, place-based norms, such as “the ethics of care, stewardship, and agrarian visions” (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 359). This inclusion denotes some variation in alternative food system elements from place-to-place. But, as DuPuis and Goodman (2005) have wryly noted, this idea of normative localism is often presented by its advocates as “a set of pure, conflict-free local values and knowledges in resistance to anomic and contradictory capitalist forces” (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 359). The authors’ skepticism of this claim is evident in the text, but here again, even the more nuanced approaches to the alternative system are defined by their difference from their conventional counterpart. I do not point this out to devalue the work of the alternative food system work, but rather to support my claim that the existence and strength of this type of activism is premised upon a certain rendering of that which is the conventional food system, and because the alternative gaze is so fixed in this direction, it may limit the imagination of other possibilities.

Myth as enlightenment; Enlightenment as myth

For Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/2002) the complicity of myth in Enlightenment, rendered the latter’s claims problematic. The authors stated the two theses to summarize their

arguments on enlightenment, “Myth is already enlightenment and enlightenment reverts to mythology” (p. xvii). To elaborate, for Enlightenment thinkers, instrumental rationality was the vehicle for the progress toward a human-dominated nature. Rational inquiry was employed in order to learn from nature how it might be used to dominate it and human beings, and “nothing else counts” (p. 2). Mythology is unable to mold itself to such instrumental reason and is therefore considered irrational.

Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the vehement adherence to rationality in enlightenment was based in fear, and that “humans believe themselves free of fear when there is no longer anything unknown” (p. 11). In this way, myth too is like enlightenment, focused on developing a narrative of the unknown in order to attain freedom from fear. But due to its depth and intensity, the authors argued, “enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized” (p. 11). In this way, both myth and enlightenment are concerned with dominating nature and other humans to eliminate fear—one elevates rationality to the task, while the other, gods.

While in this way, both enlightenment and myth are one, enlightenment regresses to mythology in another manner, by its own device—the way it forces others to engage with its method.

Any intellectual resistance [enlightenment] encounters merely increases its strength...No matter which myths are invoked against it, by being used as arguments they are made to acknowledge the very principle of corrosive rationality which enlightenment stands accuse. Enlightenment is totalitarian. (p. 3)

In this instance, in its inability to engage other realities, enlightenment becomes irrational. It maintains such principled adherence to its method of rationality that thought is expelled from its

logic. So intent on its own trajectory, enlightenment becomes irrational and descends to mythology.

Conventional as alternative; Alternative as conventional

In the same way that two perceived opposites, myth and enlightenment, set in dichotomous relation, can be read as one and the same; the conventional and alternative food systems can be read similarly. Take for example a thread linking the two—the political economic project of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is described by David Harvey (2005) as “...in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). This political and economic project has its theoretical foundations in the years following World War II and set itself in opposition to the interventionist strategies of John Maynard Keynes. The theory remained on the political fringe until the global recession of the early 1970s created a receptive climate (Harvey, 2005). During this recession, the same one that led to the rapid intensification of agriculture and its alternative counterpart (Beus, & Dunlap), neoliberalism began to seep into the political sphere and was ultimately institutionalized with the election of Ronald Reagan. Since 1979, the neoliberal approach has been employed to the degree that it now can be read as pervasive and the status quo (Harvey, 2005).

The normalized status of neoliberalism is not exclusive to the state. In fact, scholars have argued that one of the significant impacts of neoliberalism is the degree to which it displaces governance responsibilities from the nation-state, deferring them to the market (Guthman, 2008). One of the consequences of this displacement is the depoliticization of the once political “as

collective life is organized around the modalities of privatization, deregulation, and commercialization” (Giroux, 2005, p. 4). Where once existed a venue for direct political action, now exists an opportunity to engage in the market.

I want to return to alternative food systems, as defined by scholars, and ask a question of the forms they might take. As I have noted, a clear binary has been developed between what has been defined as conventional (and madness) and that which has been characterized as alternative. True to DuPuis and Goodman (2005), the operationalization of these dichotomized elements is different from one community to the next, but most frame their engagement around food system localization. Consistently, there are certain elements that have come to dominate: the reconnection of farmers and consumers through farmers markets, community-supported agriculture and interest in supporting small farms; the organization and empowerment of marginalized communities through gardens and food-based micro-enterprise or job training programs; and programs and initiatives designed to educate the public and growers about food systems and local agriculture (Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman, & Warner, 2003). One theme uniting each of these forms is a vision of food system change via technologies of the market.

In this unification, the alternative food system movement is implicated in the production and reproduction of neoliberalism—the promotion of market engagement as a form of collective action for social change. While both Beus and Dunlap (1990) and DuPuis and Goodman (2005) explicitly posit alternative food system work as a form of resistance to capitalism and the conventional food system, the alternative food movement’s main venue for action is in the market: the farmers markets, CSAs, small farms, micro-loans, and job training, and even the foci on community gardens and educational programs focus on the individual over the collective. Despite their efforts to characterize their activities by their difference from the conventional, the

alternative food movement regresses to its self-defined opposite when the reading lens is neoliberalism.

Re-making the madness

The critique of alternative food work as neoliberalism is not particularly new. As a brief overview, Guthman (2008) made such a critique of the movement in California; Allen and Guthman (2006) have pointed out this quality in farm-to-school work; Prudup (2008) and Ogawa (2009) made similar claims regarding community gardens; and Guthman (2011) has implicated neoliberalisms in the drive for healthier, less-obese and less-diabetic, communities. As a collective narrative, these authors point to the fact that neoliberalism has been made absent in the making of alternative food systems discourse. Law and Urry (2004) have noted the way in which social practices and, in particular, practices of social sciences, have the capacity to make more or less real certain ways of viewing the world and that, in effect, these practices play a part in enacting particular realities. As Law (2009) has pointed out, the making of these realities is done by bringing certain things into “presence,” or making them appear real, via our textual representations, while at the same time deleting or making absent other elements. In the example of alternative food work, neoliberalism has often been deleted. As Law (2004; 2006) has further noted, this process of making present and making absent is tied up in the logic of representation. It is not possible to represent the world without bringing some things into presence, simultaneously making others absent. But acknowledging this as the case highlights the political nature of the process of making and representing. What is made more real? And, by consequence, what is made less real? Within the context of alternative food systems and neoliberalism, these are the questions that I hope to interrogate in this dissertation.

Problem Statement

Thinking about social realities and those which might be made more or less real brings me to my problem statement and research questions, which, alongside my theoretical lens, have enabled me to shape my methodology and research design.

As I argued thus far, regardless of the made-ness of the narrative of food system madness, these depictions do describe situations in which the production and distribution of food benefit the few and elite, while creating unjust corporeal and material realities for the many. In the United States, the community food movement has been put forward as an alternative to the madness of the conventional, but some scholars have argued that it is complicit in the same logic that undergirds its non-alternative counterpart—the particular example I have used is that of neoliberalism. While I find these critiques compelling, other scholars have begun to raise questions of whether these analyses might actually foreclose upon, rather than open up possibilities for a more equitable food system (Cameron, Manhood, & Pomfrett, 2010; Harris, 2009, Boone & Shear, 2010). The neoliberal critiques enact a calculus and system of measurements for making neoliberalism visible and, consequently, more real. Because the on-the-ground activities of community food system activists are necessarily heterogeneous, it is, arguably, not possible to offer one size fits all “solutions” to the perceived dominance of neoliberalism. As a result, much of the literature laying out this critique (see: Allen & Guthman, 2006; Guthman, 2008; Alkon & Agyeman, 2011) offer little in the way of practical ways forward, even within the contexts of their studies. I raise the question: if the critical critique has merit, but its methods are, perhaps, not effecting desired ends, what other options are available? If other options to be found and utilized, what are the practice implications for community food practitioners working in central Appalachia? How might one at once challenge the effects of

neoliberalism, while searching and enacting possibilities that trouble the totalizing nature of the critical scholarly discourse?

In my methodology chapter, I lay out a case for the examination of heterogeneous assemblages of material and semiotic relations that comprise practices of community food work. As Deleuze and Parnet (2002) have noted, theories have often been used to abstract and explain the concrete—but this assumes a single state of things rather than multiplicities. They argue that the task of empiricism (what I am using here) is different: it is to analyze these multiplicities, the states of things, “such that non-pre-existent concepts can be extracted from them. So rather than using neoliberalism to explain community food work in central Appalachia, I use these locally-situated practices to complicate the discourse of neoliberalization, while reading the practices for possibilities and an ever-broadening political imagination.

Research Setting

This research is set within West Virginia and the Appalachian regions of Virginia and North Carolina. The Appalachian regions are those designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission (Appalachian Regional Commission, n.d.). Specifically, this research falls within a larger on-going university-led effort called the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP). The AFP is a five-year research project that is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture-Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (USDA NIFA-AFRI). The work is geographically focused on the same area stated above, which I term central Appalachia.

The work of the AFP has been focused on enhancing community food security in this region of Appalachia. As the recipients of the funding, the university partners (of which I am a part) worked from Hamm and Bellows’s (2003) definition of community food security as “a

situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (p. 37). Since 2011, the university and community partners have been working from this concept to develop a regional coalition and corresponding action that might make more possible the desired situation described by Hamm and Bellows. Over the past three years, we, as a university/community partnership, have held three regional forums to develop the network of partners and work towards an actionable vision for regional community food security. Each state has also held multiple convenings to develop networks of community food security practitioners as well as certain products, like community food assessments. It is in the context of these localized practices that I have situated this research inquiry.

Research Questions

In central Appalachia, a significant number of individuals, organizations, and institutions are doing the hard work of imagining and developing food and agricultural systems that are more equitable and socially just. Like any community food work, it would be possible to read large bits of these efforts as complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism. While these critiques have merit, where are the spaces of possibility, the openings for the more just and equitable systems? For scholars/practitioners, this raises a question of praxis: how might one maintain an emphasis on the unjust material effects described by critics of neoliberalism, while simultaneously avoiding the structuralist trap of creating and enacting the system under question? This question of praxis gives organization to my research questions.

Given the increasing scholarly focus on neoliberalism, its attendant material and corporeal effects, and the rural context of central Appalachia, I seek to explore:

1) the ways in which practitioners and those involved in community-based initiatives perform community food work and

2) the ways in which this work and the component practices might be read as heterogeneous and imbued with new possibilities and the capacity to make a reality different than the dominating and totalizing realities of neoliberalization.

These research questions form a basis for my overall inquiry. They emerge from the middle of my interest in new possibilities for praxis and in the concluding chapter of the dissertation, my exploration returns to this larger question.

Conceptual and Methodological Framework

This dissertation research falls within the general participatory research groundwork that has been laid by members of the AFP over the past several years. To guide my work, I am drawing on both the fields of institutional ethnography and material-semiotics as described by the likes of Law (2004; 2006; 2009) and Mol (2002). My conceptual and methodological frameworks do not presuppose one another, but are integrated. I draw upon the work of scholars like Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Deleuze and Parnet (2002), and actor-network and material-semiotic theorists like Law and Mol who have suggested that reality is not singular, but multiple. Reality, they argue, is not out-there, waiting to be understood, but is rather a product of assemblages of material and semiotic relationships. So, rather than a pre-determined and unified reality, it is instead in a state of flux and becoming, being re-shaped and molded by the ever-changing relationships between elements.

To put this in the context of community food work, I employ the example of community food security. It has been defined by the likes of Hamm and Bellows (2003) and has been taken up and used to describe the practices of a certain kind of alternative food work. I would describe the work of each of the organizations I plan to study as that of community food security.

Initially, I planned to explore the way that this work might be described as neoliberal and how it also might challenge the project of neoliberalism, but as I have develop my research plans, I have modified this inquiry. Instead of endeavoring to understand a reality that is out-there, that of neoliberalism, I have been influenced by the theorists, like those mentioned above, and to explore the ways that the practitioners in these organizations are performatively assembling their work. I am not particularly interested in how these assemblages produce neoliberalisms, but how they do not; how, by way of bringing into presence and absencing human and non-human relationships they are actively constructing particular realities. Deleuze would call this “becoming”—the way that the work of these individuals and organizations are not in a state of being that can be understood and described, but are in a constant state of becoming something else. Because they are becoming, they have capacity to be different—that which is absent might be made present and vice versa. I follow Deleuze and Parnet (2002) in their interest to “find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativity)” (p. vii). For Mol (1999) these are “the conditions of possibility we live with” (p. 75), her definition of ontology. To put it otherwise, conceptually and methodologically, I am interested in the politics of these conditions. How are they being determined in the practices of the individuals and organizations I will study, and how might they be determined differently, questions Mol (1999) has termed: ontological politics.

To interrogate the ontological politics of three locally-situated community food organizations, I will use Gibson-Graham (1996; 2006) concept of “reading for difference.” To describe this in terms of this chapter, I use “reading” as the process of observing what is made present through representation. In the same way that deconstructionists have destabilized foundationalist interpretations of written texts, I employ the same thinking on social practices. I suggest that social realities are not pre-determined, singular, and waiting to be understood by the knowing scholar, but that they are made through performance—through the processes of being re-iterated and the citation of culturally-valORIZED discourses. Reading for difference works from the idea that our perception of the social is mediated through representation. It means attempting to make sense of that which has been actively and passively made non-existent by the act of performance. Santos (2004) describes this as the sociology of absences—or the attempt to make credible that which has been actively made non-credible through the production of dominant or obdurate realities.

As implied by its moniker, reading for difference is a methodological sensibility of looking for heterogeneity in assemblages of social practices. Escobar and Osterweil (2010) have described assemblages as “wholes whose properties emerge from interactions between parts” (p. 191). This destabilizes the neoliberal critique that assumes, at least in the last instance, a superstructure that is determined by the base (Derickson, 2009). These conceptual ideas inform both the construction of my research questions as well as my hope for possibilities at work in local place-specific practices of central Appalachian community food organizations.

Significance

This work has several levels of potential significance. On a personal level, I have found the critiques of community food work as neoliberalism to be compelling—they provide concepts

and language for articulating thoughts that I have felt, but lacked the ability to describe. But, as I have worked through these ideas, I have found the criticisms to be less and less sure. As I mentioned previously, they tend to trade hope and possibility for moral superiority and inaction—everything looks like neoliberalism. So, personally, this work is significant because it offers a way for me to contend with the neoliberal critique in a way that is disconcerting in its emphasis on not knowing, but hopeful for the same reason.

From agricultural and community educators, this work also has significance. Through our theories and praxis, we, as a community of practitioners and scholars, engage in the reading and representation of the world. We play a part in making certain realities more and less credible. The research I have conducted is a particular example of how the less-real might be made more real—a particular methodology for engaging in the ontological politics of community food work in rural and urban spaces like that of central Appalachia.

This study should also have significance for community partners within the Appalachian Foodshed Project. As a university partner, I have heard repeated requests for the sharing of best practices across the region. Through this study, I am able to provide a particular take on what is happening in each of these three organizations. Though this product will require translation beyond that of my final dissertation, it is congruent with overarching objectives of the AFP and will hopefully find a life beyond the pages of this document.

Clarifying terms and locating myself

In this section, I attempt to clarify some of the terms I use throughout this dissertation. Most of these terms are woefully unclear in the literature, but rather than being a detriment, I suggest that this provides fecundity. The terms are not set; there is no clear entry point. Here, I set out to locate myself in relation to the often ambiguous ways that the concepts are employed.

Alternative food system work has been described as the numerous efforts “to make the production, distribution, and consumption of food more sustainable” (Lehner, 2013, p. 49).

Within the context of this dissertation, I more particularly use the term to describe food systems work that is explicitly defined by its relationship of difference to the conventional or industrial food systems. For my purposes, this is an umbrella concept that houses a variety of more distinct types of agro-food system work, those with narrowly defined emphases on issues like economic development and viability, environmental sustainability, and advocacy for non-human animals, as well as those that integrate a range of connected issues (e.g. community food work).

Within this umbrella, **local and regional food systems** are perhaps the terms with the most public recognition (Ruhf & Clancy, 2010). Over that past several decades, a preponderance of academic literature has been authored on these two related types of systems. There is minimal scholarly agreement on the meaning of local food systems; not shirking the challenge Ruhf and Clancy (2010) have denoted local food systems as those in which the processes of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption occur within 100-mile radius. These processes include practices of self-provisioning, direct marketing, home and community-scale processing, and emphasize fresh foods, producer-consumer relationships, and small-scale farms. When I refer to local food systems, this is my general referent.

Over the past decade, regional food systems, or efforts to re-regionalize the processes of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption, have also become an issue of academic and public policy focus (Donald, Gertler, Gray, & Lobao, 2010). As Ruhf and Clancy (2010) have noted, this term should not be taken to simply refer to a scaled-up version of local food systems, but rather an entity that is more than the sum of its aggregated localized parts.

While the boundaries of local may be easier to define, regions are more difficult to inscribe.

They noted:

An ideal regional food system describes a system in which as much food as possible to meet the population's food needs is produced, processed, distributed and purchased at multiple levels and scales within the region, resulting in maximum resilience, minimum importation, and significant economic and social return to all stakeholders in the region.

(p. 9)

These term descriptions notwithstanding, Born and Purcell (2006) have argued that it is a “trap” to think that local food systems are inherently more sustainable or more socially just, simply based on their scale. Scale, they argued, is a social construction that has little meaning outside of the intentions of the social actors invoking the terms. I align myself with this position, as well as Clancy and Ruhf's (2010) extrapolation of this criticism as it applies to regional food systems.

Though **community food systems** is a concept that has been under-theorized and consequently invoked in contradictory ways (Feenstra & Garrett, 1999; Feenstra, 2002; Feenstra & Campbell, 1996), I view the concept as an attempted response to the local trap. Whereas the supply chain element of local and regional food systems might be instrumentalized to economic ends, community food systems includes a more explicitly social component. In one article, Feenstra (2002) described a community food system as “a collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies – one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place.” (p. 100). The system described here has the hallmarks of the local and regional food systems with the addition of an emphasis on social health. The meaning of social health is unclear, but it creates an (albeit, small) impediment to economic

instrumentalization. In the cited definition, Feenstra (2002) challenged the assumption of community food system as a noun by terming it a process—a verb. This may be read to illustrate the shifting composition of food systems—denoting their nature as one of process rather than a static, pre-determined end.

Related to community food system is **community food security**. I re-iterate Hamm and Bellows (2003) definition as “a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (p. 37). Here the authors are describing an end goal or something to be attained. In the literature, I have found the connections between community food systems and security to be implicit, but here I suggest that community food systems are the process through which the goals of community food security might be achieved.

Abi-Nader et al. (2009) have posited six fields of practice that constitute community food security work: justice and fairness; strong communities; vibrant farms and gardens; healthy people; sustainable ecosystems; and thriving local economies. The first two fields underpin the latter four (Embry, Fryman, Habib, and Abi-Nader, 2012). I have found these further articulations of community food security to be helpful in framing and thinking with the larger, more abstract concept.

Throughout this document, I use the idea of **community food work** to describe both the process (system) and the goal (security). I have derived my use from Slocum’s (2007) description of the term. She divided the over-arching work of developing alternative food systems into four different approaches: those focused on: 1) farm sustainability – related to connection small-scale farmers to markets; 2) nutrition education – with emphasis on the prevention of diet-related illnesses; 3) environmental sustainability – related to the development

and support of more-ecologically sound agricultural production; and 4) social justice— which consists of a bifurcated approach—producer/worker rights and hunger/food insecurity. Slocum termed the integration of these approaches, community food work. To be slightly more specific, for my purposes, it is the explicit focus on social justice that differentiates community food work from other terms like local food systems, regional food systems, and alternative food systems. Though these concepts can be community food work, they are not so by necessity.

I would be remiss if I did not describe my concept of **social justice**, as applied in this paper. In the political traditions of the West, justice has been assumed as a fundamental value, one that should guide how individuals and political entities should act (Jun, 2011). While the meaning of justice is a matter of great debate within a number of academic fields and disciplines, to formulate my use of the concept, I draw upon the work of Gilles Deleuze. His philosophical corpus is built upon the ideas of difference and multiplicity, thus explanations of the world that develop or build upon transcendental universals are inherently problematic. Social justice can easily be lumped into this category. In its many contexts, the term generally implies dogmatic codes that suggest how one should act, or which means lead to socially just ends. Though a Deleuzian reading of the concept challenges this universalism, it does not lead to a nihilistic relativism, where anything goes. For Deleuze, the transcendent basis for ethics is replaced with the immanent. Rather than coming from the outside, the question of “how one might live,” has basis in the particularities that come from within (Jun, 2011, p. 92). This means that, instead of relating social justice to universal questions of that which is good or that which is valuable, Deleuze was interested in the ways in which human beings come to value certain things and how this capacity to value is produced by a multiplicity of unique and particular forces, “including the inward-directed forces of self-creation, as well as a producer of difference, change, movement,

and transformation. These are the processes—which collectively, following Deleuze, we can simply call ‘life’ or ‘being alive’—through which human beings experience value” (Jun, 2011, p. 103). As Hickey-Moody and Malins suggested, Deleuze was concerned with the ways that one body’s capacity to value, or be alive, might diminish or enhance the capacity of other bodies (in Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). Thus, a Deleuzian reading of social justice is one that is concerned with the contingent, un-fixed, and provisional nature of value.

As Jun (2011) has pointed out, interest in value demands on-going experimentation—which can be seen in Deleuze’s interest in the empirical. I contextualize the idea of social justice further in the next chapter, the literature review, but I find it sufficient to say that my view of social justice is one that is fluid and in need of on-going contestation—the idea social justice cannot be meaningfully captured in representation, but is instead a becoming, a multiplicity, and a possibility.

My use of the concept, **praxis**, follows in similarity to my understanding of social justice—multiplicitous and eschewing basic representation. Praxis has often been conceived of as an application of theory, which then reciprocally re-informs theory (Deleuze, 2004). Taking up with a Deleuzian line of thought, both theory and praxis are multiplicities; they do not form a totalized whole, as indicated in the previous description. Viewing theory and praxis as largely discrete relies on an understanding of theory as explanatory of a known world and the theorist as accurately representing reality. If this idea of “knowing” and representing is stripped away, as I try to do in chapters three and four, this received conception of theory/praxis is destabilized. To consider this further, I ask: a) how might it be that theory and praxis are multiplicities and non-representational; and b) if they are, how might these concepts be taken up here, in this dissertation?

I start from the idea that “theory” is a way of making the world—a way of explaining it. A post-structural perspective complicates the way that theory deletes difference and fixes the world. Rather than creating theory, per se, Deleuze argued that the task of philosophers is to create concepts that, rather than fix the world, allow for palpating “that which eludes such capture” (May, 2005, p. 82). So in this way, I alter the theory/praxis relationship to be one of concept/praxis. Such concepts are intended to be taken up in some form, and as they are taken up, they multiply. As they are used, the concepts are brought into relationship with other material-semiotic elements. As they are brought into these relationships, the concepts become singular and localized (Deleuze, 2004). So, in this way, these concepts are never universal. Using the word, theory, Deleuze (2004) made this point,

A theory has to be used, it has to work. And not just for itself. If there is no one to use it, starting with the theorist himself who, as soon as he uses it ceases to be a theorist, then a theory is worthless, or its time has not yet arrived. (p. 208)

Until a concept is taken up, it has no use; and once it is employed, it ceases to be universal—it enters into a multiplicity of other concepts and practices that are both local and singular. Following Deleuze (2004) and Foucault, theory (or concepts) and praxis are then caught up into this assemblage of relations. Rather than discrete entities, they are more like a set of connections—“Praxis is a network of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory relays one praxis to another.” (p. 206). The concepts, theory and praxis, remain, but they cannot be separated from the multiplicity and placed into a linear or causal relationship.

In terms of my dissertation, this does not preclude me from writing in terms of praxis. I use praxis to mean the process of action—the process of enacting and acting upon realities. In this way, thinking in terms of praxis means the creation of concepts and thoughts that are

intended to not explain, but to be taken up and used. Given the supposition that concepts are meaningful only in their employment, the creation of concepts is action or praxis. To put it differently, in action is “a multiplicity of bits and pieces both theoretical and practical” (p. 207). So when I speak of praxis and praxis implications, I am not meaning how given concepts might be extended into practice, but rather how the thoughts in this dissertation might become a middle to be pulled into the thick of the local, to become otherwise and multiple.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: Made-ness and critique

In the previous chapter, I laid the foundations of a case for exploring community food work from the perspective of new possibilities and openings for social justice, rather than undiluted critique. In this chapter, I build upon this base and focus on the concept of community food work, particularly how it has been made within a larger discursive assemblage. This formation includes: a particular history of U.S. food and agriculture, a notion of alternative agro-food work as a theory of change, and the theory, practice, and critique of neoliberalism. Rather than approaching this assemblage from the perspective of critique, as a transcendental conception of social justice would allow, I instead focus on the made-ness of community food work and neoliberalism, with the intention of thinking how it might be made, differently.

Working from this idea of made-ness and social justice, I want to provide a brief overview of this chapter. As I noted in chapter one, community food work is my point of focus in this dissertation. In this chapter I attempt to describe some of the discursive context of community food work. I start from a particular reading of the U.S. agricultural and food systems, post-World War II. It is upon this reading, which I alluded to in chapter one, that the argument for community food work is based. To make some sense of community food work, I situate it as a theory of social change and specifically as a theory of change that takes on questions of social justice. To further describe community food work in this way, I also describe what it is not: namely, two other theories of food system change, what I have, here, termed supply-chain redevelopment, and rights-based development. In relation to the question of social justice, I position community food work as more developed than the former and less developed than the latter. After constructing the traces of these three theories of agro-food system change, I then use

the theoretical perspective of post-development to re-read each theory as a discourse of underdevelopment; a discourse that enacts the realities it describes. In this way I suggest that community food workers are engaging in a form of ontological politics—the process of choosing, making, and making more real, certain realities.

I then turn to the way that community food work has been made within the assemblage of neoliberalism. To make this argument, I focus on the way that neoliberalism has been made, practiced, and critiqued. More specifically, I focus on: 1) neoliberalism as a theory composed by scholars and governmental agents; 2) neoliberalism as it has been taken up in U.S. food and agricultural systems and work; and 3) the criticisms of neoliberalism as posed by a variety of philosophers and activists. As I noted in the first chapter, with success, critiques of neoliberalism have been transposed onto community food work. From my perspective, these critiques are compelling, but in this chapter, it is my goal less to validate or support these critiques than it is to point to the made-ness of community food work, neoliberalism, and their intersections. My hope, again, is that this lays the ground work for the rest of this dissertation and considerations of how the confluence of social justice and community food work could be made differently.

Conceptualizing Social Justice

In the introductory chapter, I provided some clarification to my understanding and use of the term, social justice. My use of the term is significant as it serves as the ethical base of my research project. In the rest of this chapter, my review and analysis hinges upon this concept. So, here, I want to further elaborate on my reading of the concept.

My description of social justice in the first chapter provided a Deleuzian-rendered ethical base for the term. To re-iterate the argument: Deleuze, was skeptical of the transcendent morality that was the inheritance of Western philosophy, via the likes of Immanuel Kant. To simplify the

argument: morality is founded upon a set of abstract rules and their transcendence means that they originate outside of the individual—this could mean from a divine being or from an abstract normative code. Deleuze posited an ethic that was immanent to the individual—composed of an assemblage of forces, which are productive of that which is valuable, and the process of valuing is what Deleuze called life (Jun, 2011). Jun (2011) cohered Deleuze’s ethic,

Deleuze thinks every human being is the product of a unique and complicated multiplicity of forces. Consequently only individuals are in a position to discover, through processes of experimentation what is valuable in their lives, what they out to pursue and avoid, etc., in a particular set of circumstances. Only through the process of pursuing alternative practices can one begin to discover the manifold possibilities of life. (pp. 104-105).

This ethic may seem like a clever cover for relativism, the kind that leads to places like death camps and genocide, but for Deleuze the contingency of value and what he termed, the life-affirming processes of valuing were of importance (Jun, 2011). If one humans capacity to value is impinged upon by that of another, it should bring into question the value of the former. Jun (2011) termed this the “eternal revolution against life-denial” (p. 104). As he further noted, without a telos to determine value, the process will be on-going and any and each conception of justice and value, lined with a crack.

I suggest a relationship between this Deleuzian ethic of justice and value, and the work of McCarthy (2004). Though his focus is less singular and individualized than Deleuze, McCarthy has argued that the search for an inclusive theory of justice is one that should be never ending. For example, in the case of agro-food systems, as each emerging understanding of justice is articulated, it is only successful to the degree that it is shaped by those whose norms were not

considered by the previous, existing iteration. This process involves taking the current rendering of justice and applying it to its fullest logic to point to places where it is contradictory in effect.

The on-going pursuit of new conceptions of social justice carries praxis implications—or some slightly more concrete principles for guiding Deleuze’s experimentation. I draw upon the work of several scholars who are critically engaging issues of justice. The political discourse around injustice has historically focused on the maldistribution of benefits and goods, which is commonly referred to as distributional injustice (Schlosberg, 2009). More recently, however, scholars have moved beyond this approach, arguing that it is necessary to examine the underlying causes of maldistribution. Their argument is that domination and oppression are foundational to asymmetrical distribution and must be considered when addressing inequity (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990). As Schlosberg argued: “We have to look at the ‘why of inequity in order to both understand and remedy it” (2009, p. 24). For Young and Fraser, therefore, the “why” is procedural injustice, which focuses on the ways that certain individuals and communities are denied access to democratic processes. To address this injustice is to have what Fraser (2004) referred to as “parity of participation” (p. 127). “...justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers [original emphasis]” (p. 127). In order for parity of participation to be possible, two conditions must be met: 1) The material conditions of participants must be such that independence of individual ‘voice’ is guaranteed, and 2) the institutionalized cultural value must equally respect all participants and ensure “equal opportunity for achieving social esteem” (p. 128). Even here, in this slightly less ethereal abstraction, Deleuze’s interest in life-affirmation and the creation of values of difference can be seen. It is this shifting amalgamation that drives my conceptual use of social justice in this chapter and throughout my dissertation work.

Community Food Work: Making the discourse

The Externalities of a “Maddening” Food System

In the first chapter, I referred to Orlie’s (2009) idea of the industrial food system as madness. While I problematized the degree to which the alternative food system is not also maddening itself. I want to start here by describing some of the material effects of the maddening food system. To place the madness in the terms of the alternative food system discourse, I describe them here as externalities (Farley & Daly, 2003), or the realities effected by the industrial food system that are absented from the calculations of what makes a functional food system. These externalities have corporeal impacts and both have been well documented (Beus & Dunlap, 1990; Pirog et al., 2001).

The “madness” might be cursorily explained by lumping into three groups, there are economic consequences—in an increasingly industrialized system, small-scale farmers have a progressively difficult time maintaining viable operations that adequately provision for their needs (Duffy, 2009); health impacts—leaving aside more politically-imbued concerns such as obesity (Guthman, 2011; Lavin, 2013), the increasing amount of research connecting the antibiotic and pesticides uses, made more necessary by larger production systems, and long-term, negative health consequences (Newby & Howard, 2005); environmental impacts—the larger-scale farming, processing, and distribution systems have resulted increasingly degraded ecosystems, on the basis of increased chemical and mechanical inputs (Duffy, 2009), longer feedback loops (Wackernagel & Reese, 1996), and extensive fossil fuel based transportation systems (Kloppenburg, Henrickson, & Stevenson, 1996; Pirog, et al., 2001), all of which have a compounding impact on climate change (Scialabba & Müller-Lindenlauf, 2010); and finally, the

social impacts—the intensification of agriculture has largely been done at the expense of society’s most marginalized (women, non-whites, and the poor)—exploiting their surplus labor and health, and then providing little access to the bounty of this production (Allen, 2004). The end result is a global system with “almost a billion people chronically malnourished, another billion people always unsure from where their next meal will come, 500 million that are clinically obese and 1.5 billion people that are overweight,” (Akram-Lodhi, 2013), which almost make the term, “madness,” seem insufficient.

A History of U.S. Agriculture: Madness, food security, and community food security

In order to contextualize my research and to begin to compose the backstory of the madness, I offer a brief and particular history of the U.S. agriculture as it relates to the discourse of community food work. This 20th century history of the intensification and industrialization of agriculture has its beginnings in the years following World War II. The post-war global economy was shaped by two dominant factors. Firstly, during the war, technologies has been developed that enabled intensification and industrialization of agriculture—mechanization as well as inputs such as synthetic nitrogen, via the Haber-Bosch process (Knudsen et al., 2005). Secondly, following the war, the United States commanded a significant amount of increased economic and political power. Because of increased productive capacities, farmers in the United States were able to produce considerably more than they had in the pre-war years. The federal price support programs developed in response to the Great Depression and legislated in the New Deal simultaneously functioned to build and further sustain these production levels (Friedman, 1993). The post-war result was a significant surplus of U.S. agricultural commodities. As a result of their increased international clout, the U.S. was able to lay groundwork and establish trade policies that supported the domestic agriculture—e.g. limiting imports while supporting and

promoting domestic production, exports, and international investment. New markets were opened and demand for U.S. agricultural products continued to increase. As a result, the global market was flooded with cheap U.S. agricultural commodities, setting off a spiral in which countries that could do the same established similar protectionist policies, while other less financially wealthy states developed a dependency on the subsidized food stuffs (Clapp, 2012).

Viewed through the lens of the current discourse around alternative food systems, the early 1970s proved to be a formative period. A defining moment was a 1972 crop failure in the USSR. The result was a widespread famine in that country, triggering a crisis for many people and nations around the globe and a period of economic boon for U.S. farmers. When the crop failure occurred, desperate Russian officials opened their borders to the importation of U.S. cereals. A very large market that had been inaccessible due to Cold War tensions was made accessible. The result was a drastic reduction in the international supply of agricultural products—global food prices increased significantly and quickly (Clapp, 2012).

Rudimentary economic theory explains the impact of the Soviet wheat crisis on U.S. agriculture. Because of the new agricultural technologies and the New Deal-era price supports, U.S. commodity farmers were primed for increased production. So when the global supply decreased, the demand for cereals did the inverse. This, of course, meant that the U.S. producers were able to raise prices, which incentivized increased production. These increases were further advocated by the Nixon Administration, who saw a potential to increase U.S. trade balances. The Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, now famously suggested that farmers plant “fencerow to fencerow” (in Clapp, 2012, p. 49). In other words, to literally pull out all of the stops, in this case often trees. This was indicative of federal policies which benefited farmers of increasingly larger scale. Around this same time, Butz also admonished farmers to either, “get big, or get out” (in

Clapp, 2012, p. 49). And indeed, smaller-scale farmers who lacked the capital or the capacity and willingness to enter into debt left the occupation (Bell, 2004). These types of policies aided a trend that had been in place since the Second World War—fewer farmers and farms and the increased size and scale of those who remained (Kirschenmann, 2008).

In isolation and in the short-term, these changes might have been positive. An increasing number of people were able to seek non-farm employment, more agricultural product from less land, but some of the seeds of Orlie's (2009) madness were also sown here. The larger systems relied on fossil-energy intensive technologies, monoculture ecosystems, and an access to land and capital that privileged the relative elite (Clapp, 2012). Despite the madness associated with this system, and perhaps, because of issues of capital and class at play, the system has persisted and even thrived. This did not prevent the emergence of a dissenting faction—some of those mentioned in first chapter, Berry, Lappé, and others, which laid the groundwork for those like Beus and Dunlap (1990) make the “Paradigmatic roots of the debate” between conventional and alternative agricultural systems.

Before I go any further, I want to address the food security discourse that emerged in the early 1970s. Going back to the Soviet wheat crop failure; the rapid rise in global food prices meant that countries with fewer monetary resources, who had grown dependent upon the relatively cheap imported grains, were no longer able to do procure necessary foodstuffs—it was either unavailable or too expensive (Clapp, 2012). The result was a famine that stretched far beyond the geo-political boundaries of its Soviet genesis. The widespread global hunger crisis prompted the United Nations to hold a World Food Summit in Rome, in 1974. It was at this conference that the idea of food security first entered the global food system discourse. Simon Maxwell (1996) argued that the concept was born out of shock at the recent spike in food prices.

The unexpected had occurred and fearing a food system that was running out of control, the attendees sought to ‘secure’ the food supply from further risk. In their conference report, the United Nations defined food security as the, “availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs..., to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption...and offset fluctuations in production and prices” (UN, 1975, pp. 6-7). Since 1974, the de facto definitions of food security have continued to evolve and spawn. Maxwell (1996) described three paradigms: 1) the global supply and national self-sufficiency approach of the mid-1970s, which was augmented in the early 1980s to include an emphasis on food entitlement; 2) a mid-1980s shift to view resilient livelihoods as essential for increased food security—in other words, simply providing foodstuffs was not enough, people need ways of living that are supportive of persistent food acquisition; 3) and a early to mid-1990s shift from objective to subjective measures of food security—e.g. from access to daily caloric intakes and target consumption levels to measures that consider the quality of food consumed and anxiety over the acquisition of food.

It is from this third paradigm that the community food security (CFS) approach emerged—a confluence of sustainable agro-food systems and food security. This approach is often defined as, “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Hamm & Bellows, 2003, p. 37). The CFS perspective is the product of the recently dissolved Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC). The CFSC was formed in 1994 when a group of activists, community-based organizers, practitioners, and academic researchers held a meeting to discuss issues of household food insecurity and issues of sustainable agriculture. The emergence of the latter was described in the introductory chapter. The group lobbied to add CFS legislation to the 1995 U.S. Farm Bill—they

succeeded, a mandate was added that supported community food projects (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010; Hamm & Bellows, 2003). The legislation provided funding for projects that could “meet the needs of low-income people, increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues” (1995 U.S. Farm Bill in Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). As Pothukuchi (2007) suggested, the practices employed in the community food projects serve as a source of illustration and inspiration for both the continued work and theory around community food security.

Though practices vary from one project and community to the next, community food security, the practical implications of the term might be most clearly articulated in the evaluative framework created for the assessment of the mandated community food projects—the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems: Values-Based Planning and Evaluation. Abi Nader et al. (2009) demarcate six different broad values in community food security work: justice and fairness; strong communities; vibrant farms; healthy people; sustainable ecosystems; and thriving local economies. While the degree to which these values are espoused and reached undoubtedly varies from one location to the next, they arguably constitute the most practical description of community food security to date. Rather than evangelizing a homogenous vision of food system change, Abi-Nader et al. (2009) instead have introduced principles that allow for local situated particularities, without losing the fundamental political questions that sustainable agro-food system and food security activists have been asking: Who benefits from these agro-food systems? Who eats? And, how might these systems become more socially just?

Community Food Work as a Theory of Change

These questions of social justice are central to the concept and practice of the discursive assemblage of community food work. To map this assemblage, and its relationship to my

conception of social justice, I read it as a theory of change. Anderson (2004) has described theory of change as the idea of aligning intended outcomes and strategies for achieving them. In other words, seeking to ensure that means and ends actually align. Though I focus in greatest depth on community food work, I argue that as a theory of change, it is better conceptualized as part of a larger assemblage that includes two other theories of food system change, what I have termed: supply-chain re-development and right's based development. I map these three theories of change in an order, along a continuum based on the robustness of conceptualization of social justice. Because evaluation metrics are important for understanding the degree to which a theory of change is effective, I include an overview of relevant metrics.

Supply-chain re-development. The supply chain re-development (SCRD) theory of change builds upon the discourse of industrialization and globalization laid out previously. The primary intended outcome of this re-development approach is the realization of food systems that are “rooted in a particular places, aim to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, use ecologically sound production and distribution practices, and enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community” (Feenstra, 1997, p. 28). In other words, the development of local or regional supply-chain functions as a tool, or strategy, for realizing more ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable communities. In the scholarly literature, this approach might be described and exemplified by the development of local and/or regional food systems or foodsheds.

While the logic of this theory of change is not homogenous, I attempt to pull some of the core tenets from the literature. On a fundamental level, the SCRD approach is an outgrowth of the sustainable agriculture movement, which was, in turn, a response to the industrialization of agriculture. The new lower-input, more sustainable farms, were in need of a place to derive a

market premium from their goods the conventional supply chain was unable (or unwilling) to offer (Hinrichs, 2000). If a more local food system was able to offer this premium, it also offered a means toward greater margins and income, one that had been increasingly limited by the scale requirements of commodity agriculture. When the localization process is extended to the realms of processing it offer another possibility for the creation of wealth that stays within the local community (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996).

The primary means through which the consumer is able to procure goods from more sustainable operations has been through direct agricultural markets. Hinrichs (2000) has referred to these venues as “the centerpiece of local food systems” (p. 297). Though these markets might take the form of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), the farmers’ market has been lauded as the “keystone” of a re-developed food system (Gillespie et al., 2007; Francis and Griffith, 2011). An important aspect of the direct markets is in the potential for the re-embedding of the economic into the social. In globalization, it is argued, the economic has been divorced from the social relations and values that once guided it in the past. The face-to-face interaction between farmer and consumer yields an opportunity for re-embedding. The economic no longer lies alienated from social value, but is now rejoined. As a result, in contrast to the conventional food system, “trust, authenticity, safety, and confidence” (Mount, 2011) are values that have come to be associated with supply-chain re-development.

The final tenet of this theory of change is related to the distance that food travels before it reaches the plate of the global consumer. As a number of scholars have demonstrated, (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996; Pirog et al. 2001) it is not uncommon for food to travel 1,000 plus miles, propelled through several countries by a surprising amount of fossil fuel before it reaches the consumer. In light of ecological instability of climate change and the

safety concerns associated with the increasing non-linearity of the global food supply chain (Souza-Monteiro & Hooker, 2013), SCRD practitioners posit the local/regional food system as a strategy for an alternative system. This approach drastically reduces the long slow feedback loop associated with the global food system. The actual supply chain is shortened, imbued with the trust via relationships, and food system change is made possible.

SCRD: Indicators and measures. The indicators and measures of SCRD success could be fairly linear: the number of new farmers producing for the local/regional system; the amount of food that produced and retailed locally; the number of new direct-markets that have been established and maintained. It is worth noting the success of this approach given these metrics: the sales of food grown and marketed locally totaled \$4.8 billion in 2008 (Low & Vogel, 2011); the number of farmers markets in the U.S. has grown four times over between 1994 and 2011—1,175 to 7,175 (USDA-AMS, 2011). The number of producers selling through community supported agriculture (CSAs) has also grown tremendously over the last two decades, from approximately 60 in 1990 to over 12, 500 in 2007 (Groh & McFadden, 1990; USDA Ag Census, 2007). These metrics, which are those readily available, only focus on the economic impacts of the system. A more complete set of measures would include the questions of ecological integrity and social equity—two factors that though stated as hopeful outcomes are not necessarily supported by the strategies employed.

Community food work. I briefly covered the concept of community food work, or community food security and community food systems, in a previous section as well as at the end of chapter one. Here, I explore more with greater depth, several discourses that constitute the community food work (CFW) approach to food system change. On one level, this discourse bears a similarity to the supply chain re-development approach. Though the relationship between

local and community food systems is un-defined in the literature (S. Lezberg, personal communication, Sept. 9, 2013), perhaps the most significant difference is in the movement from a more instrumental approach—the idea that re-developed supply chains will alleviate the madness caused by agricultural industrialization and globalization—to one that is more normative, heterogeneous, and ostensibly, based on community values. To make this point and to briefly summarize some information from the first chapter: community food systems has been defined by Feenstra (2002) as, “A collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies – one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place” (p. 100). In this definition there are two significant differences from her (1997) definition of local food systems that I used in the SRCD section—the shift from noun, an economic entity, to a verb, or process, and the emphasis on collaboration, which implies a less-prescribed, more heterogeneous approach to food system change. But even within this more fluid description of food system development, there are several core tenets that make that form the discourse of that which is and is not community food work.

First, the discourses of food security and sustainable agriculture play a foundational role in that which is community food work. I discussed this relationship in greater detail an earlier section on history of U.S. food and agricultural systems. I will not elaborate further here, other than to note their salience of these discourses in the discursive assemblage of community food work.

Though community food work may be theoretically underdeveloped, as a discursive formation, it is indebted to the discourses of localization and globalization. This second tenet can be seen in the discursive connection to sustainable agriculture, but perhaps, more acutely in the

likes of Feenstra's (2002) definition of community food systems where she described the "...effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies..." (p. 100). In addition to theory, from a praxis perspective, looking back at a decade of community food security work around the U.S., Alkon (2013) noted the way that the concept has been often implemented. "Community food security attempts to mobilize local/organic alternatives to also address issues of hunger, arguing that all communities should have access to safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate, and sustainably produced diets" (p. 1). Further, Pothukuchi (2007) described the relationship between community food security and local food systems as one bridged by the concept of self-reliance. In the following excerpt, she was prefacing the evaluation of four years of community food projects—the Farm-Bill-mandated, federally-funded, relatively small community food security grants. "Community Food Projects (or CFPs) have developed and honed practices to strengthen local food systems by linking local producers and consumers, improving access to nutritious foods, and fostering self-reliance" (p. 1). That Pothukuchi used this line to introduce the overall impacts of the CFPs further underscores the importance of local food systems within the discursive formation of community food security. The emphasis on self-reliance in the community food security literature gives me some reason to pause. Pothukuchi makes an interesting connection between localization and self-reliance—implying the former "fosters" the latter. Hinrichs (2003) has noted that localization has often been posed as the "neat antithesis of globalization." In this context self-reliance makes sense—it substitutes the reliance on the global system for a reliance on the local system. Within the community food security literature, Hamm and Bellows (2003) described the situation of community food security as one that maximizes "community self-reliance" (p. 37). This is a

vague word tacked on to the end of the definition, but from what I can gather, it is a reference to way that community food work might make obsolete the globalized food system.

The third tenet, social justice, is present in most of the theoretical and praxis-based literature on community food security (Abi-Nader et al., 2009; Hamm & Bellows, 2003; and Pothukuchi, 2007). Abi-Nader et al. (2009) described social justice as one of two fundamental underpinning structures of community food security (personal communication, August 20, 2013). A consequence of community food security's under-theorization is that words commonly used in conjunction are even more under-theorized. This is the case for social justice. The best available descriptions of the term come from the more practice-focused literature, which includes examples of what might constitute social justice in a food secure community. Pothukuchi (2007) describe the social justice elements that were explicitly, implicitly, and minimally supported in the Community Food Project grant review process. Explicitly supported was the development of "food entrepreneurs," and the engagement of "residents in local food system planning" (p. 12). A footnote indicates that evaluation efforts indicate that the latter was very difficult for communities to achieve in practice. Activities given minimal support by the projects were those that dealt with raising the wages of food system workers and reducing discrimination in the food system. In other words, a group was more likely to receive funding from these projects if they characterized social justice as the work of fostering entrepreneurship than if they framed it as giving political voice those who are marginalized by the system. So, though social justice plays a role in this discursive formation, it is a simplistic conception of the term, particularly when compared to a Deleuzian reading, or that described by Fraser.

The final tenet that is explicitly a part of the discursive formation of community food work is that of community development. This discourse might be traced back to the second food

security paradigm—the one that suggested the importance of sustainable livelihoods for the realization of food security. In the same way, the emphasis on community within the community food security discourse employs a similar rationale. Winne, Joseph, and Fisher (1997) described community food security as an approach that “synthesizes many disparate fields” to address,

A broad range of problems affecting the food system, economic opportunity, community development, and the environment, such as the diminishing food safety net; disappearing farmland and inner-city supermarkets; increasing poverty and hunger; failing family farms; rural community disintegration; inadequate green space; and diet-related health problems (p. 4).

Accordingly, a food secure community is one that has developed itself in such a way that it is addressing these problems. This discourse might be made a little more clear by noting the unambiguous gaze upon low-income communities (Winne, Joseph, & Fisher, 1997; Pothukuchi, 2007). Community food security might then be understood as a discourse of holistic community development—including health, the environmental, social, cultural and, perhaps most salient, the economic.

CFW: Indicators and measures. The Community Food Security Coalition developed an evaluation tool that is demonstrative of indicators and measures important for the CFW approach to food system change. This tool, the “Whole Measures for Community Food Systems” (Abi-Nader et al., 2009), which was co-developed by a group of community activists and scholars, contains six outcomes that are to be further defined by the community that is using the instrument: justice and fairness; strong communities; healthy people; thriving local economies; sustainable ecosystems; and vibrant farms. The meanings of each is dependent upon the community-based definition and so then are the intended outcomes and potential strategies.

Rights-based development. The third and final theory of change is what I will refer to as rights-based development (RBD). The primary example I use to demonstrate this approach is food sovereignty. Though this particular concept was originally minted in the Global South, it has recently been taken up by a number of activists in North American and elsewhere in the Global North. In 2013, the Yale Program in Agrarian Studies convened a large conference of scholars who presented on the topic. A number of scholars cited in this chapter presented at this conference—a veritable who’s who of academic community food workers. So while this section of the paper leaves North American and brings in a more globally-oriented discourse, I have chosen to do so because the concept is being taken up in the United States and re-making discourses of alternative food work.

La Via Campesina, an international organization of peasant farmers, introduced the concept of food sovereignty to the public discourse at the 1996 World Food Summit. In attempting to define the concept, I follow Patel (2010) who has noted that in contrast to associated terms, like food security, which has been criticized as under-theorized, food sovereignty has been defined in so many ways it is difficult to construct a common meaning. The plural definitions of the concept he argued, are of necessity, reflecting its emphasis on the rights of people to determine their own policies related to food—pre-production through consumption. Though Patel ultimately refused to settle on an exact definition of the word, he did suggest that food sovereignty has, at its base, the right of people to have rights. While this sounds like a tractable concept, he further noted that such a conception requires a sovereign who can guarantee those rights, which poses a paradoxical challenge to the discourse of food sovereignty that is suspicious of and unwilling to yield authority to the current powers capable of enforcing such rights. In concluding, Patel suggested that what lies at the core of food sovereignty, and the

attendant emphasis on rights, is a hope for a radical egalitarianism that challenges the social power inequities, and this requires more than what might be guaranteed by even a “sophisticated series of judicial sovereignties.” (p. 194) A pre-requisite for the rights is “a society in which the equality-distorting effects of sexism, patriarchy, racism and class power have been eradicated.” (Patel, 2010, p. 194). Though this approach tends to eschew universal definition, the widespread membership of La Via Campesina, 164 member organizations in 79 countries in the Global North and South (La Via Campesina, 2013), is indicative of a focus on diverse, but collective action.

There is a similarity of intended the outcomes among the three theories of change—all contain elements of social justice and food democracy, but the RBD theory described by Patel (2010) indicates strategies unlike the former two. Social justice and democracy in food access are not necessarily outcomes to be achieved via the re-development of local supply chains, even when considered in tandem with community food’s collaborative, community-based strategy. For the RBD approach the localization strategy is one of realizing greater democracy—not necessarily one of connecting consumer to local markets. To be clear, this does not preclude a re-localized supply chain, rather it challenges the assumption that such a strategy necessarily leads to greater social justice.

Rights-based development: indicators and measures. As Patel’s (2010) description indicates, the RBD theory of change is by its nature highly contextual and complex and therefore not conducive to universal measures. But as the work of La Via Campesina indicated, this does not preclude some levels of collectivity and therefore ways of measuring the effectiveness of such action. As Escobar noted (2009), in face of such complexity, “a combination of ever-widening positive feedback and some negative feedback is needed...with some level of

leadership, structure, and regulation” (pp. 399-400). A combination of developmental evaluation (Patton, 2011) and the framework of collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012; Kania & Kramer, 2013) hold some promise here. It could manifest itself as a cyclical process of developing regional common agendas that are in conversation with emergent findings from ongoing, embedded evaluation, all of which would inform regional, and potentially national or global, strategies. This is consonant with Escobar’s (2009) intonation of bottom-up “meshwork” that feeds the self-organization tendencies described by theorists of complexity.

Theories of Change and Making Discourses of Development

A colleague of mine, who has spent a long career working on issues of agriculture, environment, and community development, has repeatedly instructed me that. “If you ask the right question, you are half-way to the right solution.” I view the three theories of change, described above, as somewhere in the middle of a question-posing/solution-making process. The questions are always being formed and reformed and sometimes it seems as though the solutions precedes the question. This is well articulated by Anderson, (2008) who has suggested that much of the alternative food work in the U.S. has conflated notions of “community-based, local, and sustainable” (p. 593) with issues of rights and social justice. “This conflation confuses means, ends, and complementary goals; and it may lead activists trying to help communities to regain control of their food system choices into less productive strategies” (p. 593). In other words, all theories of change are not created equally—do their questions presuppose solutions? And if so, what are the implications?

I again return to a more globally-based literature to take up these questions. Scholars in the field of post-development have been very astute in their critique of the outside

“development” of the Global South. To put it into the language of this chapter, these scholars have been adept at pointing to the made-ness of the theories of change that are employed by the international development institutions and programs of the Global North. Because much alternative food work is related to the re-development and re-making of food and agricultural systems, I have found the perspective of post-development scholars to be particularly useful for making some sense of made-ness of the three theories of change laid out in the preceding sections.

Post-development theory. The post development project is a reaction to the cultural and economic imperialism in the Global South. It is theoretically situated within a poststructuralist epistemology. This perspective is a departure from a realist epistemology that positions knowledge as a reflection of an existing reality. The poststructuralists posit “knowledge as plural, contradictory, and powerful rather than singular, cumulative, and neutral” (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2001, p. 20). Knowledge actively shapes reality. Consequently, “the production of new knowledges is a world-changing activity, one that repositions knowledges and empowers new subjects, practices, policies, and institutions” (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2001, pp. 20-21). Postdevelopment scholars have argued that the discourse of development is a knowledge system that creates a reality, one of Third World underdevelopment, defining its inhabitants as a homogeneous underdeveloped minority, rather than the heterogeneous majority that they empirically are. (Esteva, 2010). Under such a knowledge system, development is then an appealing “escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment” (Esteva, 2010, p. 2). The postdevelopment project is aimed at creating new knowledges that denaturalize the knowledge regime of development.

I suggest that there is analytical utility in viewing the three theories of food system change as discourses of development. To ask the question, what system of knowledge is being naturalized by this particular discourse? To what historically produced condition is this theory of change responding? Who has produced this knowledge system and what benefit might they derive from reality being made as such? Finally, given these questions, might this theory of change lead to a more socially just agro-food system?

Making discourses of agro-food system development. Using the theorists and theories outlined in the previous section, I attempt to integrate them with each theory of change, analyzing each as a discourse of development with the potential to realize varying degrees of social justice within the agro-food system. A couple of notes seem important here: through this analysis, I am not attempting to problematize or valorize the whole of any of these theories. There are elements of each that are both problematic and hopeful—but neither defines the theory of change. Rather, following Gibson-Graham & Roelvink (2009) I am challenged to consider possibilities for justice contained within the seemingly unjust as well as possibilities of injustice contained within the seemingly just.

Supply-chain re-development. When viewed as a discourse of development, I suggest that the advocates of SCRD create a narrative of local food system underdevelopment that are exemplified by the strategies its adherents employ—primarily the creation of direct markets. The knowledge produced by this discourse suggests that the absence of a thriving local or regional food system has created a whole host of unsustainable problems—environmental degradation resulting from industrial agricultural practices; a food economy that exports its wealth to parasitic national and global corporations; and a population that is burdened with the health problems associated with unsafe, non-local, non-fresh, non-nutritious foods. To borrow Esteva's

(2010) logic this creates the undignified condition of being underdeveloped, one that can be mitigated by the ready-made logic of the (re)development of local food supply chains.

This logic is not intrinsically problematic—there is a certain corporeal and material nature to many of the issues posed by this discourse. In terms of social justice, the difficulty lies in the re-centering of the economy as both problem and solution—when as Lavin (2009) has pointed out, many of these corporeal and material conditions raise questions of a political nature, but appeal for these problems is directed toward the market rather institutions such as the state. As such, the primary mode of community engagement is either as consumer or entrepreneur. The problem has been pre-defined as market-based, what remains are only questions of implementation. This conversation can be seen in recent scholarly discussions about how to best scale up the local/regional supply chain and provide the benefits of SCRC to more people. “Value chains offer one model for restructuring regional food systems that operate at a larger scale than direct marketing while deliberately embedding mechanisms to ensure social, environmental and economic benefits for supply chain participants” (Bloom & Hinrichs, 2010). Rather than questioning the assumption of the market as a means of addressing values, the values are embedded into market processes. I suggest that without a significant re-thinking of the relationship between questions of labor, profit distribution, and scale, the SDRC approach is at risk of reproducing the same system it is seeking to change; one reliant on the logic of the market; an entity that historically proven ineffective at addressing issues of distributional justice (Duménil & Lévy; Harvey, 2005), 2004, let alone the participatory parity of Fraser (2004).

Community food work. In many ways the CD theory of change might be viewed as a response to the SCRC’s failure to produce wide-scale socially just outcomes. The evaluation tool, Whole Measures for Community Food Systems, stands as a mechanism for both

strategically planning and evaluating work that is actually achieving the holistic outcomes laid out in a previous section: justice and fairness; strong communities; healthy people; thriving local economies; sustainable ecosystems; and vibrant farms. By design, the tool requires a certain level of community engagement: it prompts questions of meaning—the co-generation knowledge (Abi-Nader, et al., 2009). The community generates collective knowledge, their reality, as it relates to the six outcomes. In this way, the CFW approach appears to exhibit possibility for greater social justice. For the purpose of analysis, I posit the CFW approach a discourse of dis-unity, one that can be fixed by the development of community.

What are the implications of intoning community as a fix for dis-unity? I begin by noting that the CFW approach shares many strategies in common with the SDRC approach—the development of markets (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011b). The primary difference is that the CFW approach attempts to develop and utilize markets in a less prescriptive, more community-driven manner. But as Guthman (2008a) has suggested, these markets tend to interpellate white bodies, effectively making them spaces of exclusion and sameness (see also Slocum, 2007). If this is the effect of even community-driven agro-food work, it should raise the question of what is meant by community.

I follow Bauman (2008) and suggest a relationship between quests for community and globalization. As he noted, one of the predominant features of the globalized society is the mixing of all different types of peoples. As he put it, a “...mind-boggling, spine-chilling, and nerve-racking variety of human types and lifestyles...meet and jostle for space in the streets of contemporary cities” (p. 67). The unsurprising result of these interactions is what he termed ‘mixophobia’. One mechanism for producing an illusion of solidity and coping with mixophobia is to work toward ‘communities of sameness’. (Bauman, 2003, p. 110). This is consonant with

Guthman (2008a) finding on the interpellation of white bodies at farmers' markets. Sennett (1996) went further than Bauman and suggested the "we" feeling of communities of sameness, is in effect "a way for men to avoid the necessity of looking deeper into each other" (p. 39). This brings it back around to Fraser's (2004) suggestion the justice is related to the institutionalization of cultural values that ensure "equal opportunity for achieving social esteem" (p. 128), which seems to require some level of "looking deeper" into one another. Pina (2008) has suggested that the work of those endeavoring toward justice,

is to tease out of the multiple forms of difference, rooted in contingency and a radical historicity, those common strands which can make the human bond. [...] Humanity is not an essence to be realised, but a pragmatic construction, a perspective, to be developed through the articulation of the variety of individual projects, of differences, which constitute our humanity in the broadest sense. (p. 32)

The realization of participatory parity within our human communities should not invoke a pluralist form of multiculturalism, but rather "an alternative version that permits us to make normative judgements about the value of different differences by interrogating their relation to inequality" (Fraser, 1997, p. 187). This is what Bauman (2001) referred to as "a long and perhaps tortuous, but in the end beneficial, political process [original emphasis]" (p. 136). This suggests that the capacity of the CFW approach to achieve greater social justice is related to the degree that its proponents are able to create conditions necessary for engagement in such a political process.

Rights-based approach. In many ways, the rights-based approach might be seen as a more socially just articulation of the previous two approaches—like McCarthy (2004) suggested, it is built upon contradictions of previous iterations of agro-food justice. The food sovereignty

described by Patel (2010) might be viewed as an appeal for the cultural institutionalization of “equal opportunity for achieving social esteem” (Fraser, 2004, p. 128). In this way, the RB theory change might be characterized as a discourse of development, creating the condition of inequitable opportunity for social esteem. While a number of strategies might be applicable to this condition, it might be said that the RB approach is focused on generating new knowledge “one that repositions knowledges and empowers new subjects, practices, policies, and institutions” (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2001, pp. 20-21). In other words, knowledge that creates possibility for new realities. This can be seen in the overarching RB strategy of framing democratic control of the agro-food system as a right. Given the recent history of the industrialization and globalization of agriculture and food, this discourse is one of new knowledge containing the possibility of new more socially just realities.

The theories of change within a U.S. context. Based on my analysis of the three theories of change covered here, it would seem that the rights-based approach of food sovereignty would be the most socially just way to engage food system change. On a basic level, this idea seems sensible and rational, but in situ, I find the idea complicated. Food sovereignty has largely been a discourse of the Global South, finding limited traction in the North. The community food work has been institutionalized by the U.S. government in several ways—the Community Food Projects in the 1995 Farm Bill and more recently in the funding work of the USDA’s NIFA-AFRI projects, like the Appalachian Foodshed Project. So particularly when read through the lens of neoliberalism, which I do in this coming section, there is indication of a hopeful state involvement in community food work. In addition to this institutional traction, Fairbairn (2012) has noted two themes in food sovereignty work in the Global North. First, when engaging with populations in the North, U.S.-based organizations tend to reframe food

sovereignty as sustainable agriculture or localism, thereby muting the international connection facilitated by groups like La Via Campesina. Second, Northern groups that frame their work around food sovereignty have often created discourses of a binary and polemic localism that privileges local control to the exclusion of larger systems of governance—and an example of this concept would be the communities in Maine that have fought to remove government regulation between farmers and consumers (Anderson, 2013). The potential merit of this endeavor aside, it has the effect of making food sovereignty a quest for less market regulation at the expense of the social justice aims of the larger movement.

Partly due to my current employment on a project that uses the idea, but also due to the reasons listed above, I chose to use community food security to conceptualize and frame my dissertation research. While the hierarchies of socially just work have a certain reflexive utility, I suggest, consonant with Fairbairn (2012) that a more integrated approach—a combination of SCRD, CFW, and RB—might be the least reductive path toward a more equitable and just food system.

Neoliberalism, a Theory and Practice: Made, done, and critiqued

In recent years, when questions of equability and social justice have been raised in scholarly publications on community food work, the concept of neoliberalism has often been close behind (see: Allen, 2004; Allen & Guthman, 2006; Guthman, 2008; Guthman, 2011, Alkon & Agyeman, 2011). Following these arguments, neoliberalism, as a form of late capitalism, pervades community food work at multiple strata—in theory and practice. As I have noted elsewhere, this critique is compelling. It is as though, regardless of the reflexivity of a community food work theory of change, it will always be implicated as borrowing the logic of neoliberalism—a political economic system that its critics suggest has been exacerbated wealth

and income inequities. This connection to economic inequity has a direct connection to my conception of social justice—the idea that the life capabilities of one limits those of another. While I consider the totalizing nature of this critique in other chapters, I have found it important to consider the material injustices and inequities described by critics of neoliberalism. When neoliberalism is viewed in relation to these injustices, or as the cause, it is not difficult to understand the impetus to read community food work for neoliberalism.

Making Neoliberalism

Because neoliberalism is a theory that is taken up in singular and localized ways, it is impossible to develop an all-encompassing description (see praxis as clarified in chapter one). Building on Boyer (1996), I suggest that there exists not one, not several, but a multiplicity of neoliberalisms. So, rather than attempting to conclusively define neoliberalism I attempt point to its making and made-ness.

On a basic level, Harvey (2005) described neoliberalism as “...in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Its recent colloquial form neoliberalism might be equated with radically free markets (Brown, 2003), but the project which generated media-documented progressive political will in the late 1990’s protests against the World Trade Organization WTO (Roelvink, 2010), has a history that extends back to the 1930s and a depth of effect and impact that exceeds superficial equivalence with radically free markets.

Neoliberalism was birthed in a Parisian meeting of liberal intellectuals held for the occasion of discussing the perceived failure of classic liberalism. (Busch, 2010). The liberalism

in question was that of European definition, referring to the idea that individual freedom is best guaranteed by the state (Harvey, 2005) It was the thinkers' concern that the state, in both Europe and the U.S., had grown to such a size that it was increasingly constraining liberty and freedom. The laissez-faire approach to market competitiveness had failed the global market of the 1930s was in a slump—and the power of the state was grown. From this meeting came the original idea of a neo-liberalism, one which combined the theories of neoclassical economics and liberalism. The idea was that the state should transition its role to from one of market intervention, a la Keynes, to one of guaranteeing unencumbered market competitiveness (Busch, 2010). Following the Second World War, this idea was taken up by Austrian political philosopher, Freidrich von Hayek. He suggested that it was beyond human capacity to effectively intervene in the market—information was too fragmented and emergent. The least coercive way to ensure maxim market benefit—and the freedom implicit within—was to free the market from the human intervention of the state. Hayek founded the Mont Pelerin Society, a group of intellectuals, who pursued these ideas over the next many decades (Harvey, 2005).

Despite the regular meetings of academic heavyweights of the Mont Pelerin Society, it was not until the late 1970s that any version of neoliberalism was enacted. For the U.S., the decade following WWII was a period of economic growth and stability—wage and income inequality was in decline, it was not a time for a project like neoliberalism (Duménil & Lévy, 2004). But in the early 1970s, the global economy went into a recession; the inflation rate was greater than the interest rate (stagflation), effectively halting economic growth. During the middle of this decade, neoliberalism began to seep into mainstream governmental and academic circles—Hayek was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics in 1974, and the like-minded Milton Friedman received the same in 1976 (Harvey, 2005). This growing mainstream interest in the

concept culminated in Carter's appointment of Paul Volker to chair the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank in 1979 (Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Harvey, 2005). Volker effectively removed the last of the interventionist fiscal policies of the Keynesian New Deal. The interest rate quickly rose—the Volker Shock (Harvey, 2005). In 1981, the Reagan administration provided neoliberalism “the requisite political backing through further deregulation, tax cuts, budget cuts, and attacks on trade union and professional power” (Harvey, 2005, p. 25). These changes in the U.S. were met with similar transitions in the U.K. under Margaret Thatcher (Harvey, 2005). This period, in the early 1980s, signaled the arrival of neoliberalism as a political and economic regime.

Doing Neoliberalism: Two specific impacts on U.S. agriculture

As with any theory, it is difficult to extricate a purified theoretical form from the ways that it has been taken up in practice (Deleuze, 2004). In this section I demonstrate two ways that neoliberalism has been folded into U.S. agriculture. Specifically, I focus on the scaling up and corporatization of farming operations and the increased emphasis on farmers and eaters as entrepreneurs of their own well-being.

Farms, farmers, and crisis. As a person who grew up in the rural Midwest during the period of neoliberalization, I can now reflect on events in my family history that directly corresponded with some current analyses that merge U.S. agriculture and the political-economic project of focus. My parents married in 1979. Both came from rural Illinois farm families—over several generations farming had proved a viable livelihood. But in the early 1980s, after farming with my grandfather for several years, my dad left the field and took a job with the USDA, a few years later I have a vague memory of my relatively young grandfather auctioning off the farming implements and leaving farming. This was towards the latter half of what has been called the “farm crisis” of the 1980s.

The farm crisis has been billed as a catastrophic even for mid-sized U.S. farmers—farmers leaving the occupation by droves. In 1985, it was described by the popular press as the worst period for farm conditions since the Great Depression (Lyson, 1986). Interestingly, Glenna (2003) has pointed that though the though the fiscal and monetary policies of early neoliberalism (i.e. the early 1980s) had caused the value of farm assets to decrease, the actual number of farms had declined more rapidly in the three decades (1950s, 1960s, and 1970s) they had in the 1980s. To interrogate the social upheaval that surrounded the loss of farms in the 1980s, Glenna drew upon congressional hearings for the 1985 Food Security Act. The piece of legislation presented as one designed to alleviate the suffering of farmers. What he found was not a congressional discourse of a farm crisis, but rather one of an agricultural system crisis.

Earlier in the chapter I noted the federal push to increase agricultural production in the early 1970s. As production continued to increase (which is another story in itself), it began to outpace demand; by the early 1980s, policy makers were looking for ways to decrease production. Congress employed a payment-in-kind program that paid farmers not farm certain acreages, so to decrease supply and increase prices. While this worked well for farmers, as a consequence, agricultural exports decreased with relative significance. The growing agribusiness sector (invigorated by the growing neoliberal reforms) saw their profits decrease as a result (Glenna, 2003).

For agribusiness, this was a crisis—not a farm crisis per se, but one of agriculture. Enter the Farm Security Act. Though Glenna does not explicitly draw the connection, his analysis of the congressional hearings is rife with the discourse of neoliberalism. From a neoliberal perspective the payment-in-kind type of interventionist policy was a problem; it was constraining the competitiveness of the market. This level of rationality can be seen in the quotations Glenna

pulled from Secretary of Agriculture John Block who, when presented with information suggesting that the removal of the payment-in-kind policies would further hurt farmers, responded, “We are in the business to produce in agriculture in the United States” (in Glenna, 2003, p. 25).

Secretary Block urged Congress to end production-control policies and recommended continuing the “market-oriented approach” intended to increase production: “To do this, we must establish policies that assure the farmer feels the market, allows the farmer to receive accurate and timely market signals and to be free to react accordingly (in Glenna, p. 25).

The neoliberal discourse of freedom-to-achieve-economic-well-being is clear in Block’s exaltation of the perfect information of the competitive market.

The result of the passage of the Farm Security Act was resurgence in agricultural exports and a decline in the number of farms, which continued in the 1990s (Glenna, 2003). Perhaps one of the greatest indicators of the success of the Farm Security Act is the growth in farm sizes in the years following the “crisis.” The acerages of the farms that “declined” did not vanish, of course, and though urban sprawl has claimed some farmland, much of it was incorporated into growing farm operations. From their standpoint in 2006, MacDonald, Hoppe, Banker published the following, “The number of those very large family farms...grew—from 39,700 in 1989 to 66,700 in 2003. Meanwhile, the share of production on smaller family farms (\$10,000-\$250,000 in sales) fell from 40 percent in 1989 to 26 percent in 2003” (p. 2). The larger farm sizes are, of course, beneficial and congruent with a “free” and competitive market. There is a certain economy of scale that is afforded to these larger operations, but as Duffy (2009) has noted these benefits are derived at the externalized expense of increased antibiotic use in livestock, negative

impact to the social and cultural welfare of rural communities, and environmental degradation.

This concentration of farming into a smaller group of larger land-owners has paralleled the similar concentrations in food processing and retail (Busch, 2010). This post-producer end of the supply chain has also benefited from the economies of scale and competitive made possible by neoliberal reforms, but it has created a treadmill effect in relation to farm size. As the processing and retailers of agricultural/food goods have become larger and fewer, they have been able to demand certain prices from farmers (Busch, 2010), this then makes it more difficult for the smaller farmers to compete and further shrinks the profit margins for the larger farmers, thus producing the need for even larger operations.

Returning the question of social justice, this treadmill effect has had a direct impact on the life capabilities of farmers and more generally on the larger populace. Prager (2014) from the USDA's Economic Research Service hints at the material effect for farmers, "The median farm operator household consistently incurs a net loss from farming activities, which means that most farm operator households rely on off-farm income to sustain them" (para 14). In other words, though farmers are producing a universal and biological necessity, they are doing so despite the fact that it is, more often than not, unprofitable. While I am only scratching the surface of this issue, it is suffice to argue that this is a case of one life capability impinging upon another—or a social injustice. The secondary impact of this treadmill effect is that farmers engaging in an economically unsustainable enterprise are arguably less likely to engage in the production of ecological services and social goods, like fair treatment of farm laborers (Gray, 2014). The failure to produce these services and goods is connected to the madness of the industrial food system described by Orlie (2009). This madness is arguably productive of social injustices that both immediate and potentially intergenerational. So again, though it would be a simplification

to suggest that neoliberalism is solely culpable for the madness that ensues from these social injustices, it is justifiable to situate neoliberalism as a contributing component to the assemblage of food system madness.

The entrepreneurial consumer. Though implementation of neoliberalism described in the preceding section may suggest a mutually exclusive relationship with social justice, Hayek envisioned the political-economic project as a means toward “the mirage of social justice”(in Busch, 2010). But there is an important caveat to Hayek’s hope and design. Under neoliberalism, the state plays a lesser social and political part. Its role as the arbitrator of injustice is assumed by the market. So, rather than petitioning the state for all matters of complaint, the individual is expected to turn to the market. This remade sphere for achieving well-being and redressing grievances requires a different subject than did the state. The state interacts with citizens, while the preferred subjectivity of the market is that of the entrepreneur and/or consumer (Ventura, 2012). The practice of this theory can be clearly read in U.S.-based agriculture—I focus here on the role of the individual consumer in community food work .

This individualizing entrepreneurial mindset has also come to pervade the imaginations of food consumers as well. With the re-making of the state from the role of guaranteeing freedom to that of guaranteeing the freedom of the market, the eater/citizen has lost a political venue. While this may seem unremarkable, it has occurred at a time when the intensification and concentration of food production has generated concerns of personal, ethical, and environmental well-being—concerns that have pervaded the psyches of many eaters (Duffy, 2009). While these concerns might have been ones of interest to an earlier liberal state, in its neoliberal form, it has sacrificed its power to effect changes that might improve the system, in lieu of a remade role in the competitive market. To state it another way, while the state may have some capacity to hear

the concerns of individuals, it has limited power to enact change. Power had been practically divorced from politics. Individuals are instead placed before a competitive market that, as Duffy has pointed out, has little time and space for such concerns. Under this logic, the best individuals can do is to follow Michael Pollan's advice "Vote with your fork." (Lavin, 2009).

It is worth considering what Pollan's appeal as manifested in practice. Where is it that this "voting" might occur? For Pollan and other alternative food activists, I suggest that it is the farmer's market. In a recent statement on public radio, Pollan suggested that "Farmers' markets are the new public square in America" (as cited in Francis & Griffith, 2011). As I noted earlier, scholars in the community food movement consider farmers' markets the "keystone" of food system re-development. Francis and Griffith (2011) have argued that these markets have also come to play a significant role in the re-development of downtowns across the U.S.,

Farmers' markets today can be found in a variety of settings including in parking lots and vacant lots, in commercial buildings and shopping malls, on sidewalks and waterfronts, and in hospitals, parks, and plazas. They are increasingly being used as programmatic and spatial anchors of economic revitalization in larger cities and small towns. As farmers' markets become more commonplace in the American landscape, they signal a return to civic life and an opportunity to reinvigorate public space with social and cultural vitality (p. 261).

The local reception of farmers' markets, of course, did not occur in a vacuum. Broadly speaking, it was set in the context of post-Ford deindustrialization (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Towns across the U.S. were losing their manufacturing base. In many cases, the loss of industry resulted in the disappearance of commerce and social activity from downtowns. In response to the palpable impact of this deindustrialization, certain neoliberal reforms have been embraced by

local governments, often taking the form of private-public partnerships, reclaiming public spaces for the purpose of creating ‘downtown renaissances’ (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; MacLeod, 2002). This economic hope for the re-birth of downtowns prepared fertile ground for the growth of farmers’ markets.

When considering community food work, this revanchism is congruent with the ‘anchor’ role that farmers’ markets have played in communities across the U.S. (Francis & Griffith, 2011). These anchor spaces simultaneously serve two purposes. Firstly, they attract a new consumer base, creating conditions for further economic development. But secondly, more insidiously, they provide a method for excluding the populations of those marginalized by neoliberalism and the increasing gap of inequality. As MacLeod (2002) noted, “...the new urban glamour zones conceal a brutalizing demarcation of winners and losers, included and excluded...the new initiatives appear to be “reclaiming” public spaces for those groups who possess economic value as producers or consumers to the virtual exclusion of the less well-healed” (pp. 605-606). To return to the question of power and politics—this idea of voting with your fork and the farmer’s market as the new public square, leave little room for the voices of those with the most to lose. As Guthman (2011) has noted, those most adversely affected by the arrangement of the current food system, poor, non-whites, and women, are those most likely to be excluded becoming the consumer who is in a position to vote with her/his fork. So, despite Hayek’s assertion that the competitive market as a place for pursuing social justice, I suggest that this manifestation of neoliberalism in the community food work points to both the impoverished nature of Hayek’s reading of social justice as well as ways in which neoliberalism makes less probable outcomes such as the equitable opportunity for social esteem.

Critiquing neoliberalism: Theories and theorists

Having defined neoliberalism and described two impacts on U.S. agriculture, I follow the posed question, and suggest some theoretical challenges to the neoliberalization of agricultural and, consequently, food systems. To frame this section I begin with Bourdieu's (1998) suggestion that economic order of neoliberalism might be viewed as the enactment a utopia—one of a pure and perfect market. This is congruent with the work put forth by its original theorists—e.g. Hayek's proposition that the neoliberalism be a means toward greater social justice (Busch, 2010). It is within this context, as a utopian concept, that I situate the theories and theorists who pose challenge to neoliberalism. I have chosen to group the following into two main sections, the first related to neoliberalism's impact on social inequality and the possibility of realizing forms of social justice and the second, situating neoliberalism as a governmentality (Foucault, 1991) with the capacity to constrain political imagination.

Neoliberalism and wealth inequality and social justice. Following Bourdieu (1998) I begin from his suggestion of neoliberalism as a utopian project, one whose adherents have taken the science of economics and applied it as a description of reality. Judging by the sweeping ways in which the theory has been taken up in practical terms, this utopia has arguably been realized. From the perspective of its authors, the theory has been a significant success (Harvey, 2005). In my inquiries, this raises the question of Hayek's hope for neoliberalism as means toward "the mirage of social justice" (in Busch, 2010). Going back to my conception of social justice, what has neoliberalism done to ensure that that life capability of one person does not impinge upon that of another? Or, that there is equity in opportunity to achieve social esteem? To consider this question, I draw on the work of David Harvey and Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy to interrogate neoliberalism's track record regarding the improvement of social and economic inequality, which I then bring back to my conception of social justice.

To describe neoliberalism's impact on economic and social inequality, I begin with the concept of a social pyramid—the bottom part representing society's most marginalized and the top, the most elite. In the in the early part of the 20th century, before World War II much of the U.S. income was concentrated at the top of the pyramid. For example, the top .01 percent of the population was earning 2.2 percent of the total national income. During the War, the share of income received by this group and the rest of the top ten percent declined fairly significantly as the portion of the 0-90 percent increased, taking some 10 percent of the share from the top ten percent. The post-war period was one of relative income and wealth equality. This era continued through the 1950s, with only a slight decline for the 0-90 percent in the 60s and 70s (Duménil & Lévy, 2004). Under neoliberalism's utopian premises, it would be reasonable that with the "Volker Shock" of 1979, the income and wage equality would at worst, plateau, but most likely improve the lot for those at the pyramid's bottom. In contrast to this utopian urge, quite the opposite has happened. Beginning right around 1980, the relative wage and income equality of the post-war years takes a nose-dive, by the year 2000, the 0-90 percent has returned to their pre-war position with the .01 percent earning 2.8 percent of national income (Duménil & Lévy, 2004). To sum up the subject pithily, "...below the top one percent, there was no neoliberal miracle" (Duménil & Lévy, 2004, p. 130). I am not sure what the opposite of a miracle might be, a crisis?, but regardless, this increased economic inequality, combined with the divorce of politics and power, turns fertile ground for sowing the seeds of a critique of neoliberalism.

On a fundamental level, David Harvey (2005) has argued that the enactment of neoliberalism in 1979 was situated firmly within the context of a reassertion of class power by the upper class of the pyramid. As the numbers presented by Duménil and Lévy (2004) indicate, the years between the end of the Second World War and 1980 were, relatively speaking, lean

years for economic elites. Prior to the war, the greatest portion of the upper 10 percent's income were derived from capital income—or the income derived from investing wealth. During the war, capital income fell to a quarter of its pre-war level and wages were halved. This upper portion of the pyramid did not recover during the 50s, 60s, or 70s. When the economic crisis of the 1970s came, it adversely affected the whole of society, resulting in rising unemployment and stagflation. As Harvey (2005) noted, a result of this crisis was the growth of communist and socialist parties in Europe and a popular movement in the U.S. that was advocating for reforms and state interventions. For the ruling economic elite of advanced capitalist countries, like the U.S., this was a clear threat to their political power. Neoliberalism stood as an alternative to a return to increases in state control.

As the numbers show the enactment of neoliberal reforms proved to be a great boon for the upper portions of the pyramid. When the interest rates jumped in 1979, poorer countries began to default on their loans, i.e. Mexico in 1982. The U.S. Treasury worked with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to forgive loans in exchange for reforms that opened these countries to global markets. This “structural adjustment” took the form of “cuts in welfare expenditures, more flexible labour market laws, and privatization” (Harvey, 2005, p. 29). The economic elites of advanced capitalist countries were able to soak up the high rates of return in the following decades (Harvey, 2005). This was made possible by what Harvey (2005) has called, “the financialization of everything” (p. 33). During this period the mergers between production and manufacturing and the once separate area of finance allowed for those with economic privilege to benefit from policies such as structural adjustment (Harvey, 2005). The end effect has been the reconcentration of wealth and income at the top of the pyramid at the expense of the middle and bottom.

This brings me to a question of implications of this growing inequality for my conception of social justice. As Chad Lavin (personal communication, Nov. 14, 2014) has pointed out, it is entire possible that inequality can still grow while well-being is improved for all. The idea that a rising tide raises all ships and that some simply rise more rapidly. Though this might in fact be a reality in certain singular instances and localities, I suggest that the two agricultural examples from the preceding section suggest otherwise. Though it is impossible and inane to attempt to account for the well-being of the large number of individual famers who now run net-loss operations, it is fair to state that these financial straits make it more difficult to enact a food and agricultural system that is socially, ecologically, and economically just. In a hierarchy of needs, the latter are arguably and understandably less important than floating your operation for one more year. And though the resulting system is maddening, the food consumers that are most marginalized by this system are effectively excluded from petitioning power for improved well-being. As I noted earlier, Harvey (2005) has argued that a chief outcome of neoliberalism has been a re-assertion of class power and as is evidenced in the agro-food system examples, this was effected in part by structuring a political economic system that maintained economic inequality while simultaneously making relative wealth a pre-requisite for accessing power.

Neoliberalism as governmentality. In this section, I draw on the concept of governmentality to suggest that neoliberalism as a political project seeks to create subjects who employ the individaulizing entrepreneuring calculus of the market to the pursuit of personal well-being.

Governmentality is a concept used by Foucault (1991) that Brown (2003) had called, “theoretically fecund and woefully underspecified” (para 44). Given this generative lack of specificity, I draw on the interpretive work of several scholars. Within the context of

governmentality, Foucault employs a more general notion of government, one that is not linked to strictly political meaning it has today.

Government defines a discursive field in which exercising power is “rationalized.” Ways in which this occurs include the delineation of concepts, the specification of objects and borders, and the provision of arguments and justifications. In this manner, government makes it possible to address a problem and offers certain strategies for managing or solving the problem (Lemke, 2007, p. 44).

To put it differently, the exercise of power over a population does not hinge solely upon the sovereignty over the governor, but rather upon the creation and maintenance of subjects that ascribe to a desired way of thinking and being. Part and parcel is the societal valorization of a certain reality, in the case of neoliberalism, the free market, which takes on a hegemonic status, mediating and constituting what counts as knowledge.

Explicitly embedded in the utopian reality of neoliberalism is again the idea that the population is best governed by unfettered competition. The entrepreneur is essential in this conception. It is the competition between entrepreneurs that drives the whole system, Foucault (2008) has masterfully honed in on the cultural implications of the enterprising entrepreneur subjectivity. The individual becomes homo oeconomicus an “entrepreneur for himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings” (p. 226). The outcome of this mentality, the knowledge system of neoliberalism, is that the cost-benefit analysis of the market is then imposed upon all aspects of life—it governs them. The consequence is that the responsibility for well-being is then placed upon the individual. As Brown (2003) pointed out this governmentality “carries responsibility for the self to new heights: the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her

action no matter how severe the constraints on this action, e.g., lack of skills, education, and childcare in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits.” This in turn further serves the purposes of neoliberalism by absolving the state of responsibility for the guarantee of well-being and perpetuating the notion that those at the bottom of the social pyramid are there by their own doing and merit. To build on the previous section, the implication here is that not only does a lack of wealth make it difficult to access traditional forms of power, but lacking the wealth is one’s own fault. In slightly different terms if one is unable to achieve social esteem, it is not because the political-economic system is dysfunctional, it is rather a result of personal failure.

So, how does this system perpetuate itself? Foucault (2008) posits the apparatus of security as governmentality’s essential mechanism. To borrow from Mathiesen (1997) and Bauman (2012) this disciplining security is accomplished by synopticism, or the surveillance of the few by the many. Those at the bottom of the pyramid are sustained by the idea that they might reach the top of the pyramid, occupied by the few elite. This finds the individual in a place far from Fraser’s (2004) institutionalized “participatory parity.” The spaces requisite for this parity beg the oversight of some entity other than the market, which, by design, is only able to guarantee equality in the ability to become the entrepreneur of one’s own self.

Conclusion

The image drafted by critics of neoliberalism is of a social reality that is frustratingly complex and obdurate. And, while the best intentioned theories of food system change hope for a more socially just and equitable future, often the road to these ends is also traveled by neoliberalism. Henry Giroux (1992; 2004) has written extensively on neoliberalism and what educators might do to resist it. Perhaps, one of his most compelling ideas is that of the educators

as cultural workers (1992). Following Giroux, the DNA of neoliberalism has become so deeply embedded in western culture that any form of counter hegemony requires cultural work. Indeed, this is a vast undertaking. It requires working against the grain of the institutions, policies, and structures that have come to ossify neoliberalisms. While this may take many forms, J.K. Gibson-Graham have written of a different starting point—that of denying neoliberalism the totalizing, unifying, and singular explanatory power. What if, as Arturo Escobar (2009) has written, other worlds are already possible? This is not to deny or enervate the cultural worker, but to pick up another, an additional lens. How might I as a scholar, educator, practitioner, and activist understand my world differently in a way enacts a world much broader and larger than theories of neoliberalism might be able to imagine? This question is the foundation of this research effort and the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

...philosophy creates a way of seeing this world in which we live that disturbs the verities we are presented with, that opens up new ways of seeing and conceiving this world that, rather than true or false, are interesting, remarkable, or important. (May, 2005, p. 22)

Introduction

In the previous chapters I have attempted to make an argument for the social injustices of the configuration of the current food system; in the U.S., it tends to benefit the relative elite at the expense of marginalized communities—women, non-whites, and the poor—globally, the injustices are only amplified. It seems that any attempt to change the food system requires some form of action—ideally the collective action that is waning in neoliberal times (Giroux, 2005). Social movement theorists have argued that this kind of action requires some level of frame resonance—or shared ways of making sense of the world (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Klanderman, 1997). It is here that I have found the idea of neoliberalism compelling. It offers an explanation of the world that makes certain injustices coherent, and appears to offer fertile ground for action. But as scholars like Harris (2009) have noted: the explanatory power of neoliberalism is so far reaching that nearly every action can somehow be criticized as complicit in its reproduction. It is a world rigidly made, with an air of finality. As a consequence, the practitioner, the scholar, the activist, who is using the neoliberal critique as a frame for action is left in a state of stasis. What to do? My task in this chapter is to introduce and expound upon several concepts and ways of thinking that I have found useful in moving myself and my research beyond this stasis.

The concept of coherence is central to this chapter and the rest of my dissertation research. Scholars like John Law (2004) have argued that the historical and contemporary work

of social science has been to make coherence out of a world that is inherently non-coherent. As a researcher and scholar, I have been trained to look for the themes, patterns, and consistencies in the world, and all that does not fit into such a system is to be discarded as irrelevant, unimportant, or lacking in methodological rigor. The concept of neoliberalism fits well in these systems—it offers a way of reading themes, patterns, and consistencies into the world. But, drawing on scholars like Deleuze (1968/1995), it can also be argued this kind of reading obscures differences, that it sediments the world in such a way that possibilities for transformation are muted. In this chapter, I draw on the work of theorists like Deleuze and those, like Law, who are explicitly and implicitly laboring in his shadow. I intend to outline ways of thought that might trouble the explanatory power of neoliberalism, and at the same time produce what Deleuze might call new lines of flight, and create anew the problem of an unjust food system.

Arranging the Stage: Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

In order to frame my conceptual lens for viewing my research, I start with the shifting conversation around language that began in the early 1900s. Around the turn of the century, Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, gave a series of lectures in which he challenged the prevailing thinking on language and how humans use it to make sense of their world. Prior to Saussure, it was believed that words were symbols which stood in for objects in their absence. For example, the word, “woman” represents the physical being of a female human, which has elemental, real-world meaning. Saussure challenged this idea and argued that the concept of “woman” is a sign that includes the signifier, or the actual word, and the signified, or the idea denoted. The meaning of the sign is determined by structured relationships of difference between the sign, woman, and other signs, man, child, orangutan, etc. In his understanding, what is

woman is determined by its contrast to the other signs that it is not. His argument was that the meaning of language is culturally mediated and is therefore not directly tied, or representative of reality. Structuralist thinkers of the twentieth century took up Saussure's mantle and focused on uncovering the social and cultural structures that determine difference and, ultimately, shape reality (Gibson-Graham, 2000; May, 2005).

Anti-foundationalism. As implied by their moniker, the work of post-structuralist theorists is built on the foundation of Saussure and his scholastic progeny. The work of structuralists hinged upon the existence of a world with structures that could be known if only to be uncovered. Meaning was mediated by language, but still, they thought a "true" knowledge of the meaning could be discovered. One contribution of poststructuralism has been to challenge this foundational understanding of knowledge. This anti-foundational stance is based on a refusal to view knowledge as grounded in the world or somehow reflective or representative of an a priori reality (Gibson-Graham, 2000). As Foucault (1980) argued, there are certain "regimes of truth" that are valorized by societies at any given time in history. These are particular ideas that are taken to be reflective of "true" knowledge. This he argued was not without social consequence:

... Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. (p. 131)

To state it differently, there have always been certain knowledges and ways of knowing the world that have been deemed legitimate by any given society. But these knowledges have changed over the course of human history—one “true” knowledge replaced by another, then another, etc. But the act of valorizing one knowledge consequently subjugates other knowledges—other ways of knowing and understanding the world—and the ability to determine the “true” knowledge of any given time effects power. Building upon this position, I understand knowledge and ideas to lack representational accuracy, but to still effect a particular world.

I return to the neoliberal critique of food systems work as an example. If this critique of various forms of activism is re-iterated, it starts to produce a system of difference—food system work as neoliberal/non-neoliberal. If this argument is socially valorized (c.f. Guthman, 2008; Guthman, 2011; Allen and Guthman, 2006, Fairbairn, 2012), it effects power, which, in part, results in the discrediting of other knowledges, other discourse, other ways of knowing the world. As I attested earlier, the difficulty of knowing the world in this way is that it can be explained as a unified, singular and totalized system—nothing is outside of it (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Novel ways of knowing the world differently can be quickly explained away as neoliberal (Harris, 2009). The line of thought put forward by post-structuralists, like Foucault, challenges the idea there are true knowledges that can be the foundation for all thought (May, 2005). The idea of neoliberalism, while explaining material effects, is a socially contingent explanation.

Anti-essentialism. An anti-foundational epistemology should and does have implications for my ideas about the world “that is,” or my ontological position. I return to

the idea of language and meaning. According to a Saussurian understanding—the relationship between the word or sign and that which it signifies, though made by a relationship of difference, is fixed. Under this line of reasoning, a concept like woman, though defined by characteristics of difference from man, child, orangutan, etc., has a fixed meaning that, though possibly obfuscated or poorly understood, is reflective of the essence of that which a woman “is.” I follow J.K. Gibson-Graham (2000), who advocate for an anti-essentialist understanding of language. To borrow their example: the word woman has a certain meaning within the context of other concepts, like “husband,” “home,” and “family.” Within other concepts, “lesbian,” “work,” and “politics,” it has a very different meaning (p. 96). This supports the idea that “the creation of meaning is an unfinished process, a site of (political) struggle where alternative meanings are generated and only temporarily fixed” (p. 96). Though meaning may be made by relationships of difference, these relationships themselves are products of the social and are, consequently, contextual and contingent.

If meaning is contingent, only temporarily fixed, and the knowledge of it is a productive, a constitutive force, this understanding is rife with implications. This conception makes null the attempt to objectively judge between different knowledges based on their ability to accurately reflect the world, but, as Gibson-Graham (2000) have noted, it is possible to differentiate between the effects of particular ways of knowing the world—“the different subjects they empower, the institutions and practices they enable, and those they exclude or suppress” (p. 97). This perspective has implications for researchers like myself: what are the knowledges that I seek to create; and what power might they effect?

To put this in context, reading community food work as neoliberal, essentializes the efforts of practitioners and activists. In a significant way, it strips the work of its context and subordinates differences to qualities that can be identified for their sameness. This returns the argument to Law's position on coherence. Reading for sameness, or reading for neoliberalisms, is a method for making coherence out of non-coherence and difference. Though the rational and systematic pursuit of lines of sameness has produced the cannon of natural sciences, in the social sciences, it limits possibilities for social transformation (Law & Urry, 2004). This raises the question: how might I read community food system activism for difference, for something other than neoliberalism?

An Ontological Turn?

To interrogate this question, I turn to ontology. In philosophy, the concept has been traditionally defined as “the study of what there is,” or that nature of what there is (May, 2005, p. 13). These questions have a long history in Western philosophy, stretching back to Plato. In various times they have been answered in different ways—but they have often had a transcendent basis: the world that is emanates from a place outside of the individual, like a divine being or God. Building on work begun by Nietzsche, post-structural philosophers rejected this view of ontology. For a thinker like Foucault, ontological matters were based on historically contingent norms that fail to identify their genesis in discourse. Derrida, another post-structuralist, rejected ontology on account of its failure to represent that which has been made absent (May, 2005). Following their arguments, the task of ontology, to discover the world that is, is a failure as the question, in itself, is fundamentally flawed.

In this respect, Deleuze differed from his contemporaries—the problem of ontology was a signal of its re-birth, not its death. Rather than an ontology based on lines of sameness, he was

interested in the way that multiple ontologies might be continually created and re-created based on difference (May, 2005). Whereas earlier scholars had sought to discover the natural order of things, Deleuze was interested in the way “the conditions under which something new is produced (creativity)” (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002, p. vi). Mol (1999) has well described this reading of ontology, defining it as “the conditions of possibility we live with” (p. 95). These conditions are constrained by the same limits described by Foucault and Derrida, and though some are more obdurate, they are mutable and capable of transformation.

This understanding of ontology as mutable and to be created, is an idea that has been taken up by actor-network and material-semiotic theorists like John Law, who has suggested, as an implication, that realities are not something to be known, but are something that done. Reality is a product of, and constituted by, knowledge, which I have argued, is contingent and multiple. In turn, if knowledge produces reality, then reality, too, would be multiple.

Charges of relativism have been levied at theories of knowledge and reality as multiple (Gibson-Graham, 2000). But to build on the earlier noted importance of taking seriously the power effected by certain knowledges, I follow Law (2009) who has suggested that the production of certain realities effects collateral realities, or those that “get done incidentally and along the way” (p. 1). Further, the collateral realities that get done are, “for the most part unintentional[...]. They are realities that may be obnoxious. Importantly, they are realities [that] could be different” (p. 1). This takes me back to Gibson-Graham’s supposition that the creation of meaning is inherently a political negotiation and one that is in the on-going process of being done and re-done.

Performativity and ontological politics. This process of doing and re-doing, has relation to the idea of performativity, particularly as articulated by the likes of Judith Butler

(1990, 1993) and scholars that have built upon her work. Butler (1993) has defined performativity as “the reiterative and citational practice through which discourse produces the effects that it names” (p. 2). It is the on-going process, not a single isolated act, of performance that produces “the effect that it names.” This is in line with the arguments of Law (2009) and Mol (1999) in that the repetitive process of doing and re-doing produces particular realities.

If reality is performative, the question of what it is that is doing the doing is important. I follow Law (2009) who has suggested that realities are being done in practices, or the “detectable and somewhat ordered sets of material-semiotic relations” (p. 1). It is the assemblages of the practices, the relations between different “realities, objects, subjects, materials, meanings,” that enact particular realities (p. 1). So, to understand a reality that is being done, one has to explore how these practices get assembled. As an example, Mol (1999) studied the ways in which certain practices around the diagnosis of anemia have created particular realities about the condition. She noted the performance of three sets of practices and their effected realities: 1) the clinical practice in which a doctor examines a patient for physical symptoms of anemia; 2) a statistical practice in which a sample of blood is drawn and hemoglobin levels are examined against population averages; and 3) a pathophysiological practice in which the variation in individual hemoglobin needs are taken into account. Mol went on to describe how each of these practices actually diagnosed different anemias. Each practice created a certain reality about a certain condition that was not necessarily in agreement with the reality created by another practice. For example, an individual’s hemoglobin level might fall within the statically normal range, but they might still exhibit symptoms in the clinical practice. And while these practices may be used in conjunction, Mol found that they are often used in isolation. She suggested that though medical

professionals may speak of one anemia, she read multiple. The multiplicity begets ontological politics— a question of “what is or could be made more real” (Law and Urry, 2004, p. 396).

Thinking the Ontological with Deleuze

Later in this chapter and the next, I will return to the methodological implications of ontological politics, but I will first consider this concept in relationship to the work of Gilles Deleuze. At a methodological level, my research draws on actor-network/material-semiotic theorists like Anne Marie Mol and John Law. As (Viveiros de Castro, 2010) has noted, Deleuze’s work has had a formative impact on the work of such scholars, and working through some of his ideas should lend some clarity to my overall research project.

As I have noted earlier, Gilles Deleuze can be broadly grouped into the camp of philosophers (perhaps, begrudgingly) known as post-structuralists. As the prefix, “post,” implies, their work was an attempt to transform the structuralist work that emanated from the likes of Saussure (Williams, 2005). The breadth and depth of Deleuze’s work is vast. It is beyond this research scope to delve deeply into his theories, but I hope to use his work to think about my research. I am encouraged by Massumi’s (1987) introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s “A Thousand Plateaus” where he recommended that the reader pick up and use the authors work like one might use a musical album—going back repeatedly to those tracks that move the listener/reader, and skipping those that do not resonate. Both advertently and inadvertently, this is what I am doing here.

In his writings, Deleuze (and Guattari) created a number of new concepts. For Deleuze, this was critical—concepts determine the thinkable. In order to think in new ways, to develop new lines of flight, novel concepts were needed (May, 2005). In this section, I work through two central Deleuzian concepts: difference and thought. I use his work on the two ideas as a basis for

outlining several supporting concepts: assemblage, rhizome, becoming, affect, and lines of flight. True to Deleuze's larger philosophies, his own writing defies linearity and eschews pithy description, with one concept emerging in the middle of another and, like a rhizome, drawing a line to another which had actualized from another middle, and so on. As Jackson (2013) has suggested, in this section, I am attempting to plug my research into the Deleuzian machine.

Difference and Identity

As I have already alluded, the idea of difference is central to Deleuze's philosophy. Poststructuralists, as a larger group of theorists, have posited a critique of structuralism based on its tendency to essentialize differences. (I made this argument earlier in the chapter.) Deleuze added his own nuance to the anti-essentialist position. From his perspective, the task of philosophy is ontology—in this case, the study of what is. His fundamental thesis was that difference pre-exists all else (Deleuze, 1968/1994). This requires some unpacking. The difference of structuralism is made distinct, and therefore pre-existed by, identity. Going back to the argument of the sign, woman: it is only made discernable by its difference from other signs (e.g. man, child, oragatun). But even the post-structural argument of contingent difference relies on identities. For Deleuze the task of philosophy is to create concepts for describing a pure difference that pre-existed all else. In this case, the idea of difference does not stand in for what is “really out there,” but it instead refers to “that which eludes such capture” (May, 2005, p. 82).

Assemblage. A concept used by Deleuze to make meaning of differences is assemblage—which is “a collection of heterogeneous elements” (Wise, 2005, p. 78). This definition implies a noun, but in French the term is also verb, or the process of assembling. Wise (2005) further describes Deleuze and Gutarri's use of the term:

An assemblage is not a set of predetermined parts (such as the pieces of a plastic model aeroplane) that are then put together in order or into an already-conceived structure (the model aeroplane). Nor is an assemblage a random collection of things, since there is a sense that an assemblage is a whole of some sort that expresses some identity and claims a territory. (p. 77)

This use of assemblage is a means of moving away from the idea that identity pre-exists differences. An assemblage is a whole that is at once made by its parts, but also an influence on the composition of its parts. Assemblages are not governed by natural laws, but properties emerge through interactions of the parts (Escobar & Osterweil, 2010). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) use the analogy of a book as an assemblage to explain this. For them a book in itself is meaningless—a shell.

A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements. (p. 6)

The writing of the book is an assembling of different elements that all are situated with an array of other assemblages. Similarly, the reading of the book is also a process of assembling. The reader brings multiple strata of assemblages to make meaning of the book. The meaning is governed by the connections between the shifting elements of the assemblage(s).

To return to community food work, the processes and materialities described by those who deem activist food efforts neoliberal are part of larger assemblages. When viewing community food work as an assemblage, neoliberalism loses its explanatory power. As Colebrook (2002) argued, “There is not finality, end or order that would govern the assemblage

as a whole; the law of any assemblage is created from its connections” (p. xx). The connections in the assemblage of community food work are extremely contextual and contingent. To essentialize community food work as neoliberal is to subordinate the local differences to the explanation of sameness offered by a theory like neoliberalism. This does not mean that the effects described by neoliberal critics are not material, but that they are the product of multiplicity, not singularity.

Territorialization/deterritorialization. It is important to briefly note the strata occupied by an assemblage. Territorialization, “functions through processes that organize and systematize social space. These processes impose a certain kind of order and categorization on the world; they include the categories we learn to live by” (Alrecht-Crane, 2005, p. 122). Assemblages both create and inhabit these territories (Wise, 2005). Territories, such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation are culturally-produced and used to read the social field and stabilize assemblages. Deterritorialization is the disruption of these categories and stabilization. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) describe the “cutting edge of deterritorialization, which carry [an assemblage] away” (p. 88). They are, unsurprisingly, interested in this edge.

Rhizome. To capture the fluid and dynamic nature of assemblages Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) play on the concept of a rhizome. This analogy draws upon the biologic nature of plants that possess subterranean stems which grow through soil, producing out new stems above ground and new stems and roots below ground. The theorists made a case for thought that is rhizomatic. They argued that western philosophy has privileged the idea of the tap-rooted tree which springs from a single root in to a trunk that dichotomously forms branches. This linear, binary way of viewing knowledge has resulted in a constrained imagination of differences and, instead, brings thought back to ideas of sameness. For Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987)

rhizomes and their analogous thought inhere six principles. The first and second principles are of “connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (p. 7). The third principle is multiplicity. This characteristic is distinct from the root and tree, which contains a point from which new branches emerge. Rhizomes conversely contain no points, “there are only lines” (p. 8). To state it differently, rhizomes are composed of neither beginning nor end, but middles, and it is from these middles that a rhizome grows. A rhizome might send up an above-ground stem, but even it is not a terminus, but a middle. The fourth principle is of asignifying rupture, or the idea that a rhizome may be disrupted, but it will proliferate and lead back to old or new lines. The fifth and sixth principles are of cartography (or mapping) and decalcomania (or tracing). Under this principle, rhizomes are maps. “A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back ‘to the same’” (p. 12). A tracing adheres to tree-like thought, mimicking lines that have already been reproduced. Deleuze and Guattari connote decalcomania with psychoanalysis which used several fixed ideas to treat patients. The stories or data from the patient were processed through ideas like desire, oedipal drive, etc. A map, on the other hand, is:

...open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. (p. 12)

A map emerges it is worked and reworked, it is never finished. It is important to note that maps do not preclude tracings, rather they include them, but not as definitive images of thought.

Like a rhizome itself, this concept connects back to assemblages—the parts of any assemblage are connected parts of another assemblage. As both an example of this concept and their philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari argued that they were not suggesting a binary between

tree and rhizomatic thought. Rather, they suggested that they rhizomatically connect. Tree thinking can take on characteristics of rhizomatic thought and vice-versa.

But a rhizome is distinct from a tap-rooted tree in its attempt to establish new connections. A rhizome is not constrained by the linear trajectory of the tap-rooted tree. The trajectory of a rhizome is indeterminate and “ceaseless” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 7). Take for example, the rhizomatic daylilies growing in a flowerbed my front yard. They are so persistent in their proliferation that they have squeezed out nearly all of their competition. In my attempt to remove them, I dug some up and threw them into a weed-covered hillside. Two years later, the flowerbed is still full of daylilies and the hillside is now held in place by extensive new colony of lilies. In the right conditions, rhizomes proliferate.

Thought and Knowledge

The connection between rhizomes and thought arranges the stage for Deleuze’s perspective of knowledge. For my purposes, it begins with the anti-foundationalism described previously—from the contingent nature of the true. This is directly connected with ontology. While many philosophers have taken anti-foundationalism as grounds for abandoning the pursuit of ontology, Deleuze was reinvigorated by this turn. May (2005) recounts a Deleuzian perspective,

If we stop searching for the true, stop asking the world to allow us to recognize it, stop knowing what everybody knows, then we can set of on a new thought, a thought that is both ontological and foreign, an experiment in ontology, rather than an exercise in dogmatism. (p. 81)

This reading of Deleuze is consonant with his distinction between thought and knowledge. The work of philosophy had historically been in the pursuit of knowledge, which is based on

accurately recognizing, understanding, and representing identity. Thought, on the other hand, is not based on grasping an accurate representation of identity—it does not produce knowledge. Thought, “moves beyond what is known to the difference beneath, behind, and within it. And, since difference outruns thought, thought can only palpate a difference that lies beyond its grasp” (May, 2005, p. 21). The idea that thought can palpate difference is critical. Palpation is what doctors do when they use touch to try to create an understanding of an ailment that cannot be seen. A doctor might press in one area resulting in a sensation that allows the doctor to better understand the condition of the patient (May, 2005). Because difference is a fluid multiplicity and assemblage that cannot be completely known, thought is the instrument for evoking a sense of the differences, and from these differences new vistas and possibilities.

Lines of flight. Recall that assemblages are made through their connections, through what Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) would call lines. They describe two types of lines—of actualization and of flight. Lines of actualization “are centripetal, homogenizing, hierarchizing, and normalizing discourses and practices. They perpetuate the status quo.” (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013). They are the normalized connections. In contrast, a line of flight is one that cuts through an assemblage. It is new growth from the ceaseless connecting of the rhizomatic thought. A line of flight emerges through novel connections and allows new ideas or concepts. These lines of escape might emerge from the meeting of two ideas, which give rise to a new line, which then intersects with another line and so on. A line of flight has the effect of deterritorializing. It is important to make the link back to knowledge. If the production of true knowledge is an aporia the production of new lines of thought has a significant place in the pursuit of possibilities for transforming the social field.

Becoming. A central component of Deleuze's ontology of thinking is the concept of becoming. This concept is a re-territorialization of western philosophy's focus on being. If the tree-like idea of being is that of a stable entity that moves through time, following new binary branches, becoming is its rhizomatic cousin. Deleuze and Parnet (2002) describe becoming thus:

To become is never to imitate, nor to 'do like,' nor to conform to a model, whether it's of justice or of truth. There is no terminus from which you set out, none which you arrive at or which you ought to arrive at. Nor are there two terms to be exchanged. The question 'What are you becoming?' is particularly stupid. For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does himself. Becomings are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation, but of a double capture, or non-parallel evolution, or nuptials between two reigns. (p. 2)

Here, the rhizomatic connections to other concepts like assemblage are visible. A becoming is at once made up of difference, of multiplicity, of that which defies representation, but the parts are also in a state of transformation based on their relationship to the whole.

Deleuze and Parnet also suggest that conversation might be seen as the outline of a becoming. There is no terminus or destination; both are a becoming in relation to the material and semiotic entities that enter the conversation. In terms of the lines and connections of the rhizome and assemblage, becomings emerge from the middle, from the relationships. A conversation is a becoming as it moves from the middle of connections, prompting new lines of flight, new lines, new middles, new becomings, and so on. Again, this evokes the image of the daylilies nomadically and ceaselessly traversing my yard.

Affect. The final Deleuzian concept I introduce is that of affect. This is a concept that evolves throughout his entire oeuvre. In his work there is a distinction between affection and

affect. Affection is the effect of an affect. Frustration, for example, is an affect. It is virtual and un-actualized, or as Waterhouse (2011) noted, it exceeds an immediate experience. Upon realizing that I had just written two pages in this chapter that no one else would find useful, frustration would become manifest, or actual, in a sigh and slumping shoulders. This particular affection is of frustration arrested in one instance. The affect of frustration would, again, exceed that particular event. Deleuze and Guattari (1908/1987) described affects as becomings. Frustration continues beyond a particular manifestation, but does not emerge except through the collision with other bodies (Colman, 2005). In considering thought and difference, affect is significant. Deleuze further described affect as “every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational” (in Seigworth, 2005, p. 161). While affection is a knowable effect of an encounter (Colman, 2005), affect defies representation. A result of this non-knowable, non-representational quality is that affect has been marginalized as non-rational by traditional western philosophy. Under Deleuze’s ontology, which might be considered one of not-knowing, affect has a renewed and significant place.

Deleuze, Ontological Politics, and Community Food Work

We have been criticized for overquoting literary authors. But when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 4)

This quotation comes from Deleuze and Guattari’s description of rhizomes and assemblages. Like the subject-less object-less book example I used previously, community food work is only as meaningful as the machine, the assemblage into which it is plugged. In the previous sections I laid out one (albeit cursory) reading of the Deleuzian assemblage. In this section it is my task to point to ways in which it might be plugged into a general assemblage of

community food work. This section verges on the methodological, but I save the explanation of my research design for the following chapter.

Deleuze's ontology points in the direction of the ontological politics of Mol (1999) and Law (2004; 2009). The former provides the abstraction that supports the more-concrete work of the latter. Mol and Law have expressed concern with the real, its states of multiplicity, and its symbiotic impact on the lived everyday. Deleuze was interested the ways that thought and thinking might provide new ways of conceptualizing the real.

Questions of the real and that which might be made "more real" have methodological implications for social science research. As Timothy Mitchell (2008) has pointed out, social scientists have long engaged in the production of the real. Prior to the early 20th century, the object, "the economy" did not exist. It was not until

...new ways of administering the welfare of populations, of developing the resources of colonies, organizing the circulation of money, compiling and using statistics, managing large businesses and workforces, branding and marketing products, and desiring and purchasing commodities brought into being a world that for the first time could be measured and calculated as though it were a free-standing object, the economy. (p. 1116)

Mitchell subsequently noted,

Economists claimed only to describe this object, but in fact they participated in producing it. Their contribution was to help devise the forms of calculation in terms of which new kinds of socio-technical practice were organized, to monitor these forms of practice as though they formed a self-regulating system, and to put forward rival accounts of how the system worked. "Economy" no longer referred to a way of exercising power and

accumulating knowledge; it now referred to an object of power and knowledge. (p. 1116-1117)

Mitchell's description underscores Law and Urry's (2004) supposition that social science methods do not simply describe the real world, but play an active role in making and enacting it.

Building on the discourses of alternative food system development that I discussed in previous two chapters, I posit these discourses as practices of material and semiotic relationships that enact particular realities—intended and collateral. Take for example the critique of community food work as composed of an individualizing, de-politicizing, neoliberal rationality. While these critiques describe real and pressing forces, they also enact a world that is dominated by neoliberalism—a totalized system, that explains and essentializes much activist food system work as neoliberal reification (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006, 2008; Stewart, 2007). The collateral reality enacted is one where there is little substantive indication of other possibilities that might be. Working from the idea that social science enacts realities, Gibson-Graham and Roelvink (2009) wrote:

Our role as academics has thus dramatically changed. We are less required to function as critics who excavate and assess what has already occurred, and more and more pushed to adopt the stance of experimental researchers, opening to what can be learned from what is happening on the ground. To put this in the form of a mandate, we are being called to read the potentially positive futures barely visible in the present order of things, and to imagine how to strengthen and move them along. (p.342)

For me, taking up this mandate begets a methodological question: if these critical descriptive analyses of food system work perform (and effect) a reality dominated by neoliberalism, how might researchers, like myself, not lose the insight of the critical perspective, but at the same

time “read the potentially positive futures barely visible in the present order of things” and enact a different reality?

Small Systems and Becoming

As a starting point, answering this question requires theories that are less totalizing than that of neoliberalism. I draw on Deleuze and Parnet (2002); they argued that empirical research has traditionally engaged in analysis of the “state of things” (p. vii). But following my previous arguments, there does not exist one underlying “state of things,” but multiplicities. As Deleuze argued, these multiplicities “are neither unities nor totalities” (p. vii). Multiplicities cannot be explained by “strong theories” of large structural systems like neoliberalism—and this has methodological implications (in Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 7). As Law (2008) has stated:

This...is the leitmotif of this turn to the ontological. It is to refuse to be overawed by seemingly large systems, and the seeming ontological unity of the world enacted by large systems. It is, instead, to make the problem smaller, or better, to make it more specific. To deal with the materialities of specific practices. To discover difference. And then to intervene in ways that might make a difference to those differences. (p. 637)

This begets what Sedgwick (1993) has termed “weak theory,” or theory that does not purport to explain seemingly large systems and structures, but, rather, seeks find the ruptures in the putative ossifications of the world.

It is important to note that even in these small systems, the larger unifying systems, like neoliberalism, are still a part, but as elements of a multiplicity, rather than the inverse (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002). The small systems are assemblages in on-going flux—neoliberalism does not have a dominating effect. Deleuze and Parnet (2002) described it like this,

Of course a multiplicity includes focuses of unification, centres of totalization, points of subjectivation, but as factors which can prevent its growth and stop its lines. These factors are in the multiplicities to which they belong, not the reverse. In a multiplicity what counts are not the terms or the elements, but what there is 'between' the between, a set of relations which are not separable from each other. (p. viii)

The lines of these multiplicities are "true becomings" (p. viii). For the empiricist, the challenge is to re-conceptualize community food work in a way that allows the smaller systems to be read as rhizomes, and for the emergence of becomings and new lines of flight.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN

Realities are not fixed in concrete. It is not simply a matter of reporting them. Instead they might be otherwise. With difficulty, yes. No one is saying they can be invented at a whim. Nevertheless, we find ourselves with a new possibility—in the domain of an ontological politics. (Law, 2006, p. 9)

Introduction

In the preceding first two chapters I have attempted to lay out a certain story about what the agro-food system—one that traces a particular line of logic through the past century or so and has created the conditions for our current food system—both conventional and alternative. Thinking with work done by other scholars, I have also suggested that a common thread of neoliberal rationality connects both the conventional/industrial and alternative/community approaches to food system development. This critique situates alternative agro-food work as within, and constitutive of, a discourse of neoliberalism that effects ends that are not as socially just as their proponents might intend. In the previous chapter I laid out a conceptual argument for reading and thinking difference—my theoretical lens for viewing the world. Following May (2005) I suggest “differences is a process.” In this chapter, my goal is to lay out one potential process of difference in community food work.

Throughout this chapter, I use my theoretical lens to lay out my research design and methods. I attempt to counter the divide between theory and method that is often created in positivist and post-positivist research. Drawing on the work of Deleuze, Coleman and Ringrose (2013), I have argued that social science has traditionally functioned under a false dichotomous divide between theory and practice. This division has made it possible to conduct empirical research that is uninformed by one’s connection to theory, as well as the development of theory

that remains somewhat detached from the empirical materialities of practice. But as Deleuze has argued, “Theory is an inquiry, which is to say, a practice: a practice of the seemingly fictive world that empiricism describes; a study of the conditions of legitimacy of practices that is in fact our own” (Deleuze in Coleman and Ringrose, p. 2). If theory is indeed a form of practice, and empirical practice a form of world-making, then it is incumbent upon the researcher, such as myself, to develop research methodology and processes that are indicative of theory and vice versa. Schall, Opsina, Godsoe, and Dodge (2004) have used the concept of “indication” to note the degree to which methods reflect the theoretical lens of the researcher. In this chapter, I develop my “indication,” and in the process I attempt to destabilize, or deterritorialize, certain understandings of the neoliberalization of community food work, while hopefully laying the methodological groundwork for an inquiry that might point in directions of other possibility.

Problem Statement

Thinking about possibility and of social realities and those which might be made more or less real brings me to my problem statement and research questions, which alongside my theoretical lens, allow me to shape my methodology and research design.

As I argued in the first two chapters, the U.S. food system is maddening. The conventional and industrial approaches to the production and distribution of food tend to benefit the few and the elite, while creating unjust corporeal and material realities for the many. In the United States, the community food movement has been put forward as an alternative to the madness of the conventional, but some scholars have argued it is complicit in the same logic that undergirds its non-alternative counterpart—the particular example I have used is that of neoliberalism. While I find these critiques compelling, other scholars have begun to raise questions of whether these analyses might actually foreclose upon, rather than open up

possibilities for a more equitable food system (Cameron, Manhood, Pomfrett, 2010; Harris, 2009, Boone and Shear, 2010). The neoliberal critiques enact a calculus and system of measurements for making neoliberalism visible and consequently more real. Because the on-the-ground activities of community food system activists are necessarily heterogeneous, it is, arguably, not possible to offer one-size-fits-all “solutions” to the perceived dominance of neoliberalism. As a result, much of the literature laying out this critique (see: Allen & Guthman, 2006; Guthman, 2008; Akon & Ageyman, 2011) offer little in the way of practical ways forward, even within the contexts of their studies. I raise the question: if the critical critique has merit, but its method is, perhaps, not effecting productive ends, what other options are available? If other options to be made and utilized, what are the practice implications for community food practitioners working in central Appalachia? How might one, at once, challenge the effects of neoliberalism, while searching and enacting possibilities that trouble the totalizing nature of the critical scholarly discourse?

To build upon my methodology chapter, I have, thus far, laid out a case for the examination of heterogeneous assemblages of material and semiotic relations that comprise practices of community food work. As Deleuze and Parnet (2002) have noted, theories have often been used to abstract and explain the concrete—but this assumes a single state of things, rather than multiplicities. They argue that the task of empiricism (the general description of this research) is different: it is to analyze these multiplicities, the states of things, such that non-pre-existent concepts can be extracted from them. So rather than using neoliberalism to explain community food work practices in central Appalachia, I use these locally-situated practices to complicate the discourse of neoliberalization, while reading the practices for possibilities and an ever-broadening political imagination.

Research Questions

In central Appalachia, a significant number of individuals, organizations, and institutions are doing the hard work of imagining and developing food and agricultural systems that are more equitable and socially just. Like any community food work, it would be possible to read large parts of these efforts as complicit in the reproduction of neoliberalism. While these critiques have merit, where are the spaces of possibility, the openings for the more just and equitable systems? For scholars/practitioners, this raises a question of praxis: how might one maintain an emphasis on the unjust material effects described by critics of neoliberalism, while simultaneously, avoiding the structuralist trap of creating and enacting the system under question? This question of praxis gives organization to my research questions.

Given the increasing scholarly focus on neoliberalism, its attendant material and corporeal effects, and the rural context of central Appalachia, I seek to explore:

- 1) the ways in which practitioners and those involved in community-based initiatives perform community food work, and
- 2) the ways in which this work and the component practices might be read as heterogeneous and imbued with new possibilities and the capacity to make a reality different than the dominating and totalizing realities of neoliberalization.

These research questions form a basis for my overall inquiry. They emerge from the middle of my interest in new possibilities for praxis. In the concluding chapter of the dissertation, my exploration returns to this larger question.

Methodology – Using Narratives to Think and Map the Material-Semiotic Relationships of Localized Community Food Work

With these questions as my guide, I lay out my methodology and research design in such a way that the questions might be fully explored, and my theoretical lens indicated. The research begins from the basis of the neoliberal critique of community food work, but I move out from this point to read and translate the work of community food activists as heterogeneous and within a larger assemblage of relations. Thereby, I lay groundwork for troubling the dominating explanatory power of the neoliberal critique and open up the practices for different readings that might allow the co-existence of social justice, equity, and neoliberalism.

This raises a question of where to read community food work. I go back to Law's (2009) suggestion that realities are done in practices—the performances of different material-semiotic relationships between objects, words, ideas, realities. How are community food practitioners performing their work? As Lury and Wakeford (2012) have asked, how might the here and now be grasped in terms of imagining the somewhere else?

Though ethnography is lauded as an appropriate methodology for grasping and interrogating material-semiotic relationships, the specificities of research methods to be employed are varied, or more often, vague (Law & Singleton, 2013; Baiocchi, Graizbord, & Rodriguez- Muñiz, 2013; Tummons, 2010). This is arguably due to the poststructuralist challenges aimed at the traditional realist assumptions that have underpinned much social science, leaving much qualitative research, ethnography included, in what has been called “mess” (Law, 2004) and “ruins” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000b). In an effort to indicate my poststructural lens, I have chosen to loosely draw upon the methodological framework of

institutional ethnography (Smith, 2006; DeVault, 2006), which I primarily operationalize via narrative inquiry as guided by appreciative inquiry. In this section, I will describe my methodological approach, its component parts, my rationale for choosing each, and my hopes for their integration.

Institutional Ethnography

Given the post-structurally informed account of knowledge and reality I described in preceding sections and chapters, it stands to reason that all ethnographic approaches are not appropriate for interrogating material-semiotic relationships (Britzman, 2000). Traditional ethnographic research has privileged the notion of the detached researcher who is able to objectively understand the worlds and cultures, she/he is observing (Cragg & Cook, 2007). The performative account of reality laid out in the preceding parts of this chapter should trouble this notion. If research is more performative than it is capable of objective understanding, it should then be reflected in an ethnographic approach. As a researcher, I should at once be wittingly aware of the performative nature of my methods, as well as of the practices I am studying. I draw upon institutional ethnography to point me in this general direction.

In the early 1980s, Dorothy Smith originated the methodological approach of institutional ethnography (DeVault, 2006). She has noted (2006) that it is not a prescriptive or dogmatic methodological approach, but rather, one committed to “discovering ‘how things are actually put together’ or ‘how things work’” (p. 1), or “how it came to happen as it does” (p. 3). Though this commitment alludes to the existence of a single reality, I suggest that it does not impact my utilization. Consonant with the description of my theoretical lens, institutional ethnographers are adverse to the overarching ontological explanations of “how things work,” supplied by strong theories like neoliberalism and globalization, and are instead concerned with small systems and

the “empirical linkages among local settings of everyday life” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 15). Of central concern to these scholars are “relations of ruling,” or the ways that social relations “carry and accomplish organization and control” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 17). The analytic goal of institutional ethnography is the explication of these relationships, which is often accomplished via mapping (DeVault, 2006). Because of the size and complexity of the studied institutions (e.g. workplaces, homes, marriages), they never presume or attempt to map totalities, but rather “particular corners or strands within a specific institutional complex, in ways that make visible their points of connection with other sites and courses of action” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 17). This bears similarity to the material-semiotic interest in mapping the assemblages of relations that constitute particular practices.

As Smith (2006) noted, institutional ethnography, should be viewed as “a means of orienting towards effective research practice” (p. 3), of inquiry into how social relations are assembled, rather than as a methodological dogma. DeVault and McCoy (2006) have made a case for interviews as a method for locating and mapping the relations among individuals working within institutional complexes. The interviews can provide the ethnographer with access to the social relations that include both the institutional, as well as the local and individualized. As with much institutional ethnography, they also argue for supplemental participant observation and the collection of on-site artifacts.

Though I have only retained traces of this approach in my final work, it no less has been formative in my thinking about data, how it might be assembled. This has served as a launching point for further inquiry into how these performative practices might be assembled differently, an approach that I develop further in the remainder of this chapter and dissertation.

Narrative Inquiry

There are many approaches to collecting and analyzing interview data (Rallis & Rossman, 2012; Seidman, 2006). The particular approach that I employed is narrative inquiry. My interest in narrative as a form in inquiry is directly founded in my understanding of knowledge and reality described in the preceding portions of this chapter. I have argued that knowledges are productive of realities. So, in my pursuit of a more just and equitable food system, there is not one knowledge “out there” that is the key to the true reality, the true emancipatory progression of history; rather, as Foucault has noted, there is no “one thing” to be done about an unjust food system, there are “thousands of things to do, to invent, to forge, on the part of those who, recognizing the power relations in which they’re implicated have decided to resist and escape them” (in St. Pierre, 2011). History is not a linear march forward like the Deleuze and Guattarian aborscent tree, a series of forks and binary branchings; it is rhizomatic, capable of moving in all directions. With my focus on narratives, it is about the many knowledges that are making more real the multiple realities that might be, which could include knowledges productive of a more just and equitable food system.

As Law (2009) has argued, the first step toward an ontological politics of the possible is attending to practices. What is being done, what is being performed as it relates to the organizations and individuals engaging in community food security work in central Appalachia? I use narrative inquiry as a means of grasping the material-semiotic assemblages of this specific work, as an approach for making sense of the individual representations of experience that shape particular ontologies (Cortazzi, 2001). Michael (2012) supports this approach with his work on anecdotes, which he distinguishes as those narratives that are “for the telling” (p. 25). Anecdotal narratives are:

...useful for explicitly incorporating the performativity of research—i.e. the way that research is not a mere reflection of something (e.g. one's experiences in relation to social or cultural process) out there, but is instrumental in, and a feature of the “making of out theres”...[The anecdotal narrative,] as it circulates it shapes the way in which particular incidents come to be understood. (p. 26)

Narratives do not tell the story of a certain event; they are a medium, performative of realities. They are a venue for assembling practices—the material-semiotic relations that do realities. To put it otherwise, the way that that material-semiotic relationships are being described and articulated has the effect of making more real the community food work reality the practitioner is describing.

Put one other way—the community food work of practitioners does not exist in a state of ontological independence. I am arguing that it is an effect of human and non-human relationships that, to a greater or lesser degree, exist only in their performativity, which might be read in anecdotal narratives. The narratives, in themselves reveal the performativity of the practices. On one level, because the narratives are memorable and re-iterated, they relay events that have some way affected the storyteller (Michael, 2012). These narratives emerge from the affect. As Ducey (2007) has noted, the affect emerges from two levels that are at play in any event: that of potential disruption and intensity and language.

These two levels resonate with one another; their vibrations are sometimes dissonant and other time harmonious. Affect is “their point of mergence” and “their vanishing point,” where the vibrations between the levels either emerge as something actual or fade into the virtual...this level of non-cognitive intensity...is the realm from which any cognitive realizations will be drawn. (p. 192)

Ducey has drawn on the Deleuzian idea of the actual/virtual—or that which is made real and that which could be. She is suggesting that it is affect that mediates and bridges these two realms. If narrative is a product of the affect, it should not be viewed as representative of a historical actuality; rather it is the performance of a certain reality. Those elements that did not capture the affect have faded into the virtual—the possible, but not realized. The narrated assemblage of relations is dependent upon selection, juxtaposition, ranking, and framing, and points towards that which has been deleted and made absent (Law, 2009).

Narrative inquiry is then, “the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 21). It is the study of the affective convergence of experience and language, knowledge and reality. I argue that, through the study of narratives, the performativity of practices—the constituting assemblage of relations—might be made visible.

The narratives of practitioners doing community food security work are of particular interest to me because of this performative nature. They provide the raw materials for reading the assemblage of relations that sediment the activist work in central Appalachia. They also provide the raw material for inquiry into how these relations might be constructed differently, or of ontological politics. I suggest that this narrative approach is consonant with the institutional ethnographer’s interest in understanding social relationships and how they have “actually” been assembled, but in my work here, I shift the emphasis from a concern with critiquing these assemblages to one of composition and consideration of how these narratives and the performed realities might be made differently—or again, of ontological politics.

Appreciative Inquiry

In addition to investigating narratives, I have used an appreciative inquiry approach. This approach to research and organizational change has some similarities to the theories of knowledge and ontology described in the previous portions of this chapter. The relationship is indicated in the following theoretical tenet of appreciative inquiry posited by Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008): “Historical narratives and theories govern what is taken to be true or valid. To a large extent, such narratives determine what scientists and lay persons are able to see” (p. 15). Accordingly, it is the task of the researcher to inquire in ways that generate knowledge that focuses on the factors that “give life” to the researched (p. 3). The method for creating this knowledge is through the use of the “unconditional positive question” (p. 3). These types of questions focus on the strengths and assets within an organization or group. The intent is to create a narrative of “the possible” and new visions for the future.

Though appreciative inquiry has been used in many different organizational, institutional, and disciplinary settings, it emerged within the context of participatory research (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2012). Based on the assumption of participation, appreciative inquiry is composed of what its creators have termed, the 4-D cycle, which is composed of 4 phases. The first phase, discovery, is the fact finding portion of the inquiry. In this stage, the researcher(s) collaborate with the community of participants to appreciate “positive exceptions, successes, and most vital or alive moments” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). This is the primary data collection phase, the intent is to discover what gives life to the organization, community, or individual, and to do so in a way that re-iterates the reality enacted by these successes. The second phase is dream. In this phase participants collectively envision the future they would like to see. Design, is the third phase. During this phase, participants plan for action which is based on the information collected and developed in the first two phases—the goal is to enact the possibilities.

The fourth phase is destiny. This is the portion of the inquiry where the dream phase should be realized, where the design is put into action. The four-phase process is ideally a cycle, that begins anew following the destiny stage (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2012).

As I outlined in chapter one, my research has occurred within the context of a larger research effort that is working within the realm of participatory research. I see my research as a part of this larger inquiry. Based on this context, I have focused primarily on the first phase of the appreciative inquiry cycle—discovery. I worked from the notion of appreciating the “best of what has been and what is” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005 in Nyaupane & Poudel, 2012, p. 980), to develop the interview questions I used for collecting the narratives. I substantiate this alignment with appreciative inquiry on two primary grounds: first, I start from the idea that practices of community food work cannot be explained by unified or totalizing systems like neoliberalism. Therefore, within these smaller systems, while forces described by scholars critical of neoliberal may be present, there are also differences; there are practices that are enacting realities that might be preferable to the intended and collateral realities effected by industrial and conventional food systems. I take seriously Connolly’s (2011) suggestion that there is a fissure in the finality of every critique—and that these cracks hold the potential for different, potentially positive futures. This means an ethical decision on my part to focus on the possibilities within what is working well, on assets, rather than on what is working poorly, the deficits. Second, I also take to heart Law and Urry’s (2004) supposition that:

Social science is in some measure involved in the creation of the real. There is not innocence...They help to make realities. But the question is: which realities? Which do we

want to help make more real, and which less real? How do we want to interfere (because interfere we will, one way or another)?" (p. 404)

I suggest that an appreciative approach is one way to engage in ontological politics and make "more real" the life-giving practices within an organization. There is nothing to suggest that these practices are inherently more social just or more conducive to an equitable food system, but as I will discuss in the following section, the boundaries of my case limit the participants to those working for more just and equitable food systems, and therefore, opting for a view of heterogeneity and multiplicity. I believe that there are life-giving elements at work within that are, at the very least, capable of effecting more just realities.

Narrative Environment

It is important to bring the idea of narrative environment into my methodological approach. Gubrium and Holstein (2009) have described narrative environment as "the context within which [the work of narrative construction and telling] gets done" (p. xvii). They note the importance of making some sense of the setting in which the narratives are situated. For my research, this has meant interviewing multiple people within an organization to better grasp the narratives of a single individual, and to lend the organizational narrative complexity. It has also meant that a minimal level of additional data about the locale and general context were collected. For my purposes, with my unit of observation at the organizational level (next section), I found the narrative environment significant.

Research Design

Defining the Case and Unit of Observation

As Ragin and Becker (1992) have argued, there is not a commonly understood meaning for the concept of case as used in social science research. A scholar informed by realism might

view cases as actually existing social categories that exist independent of, and prior to, the research being conducted, and that, through the study, a better understanding of the nature of the case can be developed. I draw on Platt (1992) and Law (2009) to suggest a different understanding of cases as conventions that are developed and employed by researchers to make the non-coherent more coherent. I also argue that the creation of the case and boundaries is a performative act that effectively produces that which the researcher is attempting to demarcate.

To make my research coherent, I have applied several types of conventions upon my case. First, I define my case within the central Appalachian regions of West Virginia, southwestern Virginia, and western North Carolina. Second, I have focused upon three organizations within this geographic region, one in each state, that are working on the development of alternative food systems, with an interest or emphasis on issues of community food security. For the purpose of selecting organizations that fit these bounds, I have chosen to define community food security as articulated by Abi-Nader et al. (2009), who have argued that a “whole” community food system is comprised of justice and fairness, healthy people, strong communities, sustainable ecosystems, vibrant farms, and thriving local economies. While individual practitioners may or may not be familiar with the concept of community food security, by defining their work as an element of this concept, I have made a decision to perform and assemble their work as such. Third, I have further bound my case by focusing my unit of observation at the organizational level, as constituted by appreciative narratives created by practitioners and observations of the narrative environment. The narratives were generated through an in-depth interview process which I describe in greater detail later in this chapter.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for my research is the practices articulated in the narratives of the community food security practitioners. I go back to Law's (2009) definition of practices as the "detectable and somewhat ordered sets of material-semiotic relations" (p. 1). This bears further explanation. The notion of material semiotics emerged from actor network theory, which Law (2009a) has argued might be seen as an empirical translation of poststructuralism. It is anti-essentialist. Proponents of material semiotics assert that "entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relations with other entities. In this scheme of things, entities have no inherent qualities" (Law, 1999, p. 3). To put it differently, entities are effects of the assemblages, material and semiotic, in which they are embedded. In other words, meaning is made through material-semiotic relations; it is not inherent in human and non-human objects. This means that the practices I will analyze are not constituted independently, but rather as an outcome of a network of relations between different material (human and non-human) and semiotic entities. These relations are temporary. The lines of relationships between different entities are being drawn and re-drawn, they are being done and re-done, they are citational and re-iterative—they are performative.

This leads me to greater specificity in the defining of my unit of analysis. I am particularly interested in the way that these lines are being drawn at various moments throughout the data collection and analysis process. I am not interested in these lines because they hold some capacity to explain how the world really works, but because they are the mutable, changeable, imbued with becomings. While as I noted previously, some lines are fixed and others in flux, but as Law (2008) has noted, the relationships can be different—the can become something else. It is these material-semiotic relations and their potential for difference that is my unit of analysis. I provide further detail in my section on data analysis.

Data Collection and Procedures

Participant selection. The organizational participants for this study were selected based on three primary criteria: the relationship between their work and concepts of community food security; their previous affiliation with the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP); and their geographic location within the region. Each of the three criteria for selection was given equal weight, and I briefly elaborate on each in this section. The research participants needed to be actively engaged in work that is part of the “whole” system described by Abi-Nader et al. (2009). Within the context of food systems, it was necessary that the organization be involved in working for any, or preferably several, of the following fields of practice: justice and fairness, strong communities, environmental sustainability, healthy people, thriving local economies, and vibrant farms. I made the determination of individual organizational alignment with the fields of practice based on previous interactions, mission statements, and the recommendations of community and university colleagues who are associated with the AFP. Organizations that have been involved with the AFP were given preference in the selection process. This is a) a matter of pragmatics—I have relationships with a number of individuals working for these organizations that might prove advantageous when soliciting involvement; and b) a matter of participatory ethics. In our work since 2011, AFP community partners have consistently asked for opportunities to hear and share regional stories of best practice—to better understand the work that their regional colleagues are doing. This collection of organizational narratives is one response to this request. This is in keeping with the participatory ethos of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2012). The third criterion is that of geographic location. I had a sample size of N=18—sample size was N = 18, with five, six and seven participants, in North Carolina, West Virginia, and Virginia, respectively.

Participant organizations. Due to researcher ethics and my intention to keep the interviewees identities confidential, I am not naming the individuals or organizations that I interviewed. Vignettes describing the narrative environment of each organization are in chapter five.

Interviews. In-depth semi-structured interviews were my primary method for collecting the data used to generate the practice narratives. As noted above, I used appreciative inquiry as a guide to formulate the interview questions. In my question development, I emphasized questions related to the “positive core” or “that which makes up the best of the organization and its people” (Cooperider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p. 437). To elicit in-depth responses, the interview questions were designed in an open-ended format (Seidman, 2006). I also drew upon Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional space of narrative inquiry. The authors suggests that narrative inquirers pursue questions that point the interview forward and backward (temporal), inward (“feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions” p. 50) and outward (social and physical environment), and place (“the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” p. 51). These criteria have helped me formulate the following interview questions:

Interview questions

Question	Three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)
When you wake up in the morning, what gets you excited about the work that you do with food systems?	Inward

Think about your doing work related to food/agricultural systems. Describe an “ah-ha” moment, a time when something really clicked for you.

Backward, inward

Think about your history working with your organization, what has been a key event in that experience? A peak moment? A story about something that went really well?

Backward, inward

What is it about working in (your location) that makes your food system work meaningful to you?

Place, inward

Tell me about something your organization is currently doing that you feel is really successful or that holds potential for changing your community’s food system?

Backward, forward, outward, inward

Tell me a story about a partnership (formal or informal) that you have had with another individual or organization that has gone well?

Backward, outward

If you were able to look back 20 years from now and see the lives of the people in your community, what would you like to see in them? What sort of life capabilities and capacities would you like to see?

Forward, outward

In you time doing food systems work, what political, institutional, or cultural changes have you seen that have given you hope about the future of the food system SW VA (W. NC or WV)?	Backward, forward, outward, inward
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If were able to look back five years down the road from now, what would you like to see having happened in your specific work?	Forward
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Is there anything else you would like to tell me?	N/A
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Interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to over three hours. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour. Though I originally considered possible follow-up interviews, this was not deemed necessary for an interview/interviewee. The performativity of the community food work was evident in each initial interview. For the full interview script see Appendix C.

Participant observation. These observations were conducted during the interview site-visits. The purpose of the observation was to augment the interview data with additional contextual information. The observations were recorded in field notes.

Data Analysis: Reading for Difference

Otherness is absence that is not acknowledged....Otherness cannot be brought to presence and listed. But we can hint, or we can look at other practices and notice otherness that they don't acknowledge" (Law, 2006, p. 10)

Community food work has been read in many ways. As I have indicated, prior, some read them as a response to globalization and the de-politicizing effects of neoliberalism, social and environmental injustices, while others have read them as manifestations of neoliberalism and as inherently exclusionary, alienating, and therefore socially unjust. In the previous parts of this chapter and the preceding chapter, I have laid out a case for why these particular understandings might be problematic, but again, I draw on John Law (2006) to assist me in summarizing in another way. These accounts of community food work draw heavily upon what Law has called common-sense realism. This tap-rooted-tree type of ontological understanding is presupposed by several assumptions: 1) that there exists a reality independent of human action; 2) that this reality pre-exists human attempts to know it; 3) that it is definite, (i.e. not "vague, diffuse, uncertain, elusive and/or undecided" (p. 6) and; 4) that is singular, meaning, inclusive of different ways of knowing reality (epistemology), but defensive of its singularity. The work of common-sense realist research is then to document what is "really happening," (e.g. received institutional ethnography). Drawing on the anti-essentialist anti-foundationalist thinking of theorists like Deleuze, I argue, with Law (2006), that attempts to describe a common-sense-realist reality will always fail. By bringing some things into presence, via researchers' representations, other things (the rest of the world) are made absent. The problem and implication "does not have to do with the attempt to know [the world/reality]...It lies with the failure to think through what is implied by the fact that knowing is constitutively incomplete" (p. 8).

As the common-realist assumptions might imply, most social science research is premised upon its ability to ignore what is not represented. To do research that challenges this attempt is challenging. As Law further noted, the work of much critical social science has been to bring that which has been made absent, like race, gender, sexual orientation, and class into presence. In many ways, this is the type of research I am presenting in this dissertation. The challenge is to represent the work in ways that does not pre-suppose a coherent, singular universe.

The implication for my research is twofold: first it has to do with how I have analyzed my data and second, it has to do with how I conceptualize and represent my findings. In this section, I primarily deal with the former. As Law has noted, “In much social science writing everything that fails to fit the standard package of common-sense realism is being repressed” (p. 10). Stated differently, research methods are designed to other or repress all that does not fit into the ontology of common-sense realism. For instance, consider the traditional qualitative research practice of coding for themes and patterns. This is arguably an attempt to make absent that which does not fall into the realm of common-sense realism. If coherence and definiteness cannot be drawn from the data, it is taken as an indication of poorly designed and executed research, not that the reality might be multiple and non-coherent (Mazzei, 2013; Law, 2006). As Law (2006) has noted, for empirical researchers, there is not an easy way out of this “mess;” falling far short of a prescription, Law has suggested a) that the researcher acknowledge that there is a border between what is brought into presence via representation and that which is repressed and othered, and b) that the researcher should also attempt to knowingly regulate “the traffic across the border” (p. 11). The unknowing regulation will always occur: “This is built into the logic of

othering. Most of the policing will be unwitting. So the question is: what should or would we like to try to regulate more knowingly? What would we like to try to make manifest?” (p. 11).

I bring this challenge to my approach to data analysis. Rather than analyzing the data for that which does exist, or that which can be known, I instead analyzed it for the becomings, for the new lines of flight, for “the here and now in terms of somewhere else” (Lury & Wakeford, p. 13) To accomplish this analysis, I employed a method of reading for difference (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006). This over-arching process was supported by reading data as transgressive and rhizomatic. In the following section, I describe all three approaches.

Reading for difference. I draw the practice of reading for difference from the work of Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006), who drew upon Deleuze and Guattari. Like John Law (2004; 2009a; 2009b), Gibson-Graham were concerned with the overarching theories that so easily and completely explain away certain phenomenon. The example of neoliberalism explaining away activist and community food work would be an example. To trouble this way of thinking, they noted their interest in thinking overdetermination. They (2006) described it thus:

The practice of thinking overdetermination as a mode of ontological reframing simply encourages us to deny these forces [i.e.. neoliberalism] a fundamental, structural, or universal reality and to instead identify them as contingent outcomes of ethical decisions, political projects, and sedimented localized practices, continually pushed and pulled by other determinations. (p. xxxi)

A mechanism for thinking overdetermination is the practice Gibson-Graham have referred to as reading for difference. This is a technique of “uncovering what is possible but obscured from view” (p. xxxi). They have described it further:

Rather than attending to the regularities of discourse, overt or covert as these may be, an overdeterminist reading fractures and disperses the object of attention, dislocating it from essentialist structures of determination. Reading for contingency rather than necessity situates essentialized and universalized forms of being like ‘the market’ or ‘the self-interested subject’ in specific geographical and historical locations, releasing them from an ontology of structure and essence.

So again, here is an argument for looking at smaller, local systems, and multiplicity as a basis for empiricism, rather than larger explanatory theories of structures. They continue:

Techniques of rereading adopt a stance of curiosity, rather than recognition, toward claims of truth. Rereading offers us something new to work with, especially useful if we are trying to produce raw materials for other (political) practices. Possibilities multiply along with uncertainties, and future possibilities become more viable by virtue of already being seen to exist, albeit only in the light of a differentiating imagination. The practice we call ‘reading for difference rather than dominance’ has been our staple and most useful starting place...part of deconstruction’s subversive ontological project of ‘radical heterogeneity’...(p. xxxi)

While this technique clearly has guided their work—as is evidenced in their empirical practice(s)—Gibson-Graham have left the methodological operationalization open-ended. In the next three sub-sections, I work through two ideas that I have found useful.

Thinking and reading data. It would be a failure on my part to move forward with my data analysis viewing data as an accurate representation of reality. As I have noted previously, the data that I am collecting has a performativity about it. The narratives are those affections that have been effected through the collision of affect and human bodies. The stories do not represent

a totalized or complete reality, but, rather, the performance of a singular reality—components of larger and smaller assemblages. The social science of common-sense realism privileges totalized and singular descriptions of a coherent world, but the rhizomatic nature of multiplicities evades these kinds of explanations. Accordingly, I need another way of making sense of data, or a way to plug my assemblage into the qualitative machine (St. Pierre, 1997).

To put this another way, recall the Deleuze and Guattarian (1980/1987) notion of the subjectless/objectless book from Chapter Three. A book in and of itself has no meaning, it is through reading that meaning is made. The meaning making is immanent. It does not emanate from an outside place of transcendence, it is made relationally through the ways that concepts are connected, through the assembled material-semiotic relationships. So in this way, reading can occur from a multiplicity of directions and ways. Reading can be done through received sedimented ontological notions, through concepts derived from strong theories and common sense realism, or through many, many other possible ontologies and realities. Data can be read and thought, then, in a vast array of ways—through the received notions of qualitative order and coherence, or through ways it has othered.

Data as transgressive and rhizomatic. Reading through a poststructuralist lens, St. Pierre (1997) noted two primary problems with received ideas about qualitative data. First, data must be translated into words to be interpreted. In order to be considered data, it must pass through some form of textuality. Accordingly, all that is non-representational is excluded. Recall that Deleuze referred to that which defies representation as affect (in Siegworth, 2005). St. Pierre (1997) lists three types of data that fall into this category: emotional data, dream data, and sensual data. In her ethnographic work, she found that these types of data “exploded all over” her study (p. 179). This data was “uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category” (p. 179).

The second problem with data is that the linearity of the methodologies used for collecting, analyzing, and presenting findings. In her dissertation work, she found that the ordering became jumbled and non-linear—like a rhizome. New thoughts and/or new data emerged in the middle of one stage, which would set off a new line of flight, re-drawing the assemblage of her research. In spite of this rhizomatic quality, the qualitative research genre still required linearity, a boundary which her data transgressed. Rather than acquiescing, St. Pierre has argued that a new way of thinking about data is needed for research that plugs into poststructuralist thought. She called this type of data transgressive data.

Rhizoanalysis. Drawing on Deleuze (and Guattari), some researchers have used various processes of rhizoanalysis to analyze data. Waterhouse (2011) has used the term “(non)method” to describe the approach, as the title of “method” would imply a fixity that would defy the open contingent nature of a rhizome. Thinking in terms of rhizomes is a way to palpate and read practices for differences. Rhizoanalysis might be described as plugging data into the rhizome-machine, which was described via six principles in the previous chapter: connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography, and decalomania (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). The analytical question is: how can the data be read and thought, through these principles? Waterhouse (2011) described her experience with reading data as a rhizome,

Every time I looked at my data, thinking happened differently, that is different connections were taking place. These connections were created as an effect of plugging the researcher (a reading-analyzing-desiring-machine) into the data-text (an asignifying machine) within the context of completely different rhizoanalytic events; ‘ever new differently distributed ‘heres’ and ‘nows.’” (p. 129, citing Deleuze)

Thinking data in this way allows for difference to emerge; instead of applying the linear constraints of the tap-rooted tree to the data, a multiplicity, an assemblage emerges.

Affect as an element of analysis. Transgressive data is important to analysis at this stage. In positivist and post-positivist research, the data is analyzed along lines of sameness. The researcher uses processes of deduction to create themes and patterns (Coleman and Ringrose, 2013). In received conceptions of “rigorous” qualitative research, the lines of thought can be retraced and attributed to what MacLure (2013) called representational and hierarchical logic. If a true knowledge can be discovered, this system of logic would withstand considerable scrutiny. But, with anti-foundational ontologies that call into the question the veracity of such claims, the system of logic is troubled. This is what St. Pierre (1997) was reacting against with her interest in non-representational and transgressive data. Deleuze argued that “Philosophy does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 82). Here he was describing what he would term “affects.” If creating new thought and new concepts of difference is the task of philosophy, as I suggested in the previous chapter, Deleuze’s argument is suggestive of the importance of affect in palpating these differences. Accordingly, I argue that reading for difference requires affect in the data analysis toolbox.

Coding strategies. This position on data analysis bears on the process of coding. Drawing on a similar assemblage of thought, MacClure (2013) came to the conclusion that, on one level, an appropriate coding process might result in what resembles a curiosity cabinet of found wonders— of objects that intensified and exhilarated the senses. This does not mean doing away with the tree-like coding processes of received qualitative research processes. Some elements may be contained within a rhizomatic coding process that makes space for affective

analysis. After ruminating on the idea of post-structural/Deleuzian coding, MacLure suggested the following:

Perhaps we could think of coding, then, as just such an experiment with order and disorder, in which provisional and partial taxonomies are formed, but are always subject to change and metamorphosis, as new connections spark among words, bodies, objects, and ideas. Such a conceptualization would recognize coding, not as a static representation of a world laid out before us on the operating table of analysis, but as an open-ended and ongoing practice of making sense. It would also recognize that the gaps and intervals that we make as we cut and code the flow of difference are possible openings for wonder. (p. 181)

This perspective may sound out-of-place and lacking in rigor, but I want to suggest that such demands are rooted in a common-sense realism that seeks to make coherence out of the non-coherent.

In my research and data analysis, I did use coding techniques that borrowed elements from the logic of more traditional conceptions of qualitative research. I address this process on a different level in the following chapter, but I want to briefly cover my general approach to the data.

After transcribing the interviews, I worked through each narrative, reading for the interesting, remarkable, and curious—Eakle (2007) and Waterhouse (2011) referred to this as “data walking.” This description was appropriate. It was a process of moving through the data and reading for that which was transgressive. This meant attempting to set aside the strong urge to trace theories over the data as I went. Using the qualitative software, ATLAS.ti, I coded for those points that moved me: using codes like Ah!, interesting, and grating. I imagined that these

codes would be useful in their compartmentalization, but as I moved on to the next stage, I found that the transgressive/affective data was compelling as a whole, regardless of the exact affection that it effected during my readings. Most of the data that I coded in this manner were short narratives, or, following Michael (2012), anecdotal narratives. After coding at this primary level, I moved into a secondary level of analysis that I describe in the following section.

Reporting Findings: Cartography/Mapping Narrative Rhizomatic Assemblages

Once I had coded the data affectively/transgressively, I moved into a form of analysis that scholars like Alverman (2000) and Waterhouse (2011) have referred to as rhizoanalysis. The (non)method is a plugging into the Deleuze and Guattarian (1980/1987) concept of the rhizome. Recall their emphasis on mapping over tracing. The common-sense realism of positivism would focus on tracing--using categories and sameness to trace new points on old lines. Mapping is "...open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation" (p. 12). I explore this concept of rhizoanalysis in greater depth in the next chapter (Chapter Five), but here I want to hone in on several points, particularly as it relates to the mechanistic way that I worked with the narratives.

As Deleuze and Guattari alluded in the previous section, rhizoanalysis is about making connections—connecting and mapping the data immanently, via affect and that which is transgressive. This meant stepping aside from the large macro theories that tend to macro-structure the realities.

As I worked with the short anecdotal and affectively-selected narratives, I did not struggle to make connections between them. I could read one piece which would send my thought on a line of flight, but often, not to one other excerpt, but to multiple. This really

underscored Deleuze and Guattari's notion that rhizomal maps be detachable and reversible. The greater difficulty was with the idea of "susceptibil[ity] to constant modification," the capacity to be "torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation" (p. 12). Originally, I thought that I would draw clear connections between "data points," but working with the narratives made me take seriously the ability for the data to be reworked immanently by the reader. Any attempt to map the data as I had originally planned seemed to fix and sediment the narratives, closing off lines of flight in a way that seemed to imply a singular, clear, and coherent reality. I explore this idea in greater detail in chapter five.

In the process of walking, working, and circling the data, I eventually began to thread pieces together. I worked from single moments of considerable affective intensity and launched, as if from a Deleuze and Guattarian middle, into the data. I would move from the initial chunk of narrative to another narrative, connecting them immanently and affectively in ways that were often transgressive and beyond simple representation. Again, I used ATLAS.ti to mechanistically connect the data. The program contains a networking feature that allows the user to map connections between different data points. Often the maps would move out in multiple directions. Most of the maps contained between 20-30 anecdotal narratives. After mapping the whole of these anecdotes, I then traced a single line through the rhizome connecting the data in a linear fashion. Though this was not my first choice, I did not develop an alternative method. The data was too extensive to condense it to one visual, concept-type map on a single page of paper. Drawing on the work of Kathleen Stewart (2007), I employed a modified, more explicitly narrative approach that I explain in greater detail in the following chapter. The resulting approach to analysis is one of immanence, which is also developed further in Chapter Five. In a very brief summary, the virtue of this final form of reporting the data is that it is a) a mentally

digestible form, b) it “polices” the border of representation and absencing by bringing in large anecdotes, and c) it is an immanently open format that allows the reader to plug into the data—it is immediately and immanently reworkable, susceptible to constant modification, which makes possible new lines of thought and flight, and, ultimately, a reading of difference.

Returning to Praxis and Possibilities

Before moving on from this section, I want to summarize the case I have been making though the last several sections. My overarching aim in conducting this research is not to just work with the philosophies of those like Deleuze, Guattari, Law and others, it is to explore ways of reading for heterogeneity and, hopefully, open up different possibilities for more just and equitable community food work in central Appalachia. To this end, I am acutely interested in the ways that new lines of thought might be opened. As a result, some of my method runs against received methodological approaches to qualitative research. This is not to be obtuse, or even contrarian (although both seem to have their places), but, rather, in the genuine hopes that some “potentially positive futures barely visible in the present order of things,” might be imagined, strengthened, and “moved along” (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2009, p. 342).

Validity

In the type of research Law (2006) described as “common-sense realism,” the concept of validity has traditionally held significant import. It is through validity that the findings of a particular research project are considered to be truly reflective of the reality that is out-there. The concept of validity is tied to the ontological foundations of common-sense realism that were described over this and the preceding chapter. But, perhaps of most import is the idea of coherence. The construct of validity necessitates a certain level of coherence. Traditional approaches to empirical research have left little room for multiplicity and non-coherence. If

researchers were to describe a non-coherent reality (as did Law and Singleton, 2005), the assumption is that their research approach lacked validity, not that reality might be multiple and heterogeneous.

Given this situation, validity might be construed as the ability to follow the “trail” of the researcher—that the general approach might be replicable (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). As Coleman and Ringrose (2013) have noted, the researcher is always “entangled within the assemblages they seek to study” (p. 6). True replication, a characteristic esteemed by positivists and post-positivists, assumes a relatively immutable reality. The researcher is then one variable in a possibly unknown, but definite entity. To take the multiplicity of reality seriously means that all variables are at once indefinite and yet dependent upon one another. My analysis of the narratives and observations is an immanent becoming—a temporal assemblage of that particular point in time. I note this to suggest that my audit trail will never allow the reader or critic to determine whether or not I have accurately reflected reality, but, rather, it might provide a window into the way that I have performed the research at hand. Accordingly, as a method of accountability and traceability, I have, through this chapter and the next, documented the theoretical suppositions underpinning my transgressive and affective analysis processes.

Researcher Ethics and Reflexivity

The powerful person would seem to have a good deal at stake in suppressing or denying his awareness of the personal reality of others; power seems to engender a kind of willed ignorance, a moral stupidity, about the inwardness of others, hence of oneself. (Rich, 1976, p. 65)

This section is an attempt to challenge the willed ignorance and moral stupidity that Adrienne Rich (1976) has aptly suggested power, like that of academic research, engenders. In

the previous pages, I have argued that social science research has the capacity to make more real certain realities. This has a certain self-importance and authority about it—the idea that somehow the researcher can conjure up new realities. Though this language is useful for speaking of ontology, I find myself with Urry and Law (2004) when they traded the rhetoric of making realities for that of interfering with realities. As they said, “...because interfere we will, one way or another” (p. 404). In the process of doing social science research, some knowledges and personal realities are made absent while others are brought into presence. This act is one of power and consequence and one that bears careful consideration. In a previous section, I discussed the importance of knowingly patrolling the border of presence/absence. In this section I will briefly elaborate on my ideas about what sorts of concepts should guide the patrol and, specifically, discuss how this might impact my dissertation research.

Early critical theorists were guided by their interest in human emancipation (Bauman, 2012). To summarize very briefly, the idea was that humans were dominated in material and corporeal ways that kept them from their full potential. Freire (1972) used the idea of becoming more fully human and argued that those who are oppressed by other humans are denied this capability. The work of post-modern and post-structural thinkers has troubled the transcendent normative foundation of emancipation. From where does it derive? For Deleuze, ethics took the place of a transcendent morality. The former are immanent to specific practices and events, while the latter is thought to arrive from outside and above (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). So again, there is an interest, not in the overarching ways of seeing the world, but in the heterogeneity of specific and local moments. This does not disavow an interest in force and power and the way they move through social relations—it nuances it. Quoting Deleuze, Hickey-Moody and Malins noted,

Deleuze's approach to ethics is thus concerned with evaluation 'what we do, [and] what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved', and in relation to the kinds of potentials and capacities that those ways of existing affirm. With such an evaluation, it is not what a body 'is' that matters, but what it is capable of, and in what ways its relations with other bodies diminish or enhance those capacities. (in Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 11)

What it is that diminishes or enhances the capacities and potentials is immanent to a given matter or practice. For my research this raises the question: how are my practices interfering with the world so that the capacities and potentials of the participants are enhanced, rather than diminished? While the details of this question might only be answered in a given event, there are certain ways I can reflexively prepare myself. I discuss them below.

I acknowledge the privilege that I bring with me when I enter the field. I grew up in a white-collar middle-class home in the rural suburbia of the Midwestern U.S. Between my class privilege, my white skin, my male gender, and a Christian faith, I was able to complete a four-year college degree with little financial or social worry. Working from the same privilege, I was able to leisurely and casually decide to attend graduate school, twice—first for my Master of Science degree, and now in pursuit of my PhD. This was not because of some inherent quality within me, but because institutional systems are set-up to work best for people with my privilege. I share this to qualify my knowledge—because regardless of its contingency and Deleuze's philosophy of thinking, it still effects knowledge. It is knowledge as much as any other knowledge, but it happens to be a "regime of truth" that is socially valorized which "induces regular effects of power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131), which in turn enables the re-production of the valorization.

As a researcher, I carry this view of knowledge and power with me. It helps provide some balance to Gibson-Graham and Roelvink's (2009) mandate for the researchers to "read the potentially positive futures barely visible in the present order of things, and to imagine how to strengthen and move them along" (p.342). At best, this is translational work—it is reading. The concrete and material work of world-making is being done by these practitioners, not by researchers like me. The possibilities are already there—at best I might re-translate their day-to-day work in a way that makes them visible in a new way.

The appreciative inquiry approach is, ideally, a way to keep my knowledge/power accountable. The approach creates space for the generation of knowledges that "give life" to the organization, rather than my incomplete knowledge that might interfere in a foreclosing manner. Appreciative inquiry gives the participants space to share their work in a way that is unconditionally affirming. This creates an opening and basis for better understanding the capacities and potentials of individuals and organizations, and how they might be strengthened.

CHAPTER 5: NARRATIVE CARTOGRAPHIES: BECOMING DATA, BECOMING ANALYSIS

Introduction

When I set out on this process of research design, data collection, and analysis, I did not know where it would lead. In keeping with the nature of a Deleuzian (non)method (Waterhouse, 2011), the plane ahead of me seemed open, smooth, and free of guiding grids—at least in a relative sense. I was drawing on particular research questions, places, and people, but without the ontological guide of common-senses realism (Law, 2008), the terminus of my research was unclear. The process that I lay out in this chapter has been an unfolding, one, I believe, that still has an indefinite terminus. Drawing on the concept of the rhizome, what I describe in this chapter is a middle—the point of arrival is multiple and I hope to unfold a departure point that is also many.

To frame this chapter, I return to my original research questions: given the increasing scholarly focus on neoliberalism, its attendant material and corporeal effects, and the rural context of central Appalachia, I seek to explore:

- 1) the ways in which practitioners and those involved in community-based initiatives perform community food work, and
- 2) the ways in which this work and the component practices might be read as heterogeneous and imbued with new possibilities and the capacity to make a reality different than the dominating and totalizing realities of neoliberalization.

It is important to note, as I have elsewhere, that these questions are set within a larger inquiry into the praxis implications of reading for difference. Methodologically speaking, what is it that scholars and practitioners might take up and think with on a conceptual and practical level? In this chapter I attend to these questions, both specifically, but also as a complete set as my analysis moves through the questions from several directions.

Assemblages, Analysis, and Meaning

Before I move directly into the questions and analysis, I want to return to Deleuze and Guatarri's (1980/1987) idea of assemblage. While the concept translates from French to English as akin to arrangement/arranging/assembling...assemblage, it is the concept that an entity, with the capacity for self-sustaining, does not, in actuality, pre-exist the current moment, but is both being assembled and becoming an assemblage at a given point in chronological time (Wise, 2005). The entity is an effect of the assemblage, or to be more specific, as Delanda (2006) has argued, the entity and its component parts have a reciprocal relationship of effect. To use an example, at this given moment, I, Phil, am an effect of material and semiotic relationships: of chemical processes, language, histories, places, people, etc. —relationships that could be different—so more so than others. But because of the swarming and shifting contingency, I, or any assemblage, is not a fixed being or entity, but a becoming.

This brings me to a less perfect example of an assemblage, a doctoral dissertation—an assemblage of multiplicities, but one that requires a certain level of fixity or territorialization. The genre assumes a certain level of epistemological certainty, a minimum amount of common-sense realism. In this chapter, I lay out four cartographies, mappings of rhizomes, frozen on paper. But rather than staid and inflexible, I ask the reader to again consider Deleuze and

Guattari's (1980/1987) description of processes through which meaning might be made from a book,

There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it was made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. (p. 4)

The assemblage, the book, has as much meaning as the circuit, the other assemblages, into which it is plugged. The meaning is not intrinsic—it is made through connections. You, the reader, the circuit, bring the meaning to this assemblage of data I share in this chapter. I have generated the cartographies with such a sympathetic reader in mind.

In this way, the narratives or data was/is made over again, a minimum of three times. First, the raw narrative data was “a story worth telling” (Michael, 2012). These were stories that affectively moved the interviewee. They were stories gathered from an excess of difference (May, 2005), because, much like the Deleuzian book reader, the teller gathered the meaning from resonances between assemblages—through connections. Second, as the researcher, I attempted to code the data via affect—to roam through the data, allowing myself to be moved and startled by the narratives. In a process that stuttered and stammered (Albrecht-Crane, 2005), I followed rhizomes as they moved through the data. I felt the pull of grids that my common sense realism attempted to place on the data, but endeavored to allow myself to think in terms of rhizomes.

Third, as the reader, you will make the data once again—producing connections within the narratives, but pulling from other planes, places, assemblages.

I connect each of these three makings of the narratives and data as corresponding to each of my three research questions. The performance and performativity of the practitioners (question one) is a becoming present in stories that they told, in the way that they assembled and made. The heterogeneity of the practices of community food work (question two) comes through in the rhizoanalysis, the cartography, the narrative mappings, and the dialogue between the different excerpted stories. The praxis implications (question three) are perhaps most tangible in the ways that the reader plugs into the rhizomous assemblage of narratives. Where do the lines of flight carry the reader?

The remainder of this chapter is composed of five components, developed in relation to my research questions. Questions one and two have, in places, become indistinguishable to me. They fold into one another. My primary analysis corresponding to the first questions comes in the form of the cartographies. I first suggest possible ways of entering into these maps. Second, I provide some context for the cartographies with vignettes of each organization and some of the distinct individuals therein. The third part of this section is composed of four cartographies, each separated by a brief interlude. In the fourth major section, I develop some additional analysis and reflection on the thought and process of creating the cartographies/rhizoanalysis. The final section of this chapter is composed of condensed, visual mappings of each narrative assemblage.

Guide for plugging into the mappings

In my education as a scholar, much of the training I have retained is directly linked to representational thinking and common-sense realism—the ongoing task of interpreting the meaning of texts of all kinds. As I have suggested in previous chapters (3 and 4) this kind of

thinking relies on strong theories, homogeneity, and totalities, which have the effect of closing down a certain amount of creativity and possibility. To read the narratives for heterogeneity (question two), required me to employ a different way of approaching data, one that allowed me as the researcher and reader to slow my “quick jump” to representational thinking (Stewart, 2007).

As I worked through the narratives, reading for difference, reading for affect movement and curiosity, for the transgressive (St. Pierre, 1997), I realized that for this approach to really point towards heterogeneity, I would need a different way of presenting the data. As a (non) method, rhizoanalysis did not leave me with a prescriptive way of presenting the data, nor should it have. Some of the better examples I had found of rhizoanalysis (Waterhouse, 2011; Eakle, 2007; Leander and Rowe, 2006) did not seem directly applicable to my context and questions. Perhaps, the only form in rhizoanalysis is that it has no form. Rather, it is an “animation” of Deleuze and Guattarian thinking. It is “A way of ‘bending their work to [our] own project’ while, at the same time, allowing our work to be ‘reoriented’ by theirs” (Grossberg in Leander & Rowe, 2006, p. 434). Sitting on the conducted-side of my rhizoanalysis, this has description has been particularly apt. It is a plugging into the Deleuzian assemblage; an assemblage that is becoming—filled with an ever becoming multiplicity of other assemblages, and therefore very few method prescriptions.

As I muddled through possible ways of presenting the rhizoanalysis I re-encountered Kathleen Stewart’s (2007) book, *Ordinary Affects*. In this short book, she weaves together a series of stories about the ordinary and mundane, gathered from her personal experience. Read in some ways, they might seem disjunctive—various short vignettes cobbled together—but read as a larger text, with each mini-story as part of larger assemblage, the effect was a slowing of the

jump to representational thinking. As a reader, I found it difficult to get past the heterogeneity of her stories. Like a rhizome, I could read them, making connections, but not in a particularly linear fashion. My thoughts raced around through each story.

I had encountered Stewart's book early in the planning of my research. I dismissed the style as something reserved for artists, people with skills in English and Literature. But as I moved through the narratives I had gathered, I found this particular form of mapping to seem more and more reasonable. As Stewart has argued (2007) there is something about the unfinished quality of the ordinary, the singular, that "...is not so much a deficiency as a resource, like a fog of immanent forces still moving even though so much has already happened and there seems to be plenty that's set in stone" (p. 127). While these stories may not seem as immediately ordinary as those composed by Stewart, I suggest that they fall well within the auspices of "ordinary" community food work described by Slocum (2007).

In relation to my research questions (one and two), the cartographies below simultaneously describe the performativity of community food work, in their singularities, but also describe the heterogeneity of the work through the lines of connection between stories. Following Stewart (2007),

My effort here is not to finally "know" them - to collect them into a good enough story of what's going on- but to fashion some form of address that is adequate to their form; to find something to say about ordinary affects by performing some of the intensity and texture that makes them habitable and animate. This means building an idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities. (pp. 4-5)

This is the form and function that I undertook with the development of the following cartographies. The stories in the singularities do not illuminate "what is really happening," or

allow the reader to “really understand what someone did.” It is my hope they might instead raise questions of how things might be made differently.

So, as you read these mappings, I suggest reading them like Deleuze and Guattari’s book with no intrinsic meaning. The stories were not connected to illuminate theoretical notions and connect them to on-the ground practices, but as a point of affective engagement, movement and curiosity.

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times.
(Deleuze & Guatarri, 1980/1987, p. 161)

Research context

One Organization

This organization is located in the largest of the three localities he visited. It is a small city, but it is constant movement. It has been the center of significant development around local food and agriculture. Like most other towns he's been to in Appalachia, this one is set amongst beautiful old mountains.

He makes several trips to visit this organization. It does not have a central office. In fact, it has no paid staff. Though, like the other two organization profiled here, they have non-profit status, they seem to be much more like an alliance of different organizations and individuals.

Though he was familiar with the organization, had been for several years, he realized that he really didn't get it. The organization has primarily focused on urban agriculture and they have small garden plots around town. They once ran a number of the plots, or at least played a significant role in coordinating garden activities, but the current work is shifting beyond the gardens.

He follows a winding road through a neighborhood of old, large, well-kept houses and those with smaller bungalows that have been remodeled to a chic local aesthetic. At the end of the road he spots the garden—the flagship plot.

It's July and the garden is full of life, vegetables, some bees, some poultry. There are a couple of nice storage buildings, a beautiful pavilion with an outdoor kitchen, and a little cob shelter with a wood-fired oven.

He meets the executive director at a food co-op. She eats lunch with her granddaughter as they talk. Eventually, her granddaughter's mother picks her up and the two of them set off on a drive around town. They go from garden to garden, through gentrified neighborhoods, past public housing developments, through older wealthy neighborhoods. Some gardens are covered in weeds, some are beautifully kept. He's finally getting it—seeing the gardens—he can make some sense of the organization.

And she says,

“...all of our public housing is under attack. It's all going to section 8. It is CRAZY, like I can't even hardly wrap my head around it.”

Like the other two organizations profiled here, this group's work extends beyond agriculture and food. Here it seems more like a tool for doing community development around issues of race and social justice. Because this organization functions like an alliance of more singular organizations, it seems like there is a flexibility here that the other organizations do not have. They can follow their own path, while still remaining loosely connected to bigger organizing concepts.

Over the course of several visits, he meets with the operator of a multi-plot urban farm, a worker-owner of a cooperative mobile fresh food market, a founding member who facilitates a

community garden with her husband, and an elder in a neighborhood community association that ran one of the first gardens planted by this non-profit organization.

Two Organization

He is driving toward Shelbyville, a small rural town that is very much in the mountains. On the way he is listening to a dry podcast and misses his turn off of the main road. He was going to have a long drive on country roads, regardless. He'll get there anyway.

The town is relatively small, it has a under 4,000 people, but at that size, it's the largest in the county. The organization he's coming to work with is faith-based and recently celebrated its 50-year anniversary. The organization has an office in an old house in the city-center part of the town. It shares the half-vacant downtown with two other organizations that are doing similar work in the area—faith-based and poverty-oriented.

This particular organization does county-level community development work. For decades, they have repaired homes, run thrift stores and a food pantry, provided emergency financial assistance, as well as operated a seasonal garden market where individuals could sell excess garden produce on consignment. As the national and regional interest in local food has grown over the past several years, so has the amount of organizational time and resources directed toward the market.

The house that holds the organizations office has not been kept like a home. Gone was the yard. In its place a large empty asphalt parking lot. The rest of the block is composed of old, brick storefront buildings.

He walks into the building and is greeted by the receptionist at the front desk. When he had called several weeks earlier to try and reach the executive director, she was hesitant to transfer him to her line until he told her his institutional affiliation. (Later, as he interviewed the long-time receptionist, he realized that she deals with a steady stream of people with an equally steady stream of material needs, which might have affected her reticence.)

The small waiting area in the office had a bulletin board covered with flyers and brochures from different government assistance agencies and faith-based organizations. A side table was full of neat stacks of similar materials.

In preparing for his visit, he contacted the executive director of the organization. She helped make a few interview connections and had a list of other leads. A second connection within the organization had an additional list.

Unlike the other organizations he worked with, many of his interview leads were turning out to be dead ends--even those guaranteed to be sure-fire connections. By the end, he found the final group of interviewees to be fascinating, but the curt and evasive responses to his phone inquiries was unsettling him in his positionality as a university-based researcher.

In this process, the researcher talks with the executive director, a long-time office manager who incidentally runs several of the major programs, a consignment farmers market manager, a farmer, a pastor, and a founding member—a retired Extension agent.

He is getting the impression that this organization is a fixture in the local community—it is embedded. Some of the local people he interviews grew up volunteering through the organization—it's like it has always been there.

Three Organization

Right off the interstate—easy enough. It's a large non-descript, newly built brick office building, tucked in with all of hotels, gas stations, and eateries he expects to find an interstate exit.

Because he is a few minutes early, he sits in his car and finishes listening to an interview on NPR—the interviewer is talking to the boss of a reporter that was beheaded last week. Interviews make him nervous and this doesn't seem to help.

Inside the building, he sees a sign indicating that the organization's office is to the left. He finds the non-descript door and slowly enters. Inside there are numerous cubicles. All of them are empty. This organization's work must really ebb and flow with the growing season. Everybody is out in the field.

There is a large display that holds professional-quality glossy color brochures related to the numerous programs of the organization. He grabs a couple and leafs through them. In one occupied side room, he finds a secretary who points him toward the executive director's office.

Mountains really do make a difference in travel times. He had thought it would only take him a few minutes to get to his next interview, but it turns out that it is in a more remote part of the region. How does one organization like this work with so many people when the geography is so considerable? Over the course of the interviews, he never answers this question.

In addition to the director, he meets with several agricultural and food system service providers, a communications and funding strategist and a logistics expert at a food aggregation hub. If Organization One is like an alliance of different organizations, this organization seemed like an alliance of uniquely skilled individuals working under the auspice of one vision and mission. Each person he talked to had a highly-specific expertise and background that overlapped little with that of the other interviewees—but rather than seeming fractured, this seemed to work for the organization. They could cover more ground, provide further-reaching services, and generally broaden their impact.

Cartographies

1. Cartography - Addiction

Farming is an addiction

Farming is an addiction. I was raised on a farm and I am always looking for ways: How can I better my family and myself? You know, I am not afraid of work. My family is not either. We're not lazy people. We may not be the smartest people, but we sure aren't lazy people. And so it's that drive that I want to better my family, so when I see an opportunity—that I can raise enough tomatoes and peppers for us to eat. Cause, there are a lot of people out there who don't want to do the work that we will, and we can make the most out of that. So, I see it as a way of life and as a way to better my family.

Insurance

...when you look at again the employment opportunities in this community, it's very limited and most of them are minimum wage, not a lot of opportunity for folks. A lot of older...the senior population is high and they're on fixed incomes. The market is a source of additional income for a lot of our folks. Now it [is] open to anybody, not just low income folks can participate, but open to anybody. ...I know we've had some of the farmers or gardeners say they use the money they earn in the summer at the market to help pay winter utility bills. I remember several, three or four years ago, there was a lady who was a phenomenal baker, she just made some incredible things. And she sold them at the market that summer and made, and this place is such a blessing, she said I'm able to pay for my daughter's dental work. Her daughter had to have some extensive dental work done, and of course they had no dental insurance. And she was able to earn money to pay for that, and so it is an income opportunity for folks in the community.

Seeds

If you did it by participants, we have 137 participants right now that are bringing things into the market, but when you look at the volume, the volume goes to the top 10 producers. The little lady who brings in a bucket of tomatoes to me, will do that twice a year, and whatever little money that she gets, 80 percent of that, she is very happy. She has money to buy some seeds for her garden for next year...plus, she has the fulfilment of doing something.

A commercial vegetable farm

I can say over the last six or seven years, we've probably have somewhere around 400 local people come and work the day or work two days or work half a day and just can't cut it. Don't want to do it, and it's not that they can't; I feel like a lot of it is that they feel like they're above it somehow. They feel like maybe, "I don't want to do this farm work. I'm not digging this ditch. Come on. I don't have to do this. I'm whatever I am. I'm not Hispanic."

Starve

It is ridiculous now, yeah, because the restrictions are so ... and I completely understand their needs to be immigration reform or immigration whatever, and I don't go there politically, and I can't go there politically, simply because I've been on farms in California, I've been on farms in Florida, I've been on my own farm, I've been on farms in every state in between. I've been on farms in Mexico, but I've been on farms in this country, from one to the other, year round, whether it be vegetables, cattle, sheep, chickens, whatever; if they weren't here, we would starve.

Three times

And it was just at that time that we were coming along, you know, the last thing we wanted to especially with people of color, is agriculture. So there was that whole shift with that as well. People of color did not want to grow food—because agriculture has been so devalued, but also most people of color have a history of growing food for privileged people.

So, anyway, the [new community association in neighborhood of color] and the garden club we decided, “we are gonna meet and focus on their 501©(3).” We sat down and we wrote it together. This is how we work. Just like we wrote grants together. This is your part of the grant, [new association]. This is our part of the grant. This is how were going to work together. But, then, there we submitted the grants, and that’s when the funders are like, “what you mean [new association] is gonna make the decisions?” I thought that’s what you’ll wanted, that’s what I interpret empowerment to be. I don’t understand what you’re interpreting different. But this is what empowerment is. You know we’re not doing a handout, or doing a hand-up.

...so anyway, the IRS denied them three times—three fucking times. And each time, we took it back, and each time I did the research on why the IRS was denying them, and gave cases where the IRS had given 501©(3)s to organizations like [new association]. They denied them one time because they didn’t have a budget. No nonprofit submits with the budget. That’s the whole point of becoming... They did it because they didn’t have a budget, and how are you going to raise funds? Grant writing, I think that’s what nonprofits do! I mean it was SO racist. So apparently racist. The third time they got it. So, how do you have you tell that in a story? How do you tell that when you say, “oh, we’re really not racist.” That was institutional racism and classism.

When there are tons of nonprofits, associations that are nonprofits, why would the IRS deny you? Is the first thing that we put in our opening: [new association] blah blah blah... We are considered the oldest African-American intact neighborhood in [particular area]. “Oh, you all want to... Oh... Oh...huh?” You see what I’m saying?

A seed in the ground

I keep saying ourselves because ... Yes, it does take all groups of people because we all live on the same planet, right? We all need the same things to survive, right? When there’s been a certain group, my group, that has been stripped over hundreds of years of being able to do that for themselves to now we’re at the point where you can’t get a mother fucker to put a seed in the ground. You know what I’m saying? I’m sorry.

Pause button

We have a movement already of people, more a stronger entrepreneurial spirit, a lot of focus on that. There’s definitely still a segment of the population that’s being left out of that whole renaissance. I know it’ll just create the same damn problems all over again if we don’t stop, hit the pause button and go wait. Let’s make sure these folks catch up.

Make that shift

The reason why you only have a little bit of cooperatives that’s working here in the United States is because for one, most of them are just for one particular group of people. Social class and as

far as race goes. That's for one. Two...It's not too many people want to make that shift. You know what I'm saying?

Get the fuck out of the way

You got some white supremacy groups that are definitely against what's going on, because Jackson is predominately black. It's not that many people there but you have this movement that the white supremacy groups has labeled the New Africa. They got Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama and Georgia, like the whole South. They got faces of different black political leaders that have come and gone. They're afraid. Like, "If we don't stop this, they going to take over and they going to la, la, la, la, la." It's like, "Look. Y'all would rather continue seeing us kill each other? Y'all rather continue to see us move like this?" We trying to say that, "Look. Fuck it. Y'all don't ... We can do for ourselves, just get the fuck out the way."

A garden

I: The whole USDA has been subsidizing conventional corporate agriculture for decades, for decades. You just shift that money. You know, this is another thing! You see, space this is how deeply rooted it is in stuff...and this is like the gangsters... You remember when Obama gone to office it was in the first two years Michelle had a garden...

Then they put a garden, I don't know if you followed it, at the USDA office...Michelle is bringing a chef and all that...

They fucking silenced her. Did you notice that?

Phil: yeah, it really hasn't been in the news really. You're right.

I...They silenced her within a year. They let her have her say, by the third year, she was silenced, dude. Michelle does not say anything anymore. Did you notice that?

Resources

I am charged with raising general awareness about the organization and communicating plainly the way we talk, and also charged with raising money. As you know, I'm nonprofit, so there's not a lot of people, and there's not a lot of resources, so a lot of other things do fall on my desk.

However, it's about creating corporate partnerships. It's about growing into a donor base. It's about community involvement and awareness, collaborations. There's a lot of work that I'm doing for collective impact. It's a lot of networking.

Budget

Kids need something to do with their time. They're going to be doing something. You can have them doing something productive or not. We've set aside ... We've probably done it, I don't know, as long as I can remember. We set aside a portion of our budget every month to pay for work in the community.

Time

In my fantasy world, healthcare partners in this region would give us a shit ton of money. It would be on their budget. We would be a line item in the [state budget]. It would be all around sustainable agriculture and food access. In my dream world, corporate partners would say, “Don’t waste time filling out a big grant application. You are so important that you’re part of what we’re interested in impacting in this marketplace.”

Living

...Reality is that we actually like, that company doesn’t need to grow to be like a gazillion dollars. The company just needs to grow to supply living wage.

Mama

And so how do we, we need to be connecting the folks aware working with to let them know that there’s this larger movement, besides the fancy restaurants in [this town] they’re doing all this crazy stuff with food, you know rhubarb and rha, rha, rhar. And all that is good, but it’s just like you and another thing that I have also at this whole restaurant movement is that we are elevating all of these chefs who are fucking guys. And it’s just like whose cooking in your house?

...Who is it? Your mama? Oh yeah, it was your mama. Did you forget that you had a mama?

Green tomatoes

I am freaking out because I see what’s going on in the whole restaurant industry and the markets in the whole thing is that the restaurants – – because I’m on the ground working – – the restaurants they’re getting a free ticket because they’re talking about supporting the farmer when

they're coming to the tailgate markets and they're shopping, they're shopping at the tailgate markets with the farmers, but this is normally what happens with the chef. They come and they see what you have, and if you have something that is hot, you have a limited amount of it and they want to make a dish that is... Say you have green tomatoes and not everybody brings green tomatoes. So, the chef might buy all of your green tomatoes and go do a dish specifically for that. One thing of green tomatoes and one dish, and they're making a boatload of fucking money off that meal that is not going back to the farmer. Because, what happens with that little equation too is if you have greens and other stuff, what the chef will say is, "Call me when you're done with the market and whatever else you have, I will buy." So, when you go to sell it to a chef like that, guess what they do? You might have what you could sell, but whatever you have they like I say I give you \$20. So, then you go into this negotiation. That's not fucking supporting farms. You understand?

Sticks

When we started working with him, and I say we; meaning myself, [our organization and an extension specialist], the kid was living in a trailer shack. Couldn't pay his bills, was literally having to sell his tomato sticks in the winter time to keep his electricity on and buy them back in the summer, and we started working with him.

Got him the production information that he needed to increase his yields, got him the information that he needed and helped him with his GAP certification to get his produce in the right markets, so he didn't just have to sell to the farmer's market or on the side of the road or wherever. He

could sell to the actual good-paying markets that go to the grocery stores, so now the kid's married, got a new baby, and just bought a new house. Hey, that's awesome!

Farming is an addiction...

Forever

As soon as you do something wrong in your past as a youth, that's held against you forever.

Volunteer

Phil: The garden existed, it was there before you started working with it?

I: Check this out. All right. I had volunteered at the [public housing community garden – phcg]. I had to volunteer there because I had signed up for Work First which is a governmental financial assistance program for single moms that needs access to a little bit of money while they look for work or go back to school or whatever. I went and signed up for that because I didn't have a job at the time. I had went to school for I training which is pretty much a nursing assistant. Wouldn't nobody hire me because of my background, my criminal background.

After months, almost a year of job searching up here and going to interviews, landed a job. It was a couple of places that hired me, but when they got my criminal background back, they had to let me go. Even though at that time the charges were seven or eight years old. The main ones, the assault charges were seven or eight years old, but all the other little charges that was on there which was due to a bad custody battle that the other party felt like, "Hey. If we go down there

and throw all this shit, accuse her, then that's going to make it look bad for when she go to court. So come on, baby. Come on down here with me so we can take out these bogus warrants."

I have a laundry list of communicating threats charges on there, which I never did. They stayed even though they were dropped and dismissed, they're still on there.

Come on, you got a black woman that's coming to you talking about taking care of your residents that are disabled or sick or old and she's got two assault charges on there plus she's got all these communicating threat charges. Ain't nobody going to ... "This woman is crazy. Hell, no, I'm not hiring her. I don't care how long ago it was."

That's what pushed me into signing up to Work First. Then my Work First worker was like, "Well you got to volunteer somewhere. I got a perfect place." I was like, "Oh, okay." He was like, "You're going to go and volunteer in [public housing community garden]."

[that public housing development] has a garden?" [That development] is a public housing development that is bigger than [another public housing development] and has a lot of issues that low-wealth communities deal with. Drugs, drug use, assaults, all of those things. I ain't know nothing about [the public housing development] having a garden. When I went over there, I was like, "Wow!"

Phil: It's an impressive garden.

Interlude

“...I’ll come back to [this story], but I’m going to tell you that... I tell these kinds of circular stories...”

2. Cartography - Child

Oranges

The children, they love us. We was in [a large apartment complex] one day. Them babies, man, when they found out that we ... They was like, "Hey, yay! Ice cream! Ice cream!"

I said, "Uh-unh, uh-unh. Here, come here. Let me tell you what's going on." They come up on the bus and I said, "Now, this is a produce mobile market, all right? Not an ice cream truck. Not a candy bus. We sell the opposite of what they sell. Now, I'm sorry but I don't have no Dr. Pepper, Sprite, Sierra Mist or Mr. Pibb or Pepsi or Coca-Cola. I don't have any of those, but I do have some peaches, some oranges, some carrots and some apples."

"Oh, you got some apples? Can I get an apple? I want an orange. No, I want a carrot." So then the babies start spitting out all kind of things from that. And I was like, "Okay, okay, wait.

Calm down, calm down. You got some money?"

They reply, "Oh, I can. How much it cost? I can go get some change. I can go get some change or something like that."

Honey, them babies came back with change, EBT cards. It was the cutest thing that I had seen. They bought up all of our oranges that day, the rest of the oranges that we had. They bought it all up.

What I noticed after that, it's like, "Can you peel this? Peel mine." Everybody didn't want to peel their own oranges. They wanted you to peel it. That's the response we've had from the babies.

Default

It is about reconnecting, and that is another part of [his multi-plot urban farm]. Is that bringing food systems into the city, yes maybe like when we come down to it, we're not going to be able to ... Well definitely, we're not going to be able to feed everything to everyone who eats in the city. We're just going to be able to ... The idea is we'll be able to feed all the fresh produce and that kind of stuff to people in the city.

But we have more systemic things that are surrounding the city. Things to grow, staples and things. But at any rate, what the hell was I saying?

...Oh the people. Reconnection. Bringing these food systems into the city, people just experience it by default. You know, they're walking down the street. They see this kookie farm happening.

They might be like, "I don't really know what that is," and might not be even interested. But it's the start, you know? Especially with our children. Just having exposure, and seeing if you walk

down the same street every day, for a whole year, you see this thing changing thought the year. Whether or not you know what's going on, it doesn't really matter so much as just actually experiencing it, seeing it, smelling it, hearing it, that kind of stuff.

...And it's about really getting back to that sort of basic sense of experience, rather than being like, "Oh, we should do this, and we should do that." And, "You should think this way, and you should eat that way." You know, all that stuff is futile, you know?

Go get me some

I remember when I grew up in this community, and my grandmother's house, and we had a big garden. We had a big garden! That's where ... I mean, we didn't go to the store and buy vegetables because we had them all in the garden. We would go out there and grandma would send us. In our backyard we had this apple tree and we'd just go. She'd say, "Go get me some apples," so we'd go get apples.

Watch him

Even before harvesting, I remember my Granddaddy having us out there. We would sit and watch him plow up the ground first, you know what I'm saying? It would be in the same spot that it's always been in years before, I guess. We would sit and watch him plow up and break up the soil and everything and get it ready, and then he ... My nickname was Puddin'. My brother's nickname is Bo which we still call him Bo. My grandfather would call us out there and put the seeds in our hand. He would tell us to watch. We would watch he do and then we went behind him and we did the same thing.

..."Oh. So you really did have an advantage. It took me on a whole 'nother level of understanding why this have came back into my path and where it could possibly lead me as an individual and also to my babies, too, where it can lead my babies that's coming up.

Forever

As soon as you do something wrong in your past as a youth, that's held against you forever.

He can't not do it

I: This is the piece with my husband really. This is his soul thing. He can't not do it. They're kids in the neighborhood. He's going to bring those kids together. They're going to be here every Saturday now. He's been doing this for two, three months. He finally really structured what he does with them. He has five kids who show up about 9:00 on Saturday morning. He brings them here [a public community space in the garden]. They get a book, not just any book but a book that is going to have a lesson in it, and they read together. He takes turns and lets them read out loud.

Whatever they're reading about has relevance to their history so it's almost always about a black historical figure or an issue affecting predominantly African-Americans. Then, they'll talk about it.

They all go out into the yard and they do exercise. He'll lead it. They get to choose to do jumping jacks or push-ups or whatever they want to do. Each takes a turn and everybody does

exercise and then they go work in the garden or clean up somewhere down the street, clean up trash or whatever.

Phil: And they keep coming back?

I: Yeah, they get paid...Yeah. They get to go do fun things. They get paid a little bit of money and whatever, but they love the money and they love him.

Paper

we are so much more creative, so much more dynamic, so much more than what this capitalistic system has given us. This says: you go to this institution, learn these things, you come out with this paper, and you are in debt, and therefore you go to these capitalist jobs...it completely sucks your soul dry.

We just got to know each other. All the neighbors were out. It was just so good and having the space as a place to be [in a community garden]. You just get to come and be here and go, oh my god, the kids are here. I can ask them,

“You know what this is in the garden? Do you like ketchup? Do you like tomatoes?”

“No, I don’t like tomatoes.”

“Well, ketchup is made from tomatoes. Do you like potatoes?”

“Oh, no.”

“ Do you like French fries?”

“Yes.”

“You like potatoes.”

“You go down”

[The pastor] one day, he preached on Sunday about not helping your community. He made me feel guilty, so I talked to him. He says [the organization she works for] needs some volunteers. I opened up my mouth and said I could do that. He says, “You go down and you talk to [a specific person] at [the organization] and see what you can do for him. I said okay. That was in the summer of 1978 and this is the summer of 2014 and I'm still here.

Everything right

Yeah, so we've got a couple of growers over there that are having their [organic certification] inspections tomorrow, when I'm going over to do the one last over, like I said, I give them the psychological "Calm down. You're going to pass and be just fine. You've done everything right."

Stories

We also have stories about our history, and we have an historian, and her name is [...].

She tells, just like at our events, and even on Saturday, she'll be telling a little history about [the neighborhood]. We're very proud of our history. This particular neighborhood was started in the 1880s. As a result, we were the neighborhood that was on [what is now a large privately held property]. So we have people, just, generations, here, in the Shiloh area, and our church up there, AME Zion, was the same church that was on the [private land], which was built in, I think, in 1874.

... So it's quite a lot of history, how [the 19th century landowner] bought the land here ... bought our land, rather, because we lived here, and how he built that church and also the graveyards were also moved over here.

Felt good

I: I grew up in this neighborhood. I went to school where the [community center] is. It used to be [the] elementary school. I did move away from here after I went off to school and I got married. So I moved away and I came back in 1997.

Phil: So what brought you back?

I: I wanted to come back to my home and my community. My grandparents had all died down like that, but I still had some family. Of course, unfortunately some of them have gone onto Glory, too. But I wanted to come back to my community. It just felt good. It felt good to be here.

Nothing. Zero

The adults now, let me give a little credit to some of the adults. Some of the adults, "Oh, yeah. Okay, all right. Oh, dang, y'all have a good out here. I like it. But, you know, you need to get some cigarettes or some blunts or wraps or something on here, girl, because ... I mean this is cool but you ain't got no sodas?"

"I got some soda." Show them the soda.

"Girl, what kind of soda is this. What this say? Organic! I don't want nothing organic.

"You ain't got no Pepsi?"

"Nah," I says. "We ain't got no Pepsi."

"I got to have my Pepsi."

I was like, "Well, the reason why is because the preservatives and additives and all of that stuff that's in it, it's addictive. It's making you want the Pepsi. It's nothing good about that Pepsi, not shit. Nothing. Zero. I have a soda that's organic and what it means is that it uses cane sugar. Now, am I promoting sugar, sugar, sugar? No. Moderation, balance is the key to everything. But you have something that's made from a natural resource versus something that was created in a science lab for you to become addicted so that you could spend as much of your little bit of money that you get on these highly processed foods."

"All right, girl. But still. I want my Pepsi."

What do you say?

"All right, that's your choice."

Shift

We did shift from such a really strong environmental. It is not that that is not still core to who we are and what we do. We have tried to be ... The biggest change is that we are more inclusive now

and not exclusive because, if all you can offer is organic, you are very exclusive, and you can't even talk to conventional growers.

Willing

I think if we have that, one, yes, you're allowed to get your feelings hurt. It's okay. Two, be willing to forgive. It might take some time but be willing to forgive and come back to the table because we're all really working for something.

Maturity

I feel like [our organization] is at a point in its nonprofit maturity, we have got to find a way to be more courageous, and we have to say, "This is what we bring to the table, and this is why." I think the more we say that, and the more validation we receive, the more courageous we become.

Interlude

[Stopping conversation mid-sentence and pointing at a large bush] "...And these are elderberries. And these are these are native elderberries. There are some that are different. But because this is a lower tree, and you can just tell by the leaves – the leaves are just a little bit different. You know elderberries?"

"I'm familiar with things made out of elderberry I've never grown it myself..."

"You never have? It's super, super easy to grow. And if you're going to grow anything, it is one of the best medicines. All of these berries you harvest, and you make a tincture and anything you might get in the winter, like elderberries are your go to. It makes good elderberry wine, mead..."

3. Cartography - Astrology

Really know good, clean astrology

I started following astrology, just like barely touching it, and it was like many years ago, probably twenty-something years ago. It was like, “Oh, this is kinda fascinating, this is kind of interesting.” About 12 years ago, or longer, I really started following astrology and I will tell you, to me, I think astrology, the more of us that really know good, clean astrology, I think the more were going to be able to sit down and shift [culturally]. Because I think, for me, astrology answers many things of who we are as humans. And we’re in this huge, huge Milky Way system, this huge galaxy with all these planets that affect us in all these ways. I think your sun sign, is important to rising is I think your moon is important. I mean, you come in and the minute you come in, you come in with an astrological blueprint. Now what is that shit mean?

...You come in this universe attached to this huge Milky Way galaxy, this solar system where all of this stuff is happening, as this human in earth, turning, turning, turning, thinking that your shit so important?...and being told over and over again to your shit is so important. What is so important about my shit that affects this galaxy? You know what I mean?

Vegetables

First off, I love children and the kids that come in here it's not a fun place for them to go. “Mom's going to buy vegetables and I don't want to eat them to begin with, let alone go help her.” One of the things that we do is we provide popsicles and sometimes different ice cream, we put them in

the freezer there and we give it to the kids for free, and now the kids want to come back, especially now that we've added donuts. Now we have donuts and popsicles!

Generally speaking when a kid comes in and would say something special about their birthday or they're out of school or... we'll make a big deal out of that, but the children really enjoy coming in and there's no playground here for them.

They come because they do get something. There's no doubt about that but we feel that if we're going to make a difference with eating habits of the people of [this state] you got to get to the kids. That was one thing. The children who come in here, they help their mothers pick out corn or whatever.

I can say

[This faith-based organization] first is a ministry and when you minister to people, you have to be able to relate to them in some way, shape, or form. I have been through probably all the things that these people who come in here have been through, so I can say I understand how you feel. I never tell them I know how they feel, but they can tell I understand how you feel because I have been divorced, I have been homeless, I have a second husband, and things have happened to me that happened to the people who come in here, so we have empathy and I think that makes it easy.

Horns

That's why I enjoy doing what I do, is because I can help someone do this because I've been down that road, been there, done it.

It's not fun to take the bull by the horns when you have no idea what the bull even looks like.

Came back

I: I grew up in this neighborhood. I went to school where the [community center] is. It used to be [the] elementary school. I did move away from here after I went off to school and I got married. So I moved away and I came back in 1997.

Phil: So what brought you back?

I: I wanted to come back to my home and my community. My grandparents had all died down like that, but I still had some family. Of course, unfortunately some of them have gone onto Glory, too. But I wanted to come back to my community. It just felt good. It felt good to be here.

Sometimes you wonder

To be able to take somebody's hand and pray for them and pray for their family and then what are the right words? Your well-intended part sometimes says the wrong things, but I have learned over the years that if you can pray for them and pray for their loved one or whatever the situation is...we've got people come in here and talk about it, "My husband left me," or, "My wife's

leaving me for another guy.” Sometimes you wonder if you're not wearing your collar backwards, do I look like a pastor? But part of the faith is that Jesus said that the Son of Man came to serve not to be served and there's a number of us, and that, it really hits a chord in us. Fortunately, or it depends on how you look at it, but I think that God put in my heart: I love people.

His

I: This is the piece with my husband really. This is his soul thing. He can't not do it. They're kids in the neighborhood. He's going to bring those kids together. They're going to be here every Saturday now. He's been doing this for two, three months. He finally really structured what he does with them. He has five kids who show up about 9:00 on Saturday morning. He brings them here [a public community space in the garden]. They get a book, not just any book but a book that is going to have a lesson in it, and they read together. He takes turns and lets them read out loud.

Whatever they're reading about has relevance to their history so it's almost always about a black historical figure or an issue affecting predominantly African-Americans. Then, they'll talk about it.

They all go out into the yard and they do exercise. He'll lead it. They get to choose to do jumping jacks or push-ups or whatever they want to do. Each takes a turn and everybody does exercise and then they go work in the garden or clean up somewhere down the street, clean up trash or whatever.

Phil: And they keep coming back?

I: Yeah, they get paid...Yeah. They get to go do fun things. They get paid a little bit of money and whatever, but they love the money and they love him.

Zucchini

Everybody had a good year evidently because of zucchini and squash. We opened up the door there and they say,

"Could you use any zucchini or squashes?"

"Do me a favor? First, check and see if anybody's car door is open. Fill up their car seat..."

Yeah we've got a lot of that this year.

What the fuck to do with it

You can't put that infrastructure in there without building relationships. [...] You can go and you can dump that pavillion there, but it doesn't mean that the community is going to use it! Because, they're going to do going to look at it as, that pavilion belongs to [her organization], it's not ours. I know that, because I hear them, "Oh, well, that was something that so-and-so brought in, I mean we don't know what the fuck to do with it."

What she was supposed to become

[Hanging up the phone.] The lady who called me is the story really. Her and her husband were coming in here a lot whenever they were eligible to get whatever they could and we just got to talking and got to praying with them, and her husband had a heart attack and he couldn't work anymore.

She came in and she was really frantic. We worked with her and we got them to collect Social Security Disability. We helped them get that. When they got that, they learned how to do a budget. We talked to them about budgeting and how you do that.

They got a house through the housing program, the [...] County Housing Program. They got a house through them because of his disability and he needed to get for the house. They had to have wider doors and all kinds of stuff. We got him with another doctor. We just talked to her about other places that she could go to get help. It just escalated. Now she helps all her neighbors. She has a garden and she passes out the first fruits to her neighbors and to other people.

...And they don't need to come in here but very seldom. When they do, they always bring a small gift of some kind or other. That's changing from here to rising up and becoming what she was supposed to become in the first place.

Our date

We didn't start with the garden. We started with picking up trash. We would just get trash bags. That would be our date. Saturday afternoon, that's what we'd do. We'd pick up trash and talk and have these deep conversations, all deep, picking up trash, the needles, open needles. Kids still running around in the neighborhood, because you cannot keep kids inside.

Talent

We have a beautiful cookbook, and then our cookbook has some history.

....It has a picture of our church, [...]. It has a picture of AME Zion. It has the new picture, and then it has a sketch drawing of those churches, when they were older. It was done by ... I'm sorry to say, he has so much talent ... I don't know what he did to end up to be incarcerated, but he was incarcerated ... but he's a beautiful artist. He's just ... It just breaks my heart when you see people so talented and yet, and still, we could have molded him in another direction, that he could be using his talent for other things. The pictures are beautiful that he did. The drawings.

Front porch

Because I am not about sitting around bitching at the planet. I used to be. Oh, honey, I sat on my front porch plenty of days talking. Nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah. I used to do that all the time. Then I don't know. Something just happened and I was like, "Oh. Okay. I have a voice. I can say stuff and I can also do stuff." When I found out that I could do that, shhhhh, gone.

I just feel very...

We're in the right space to do it. What I mean by space is city, because I didn't know how the city or the residents of [town] would respond to black people from low income communities trying to do something like this, you know what I'm saying? I didn't know how they would respond. To see the level of love and support coming from people that don't necessarily look like me.

A lot of people don't understand why I always or most often put race in it. That's not to say that I only think and look at things one way. Damn! I'm not a white woman doing this. I'm a black woman doing this. I'm a black woman that's been affected by all the systemic racism and stuff. I see other people that look like me that's been affected by it, too. For me to say that I was shocked to see the level of love and support coming from white people, that's just all truth and honesty. There ain't no other way that I can say that.

In speaking to that, I just feel very ... There would be times I would go on our ... We've got a little GoFundMe page, our crowd sourcing page. Still ain't reached that \$10,000. It's ongoing... I remember a couple of times this happening to me when we first got it started up, I would go on there and I would see all of these thank you e-mails that I have to send out because people have done made contributions. I'm seeing contributions of \$100, \$5, \$20, \$222 you know what I'm saying? Just all wide ranges of contributions coming in. I didn't give a damn about the amount, it was the fact that I could tell be the names that these were white people that believed in us.

For me, it was a healing process that had came along with that as well, because I sometimes get in trouble for speaking so openly about what has happened and stuff. I've been able to deal with my own prejudice.

I don't believe black people can be racist. I don't believe any person of color can be racist but I know we can practice prejudice and bias. I know that we can do that, easy. No problem, right? It's been a healing process for me to deal with my bias and my prejudice that I sometimes have due to unfortunate circumstances and experiences and situations that I found myself experiencing more than I care to say.

Seeing this on a computer screen in front of me is ... Been times I'd get just as watery-eyed, tears were flowing, stuff like that. Would be like, "Damn. Okay, they really do care and want to see us uplift ourselves and to be a change." Do you know what I'm saying?

Flipped out

But you know, we had a woman here [pointing up to the house right above the garden], this is gentrification, because this lot, this one was actually empty when we started here, for a couple of years. We were actually talking about, the association was talking about we need to find out how we can buy that property.

But the property was bought by this couple who came in and, in this house it's passive solar and it's got all of the zero landscaping, xeriscaping, or whatever that landscaping is. So, the couple was here for a couple of years and then they sold it to this woman, this single woman who is from, I think she was from Florida, I'm not really sure. But see, she flipped out when she saw all the gatherings and the music, and she flipped out.

Not only did she flipped out, but she called the cops: over and over and over again. Not only did she call the cops, she also tried to call DSF because she was saying that some of the children were not supervised. Here, all because she was scared. And see. And she never should have been, and that's part of the gentrification story. Oh, you move into this place because she couldn't, she could afford this house in this neighborhood, but she couldn't afford it in [a wealthy neighborhood], or in some other...

So, yeah. She got the house that she wanted, but not in the neighborhood she wanted. She didn't know what neighborhood she was in.

But also on top of that, initially she was like "Oh, a garden!" She was really happy initially until she finds out; until it warmed up and you know people were coming down here and have their boom boxes and children would be running around and it's just like: wow! And she left, because it was too much pushback, and finally you know, we were talking to the cops constantly, and finally the cops were like, "You know it's almost as if she's kind of, like this is harassment." And we were like, "thank you." "When we see that it's you, we're not responding anymore. In fact you're putting yourself at risk because if it's a real emergency were not going to respond to you."

And you see, this is thing, Phil: we would probably be sitting with her some kind of event...she would be talking stuff we buy into thinking that she was one of us potentially. You understand [rising inflection]?

Parade

I: We have a resident [...] she's still a resident, but one of the things she wanted to do was have a parade out here in [the neighborhood], and that's what she did!

She got the people together; we had cars all down here. We had the Mayor here in her, what do you call it, the cars? Convertible. We had her in a convertible and we had a parade in [in the neighborhood]...

Of course we had a program inside the [community center] and everything, but we had this big parade first, and it was really nice. We had ... We had so many people in it! All we did, we really didn't go beyond [the main road], but we went all in [the neighborhood], all around, blowing the horns. It was beautiful

Phil: Have you done it again?

I: No, we haven't. Maybe we can get [her] to do it again. It was beautiful, and to have the Mayor in it, it was just ...

It was just beautiful. It really was. I mean, we had motorcycles in the parade, we had ... I think Reverend [...], because he owned a motorcycle, one of the preachers, he was on his motorcycle, and we just had ... It was beautiful. We had a beautiful program and had food and it was just nice.

That'd be awesome

What I would like to see is, and like I was talking about this unit that costs six grand, is NRCS [Natural Resource Conservation Service] has grain drills and no till drills that like in the fall, when it comes time to sow your cover crop, they'll rent or sometimes there's even like initiatives where they let you use their equipment if you buy the grain...and if NRCS in the counties had one of these that people could check out, rent, or whatever. That'd be awesome.

Sense

That makes sense if you really go to your wiser mind and say, "Well of course this makes sense."

Sure enough

They are REALLY GO-OD farmers. Now, if we could clone those two kids, I would not be worried about the future of the food in this country because those kids are hardworking kids. They make it happen. Beautiful, beautiful growers doing a wonderful job...

With the GAP [food safety certification program], they were growing and selling to the farmer's market. This is how good these kids are -- they were selling to the farmer's market. The other people that were selling to the farmer's market actually got mad at them, got pissed, and called [the department of agriculture] and said they weren't growing their produce. They were buying it and reselling it. [A respected official] from [the Department of Agriculture] went and done a full-

blown investigation because these people were just so adamant about this. Sure enough, these kids were growing this good of produce.

I think so

I: Are y'all Christian?

Phil: I mean we have... Yeah.

I: Do you go to church?

Phil: Some...

I: You believe in...in Jesus?

Phil: Yeah, I mean, I believe in like...

I: ...Do you believe in God? [Incredulous.]

Phil: Yeah, I think so.

I: In God as this God?...

Working

The thing about capitalism is that it's not that it's bad or it's evil. It's that it's not working. And just talk about that it's not working. The reason why it is not working it is because it is an inequitable financial system to begin with. And is not inclusive.

So, when we have those kinds of things and there. It's not shame, bad, bad, bad capitalism. It's not working, and because of that, let's put our resources and the stuff, make the jump, let's make that leap. Because what happens is when we point the finger and we say good bad, what we're saying is we are not...we get so tied up into that judgment piece, that we get off track and then we get spun and then are like that's not at all what I meant.

Interlude

“Can we turn the tables on you and ask how you feel about what you’re doing and the impact it might have on all of us?”

4. Cartography - Experimental

Experimental

The way I feel [our organization] should live is in an experimental mode.

You cannot. If you ... Why do you think that you know the answer? How do you think that that is the answer? An answer? Maybe. As long as you can keep informing that, sure, maybe it is. If you're not experimenting with it and proving it, then, to me, it's so much bonk. I mean, give me a road map to get to this nirvana and I'll follow you. I'd like to have some validation and proof that that is going to lead me to nirvana and not the opposite.

A season

I did that season out in California, Northern California. Worked on an old bio-dynamic farm there. At the end of the season, I was like, "I still don't know anything." I was like, "I think I need to do it again, to really accomplish the goal of having a basic understanding."

This is their community, back off

The gang thing comes in the talks about, "We've created a satellite unit, and here's my card, and when you see any suspicious activity, call me." And I, just like, I was sitting there and I just had to, you know, I almost, it was almost as if I need to be tied down because I wanted to jump up so bad, and I wanted to be like "What the fuck? This is racist! This is classist!" You know: brah, brah, brah, brah, brah. But then I'm just like, "[to self], this is their community, back off." If you do that, the cops are gonna target you... Which they probably already have my profile anyway. I mean, they probably already know, as I was out here every week, you know.

So, so we had our garden meeting the next week and so I was talking to the people who were on the garden committee and was like “So what did y’all think about that?” And they started laughing and they were like, “We’re not calling them. We know what they’re doing...[knowingly].

To make sure

This is where farmers come in: check in, wash their hands, and sign in. [The products the farmers are delivering] are palletized by commodity. [pointing] And your labelling: either GAP, non-GAP, Organic.

...That’s part of our non-comingling. You don’t comingle GAP with Non-GAP. So, you get your label slapped on it.

You check in, here. Where they get an inventory-received document. Or, if they buy boxes... When we check them in—we have to maintain all of that. As you can see there are multiple binders [tens of neatly ordered binders.] There’s a whole lot of paper work.

We spot weigh. We provide scales. You can sign the scales out, they’re already calibrated by the Department of Agriculture. They don’t have to worry about working on that. We bought ten of these [scales] that farmers can sign-out and use. We spot weigh their products to make sure that they aren’t short-weighting.

I: We've got these stainless steel pallet jacks, for if we're doing any trucking, logistical run in the off-season to try and generate revenue.

We got to a place, a processing place, where they wouldn't offload us because we had a painted pallet jack. They said, there's going to be chips of paint. So, they ended up having to shrink wrap the pallet jack and put it back on the truck. So, from there we got stainless steel.

Because if a farmer decides that he wants to deliver to a big, high-end processing facility, they can come here and sign these out.

Phil: That's not common? That's unusual?

I: That's somebody being anal. But when you get to this food safety stuff—that is how they're going to monopolize food. That's the end all. That's the corporate model. When they want the GFSI, the global, all that crap. It's not really making food safer, it's just weeding out the small guy.

But, seriously. They are going to control food by that.

We started out with five major seed companies, now we're down to four, and within the next two of years, it is predicted that we're down to three. So, you're going to have three organizations who are going to dictate what we eat and where the processing will be.

Another way

"You know what you're doing is very political." I don't even want to hear that word. I don't want to be ... Nah, don't get me mixed up in all of that, I'm just saying. If there's a better option or another way to do things then I want to know what that is. I want to explore it.

Figure shit out

Because there's enough of us. We know we're smart enough to figure shit out. We just need people to step aside and to remove these policies that are in place to continue to keep people in an oppressed state.

What you do want kind of thing

In 2000 I guess, [the co-founder] and I got connected through this monumental fight against Walmart, keeping Walmart from coming in, which was really incredible. We learned a shit ton of stuff through that process. At the end of that, the natural progression for us was to create ... tired of fighting what I don't want. How do you create what you do want kind of thing? We turned our energy to create what we did want, and [our organization] grew out of that.

Getting lost

I: Geographically I'm not a Yankee. But you listen to me talk, and there's no hiding it. I guess, really, my kind of spiel is the people of Appalachia, they got it. It's not us Yankees that need to

be putting ... We're here to learn. There's a lot of stuff that is getting lost, a lot of knowledge about how you keep a garden, and about how families, you know, like kinship ties and all these sorts of things that still remain of utmost importance to people who've lived here forever. So, I don't know. Not just the people here, but that we all...That we would all kind of go back 50 years. Not just the people here, but all of them. Even more importantly in urban places. There used to be gardens in cities. I guess it is kind of coming back. You do have this urban chickens, and urban farms. But yeah, that that continues to flourish in urban places...

Phil: What do you think it is about what you're describing as like kind of the Appalachian kinship that makes it something to foster, work towards?

I: It's just good community in general. I think educated people use the idea of community. There's like urban ... I don't know how you ... Like there's urban tribal people. That is their family, and those kinship ties are just as tight as the kinship ties of blood relation. Just those that, I think ... That we as a nation get back to realizing our interdependency, those Appalachian kinship family ties, I think. They may not consciously. It's just a part of their being. Like those ties, they are interdependent. And gender roles, I mean more traditional gender roles. It's just like women cook and ... Not so much that, but that each piece has its function and it's necessary to the whole. Where I think as a society, Americans, we tend toward rugged individualism.

...We're really recognizing once again that interdependency, whether we want to do it consciously—that's just how we operate with each other in our way.

The way that you think

... Like I said, you have to put it in your consciousness. It's a shift in the way that you see the world. It's a shift in the way that you think. I was reading ... What was that I was reading recently? It's talking about how people don't like to talk about slavery and any kind of reparations around slavery. People get their panties in a wad faster over that conversation than any other conversation. We feel very strongly that the Jews and the descendants of the Jews that were in the concentration camps in Germany need reparations.

...That the people in South Africa who suffered during apartheid, they deserve reparations, but not for the fucking holocaust that happened during slavery here because we can't ... I don't know if it's part of our consciousness that we admit how truly depraved and fucked up that whole concept and experience was. That's where our whole economy is built on!

This is beef

Now I'm hanging out with [my partner] and the 60 cows, and we load them up. This is what I thought about. We load them up for market. We're like the first load that day. This market is just in [small rural town]. I mean, it's right here. We take about 10 head, these steers, whatever, and we are the last load at the end of the day. There were thousands of cows in this barn. The process of the day was separating myself from these cows that I've been putting up, putting into this pasture and putting into that pasture, working them up, and being like, okay, they're leaving this grass-fed farm. I know where they're going. Kind of like that this is the way that money is made on this farm. This is beef.

For me it was just like, I don't know if a light went off, but it was more like this turning point. I needed to realize, yes, you do need to make money, and sometimes ... Of course, that wasn't my decision to [raise and sell the animals] that that way, but this is the way it happens a lot around here. This is the way it happens. The exception to the rule is that people take a steer here and there to get it cut, and then they bring it to market. Kind of that whole, I'm 21 again. This beautiful picture. But, I mean thousands of cows. He's only open one day a week. But thousands of cows go through there every Wednesday. That's the way the local food, the beef moves here. I was surprised, too, I guess, also during that, all of this beef potential.

The most idiotic thing

If we're going to continue as a culture, as a civilization to allow the oil and gas industry to have so much influence over our development as a culture, so much so that they had retarded our technological advances to keep us dependent upon a finite resource. It's the most idiotic thing I've ever seen and our civilization has allowed this culturally as a collective. We have allowed this to happen so that we don't have cars that can run on water and we don't have solar-powered this. It's a fight to the death. It just builds like, "Oh my god, really, fracking?" That's the dumbest, forgive me, fucking idea I've ever heard. Yet, that's around.

Forgive and come back

I think if we have that, one, yes, you're allowed to get your feelings hurt. It's okay. Two, be willing to forgive. It might take some time but be willing to forgive and come back to the table because we're all really working for something.

Good and bad

The reason why I want you to pay attention to that is what I have found is that that good and bad language, there is no good, and there is no bad. We have put that on as guilty white people.

See I'm saying? So, what I think a different frame would be. How can we just tell the story without having any kind of judgment?

Happened

[This organization] first is a ministry and when you minister to people, you have to be able to relate to them in some way, shape, or form. I have been through probably all the things that these people who come in here have been through, so I can say I understand how you feel. I never tell them I know how they feel, but I can tell I understand how you feel because I have been divorced, I have been homeless, I have a second husband, and things have happened to me that happened to the people who come in here, so we have empathy and I think that makes it easy.

You know what?

And see, their elders and it was really learning curve for us, sitting with elders. Several of them when we first started working with them, and that's another thing we only work were invited, so they invited us in. And when they invited us and we told them what... There was, there was division within them because they had this property, or they were getting this property and some of them are like: "why don't we put in a swimming pool." And I'm like, "Oh, shit. That's the worst thing you can do, is talk about a liability problem." So, it was that whole learning curve.

And some of them, some of them said to me straight up, "You know, we've had white people tell us for decades, for a long time, how we should or should not do things and if we never have to

work y'all again, that's fine with us." And I was like, "I hear ya, I hear ya." And then that same person ended up being like, "You know what? You and I, we get along so well, we should be talking the panel on race and class together." And I was like, "all right."

10-10-10-like natural

At [local] farmers market. At any of the other regional farmers market, I don't think it would make a difference. A lot of people say organically grown, naturally grown, ecologically grown. That's where the, those small rural markets, you do know your farmer. Hopefully people do ask those questions. So what is natural really mean? Are you using 10-10-10-like natural?

Come

Because we have some people in the neighborhood who maybe don't have as many resources as the others, financially, and they need food, and they have children, so, come! Come and harvest. We don't want it to go to waste, we don't monitor who's doing what! We do like to know how many people harvest, it helps us, especially with grants and things. Other than that, we want you to come and we want you to get the food.

The art of crafting life

[The neighborhood] is four streets that way...

It is an old agricultural plot as well. These houses have been ... over time, this farm in West Asheville. It used to be populated with sticks. It got more populated and houses got built around this gully, valley kind of place. It's all grassy. All the people who owned the houses that backed

on to this green space decided to do a community garden. You got all these neighbors and they come out and they have potlucks with each other and their kids play together. They dig in the dirt together and they share meals together and you do all this stuff together. That to me is the art of crafting life.

Analysis, post-Rhizoanalysis

A Question of Method

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, my approach to the data continued to shift throughout my analysis process. The analysis played itself out much like a conversation between my original research plans and the narratives—a becoming. Like DeLanda's (2006) description of assemblages from earlier in this chapter, my methodological assemblage was decentered and destabilized as I plugged into the assemblage(s) of narrative—it was affected by the data, which, in turn, affected my reading of the narratives. That said, as I read and then re-assembled the narratives, I took seriously Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1988) urging to,

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. (p. 161)

When I “lodged” myself, I sought “middles” for entry into narratives. Rather than looking for a “logical” entry point, I allowed moments of intensity, of affect, and curiosity to serve as my guides for entry. To further clarify my approach and the way that it unfolded in my analysis, I will, in order, move through each narrative cartography and further explicate my point of entry, as well as reflect upon where that point carried me.

Cartographies

1 – Cartography: Addiction. In each of these cartographies, excepting the third, my entry point is the first excerpt that you read. The idea of farming as addiction really jarred me when I was interviewing and analyzing the data. It was perhaps, more acute, because in addition to the quoted anecdote, another interviewee used the exact same analogy. On one level, this idea

set my Cartesian mind into action—thinking of the blithe ways that this concept both relates to the wantonness of certain addictions and the financial privilege that is implicated in one’s ability to search for a fix to that addiction-land, capital, etc. But as an entry point for my first analysis, it took me off in directions that I would not have expected. There was a visceral feeling as I circled through the data. In some ways, I ended up far from the original entry point, but the concept felt deterritorializing as I moved in the data.

2 – Cartography: Child. As I “walked” (Eakle, 2007; Waterhouse, 2011) the data, I found myself being affected by the concept of children and babies. The anecdote used as the entry point was the first one that grabbed my attention. As Slocum (2007) has noted, a significant component of community food work is nutrition education. Guthman (2008a) has elucidated the highly political nature of the component, pointing to what I will call the if-they-only-knew mentality—or the idea that the reason people eat non-nutritiously has to do with ignorance. The idea of children seemed particularly salient to me because it resonated with my embodied reaction to the paternalistic tone that is inherent to certain approaches to nutrition education. Consistent with the previous cartography, children/babies were my launching point, and I found myself following this concept across the data in new and different ways. While the logic of connection may disappear at times, the anecdotes are threaded together and connected on a different cognitive register.

3 – Cartography: Astrology. My entry to this third cartography shifted and changed as I worked with the data. This particular series of narratives invoked multiple affective responses from me. There is an excerpt, near the end, titled, “I think so,” in which the interviewee, aggressively asked questions about my particular entry point to spirituality. This came near the end of an interview peppered with a radical type of agonistic-like pluralism (Connolly, 2005). I

found the line of thought opened by this conversation, following me as I worked through the data on successive readings. More so than the other cartographies, this one looped around in circles and pulled me in various directions. When it came time to translate the mapping to paper, my original entry no longer seemed like the appropriate place to begin—I was reading spiritual affinities in and through data and seeing them proliferate in multiple directions, and my original starting point, though known, no longer seemed clear.

4 – Cartography: Experimental. It was challenging to attempt an affective reading of the interviews. In the opening lines of “A Thousand Plateaus,” Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1988) wrote, “The two of us wrote...together. Since each of us was several, there was always quite a crowd” (p. 3). This concept resonated with me as I tried to read non-representationally. There were times when it seemed impossible to remove my Cartesian self from the analysis process. On this side of the coding process, I believe that I was never truly able to remove my other selves from the process. In this fourth cartography, my entry point was the concept of experimentation that came through in the first excerpt. The idea excited me. At this point in the analysis process, I was working with ideas of ontological uncertainty and experimentation, so it is no wonder that this particular anecdote resonated with me in a positive way. This illustrates the difficulty of an affective analysis process—in my experience, it cannot and will not be a pure process.

Conclusion

This process of rhizoanalysis, as described and demonstrated in this chapter, is a becoming—the data is a becoming, the analysis a becoming. Part of my positivistic self wants to fix a dividing line, where the data ends and the analysis begins, or where my analysis ends and the readers’ begin, but then I find myself back with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/1987) description of the rhizome, “...open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable,

reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation” (p. 12). A rhizoanalysis should not require a fixing of these clear lines of comings and goings. Rhizomes grow from middles, not beginnings and endings. To be “susceptible to constant modification” and “rework[ing],” a level of fluidity is, arguably, needed. The data becomes analysis and the analysis becomes data.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I began with Horkheimer and Adorno's arguments about myth and enlightenment—that enlightenment reverts to myth and myth becomes enlightenment. As I moved through this dissertation, I dropped this concept, but I think it is worth revisiting here, in the conclusion; it stands as a useful metaphor for how I think about the practice implications that might come out of this research.

Though Deleuze and other poststructural thinkers might not have “any truck with dialectics” (Buchanan, 2000, p. 192) and the assumption of totalities (Gibson-Graham, 1996), I argue that there are some strong similarities between how I might think praxis with Horkheimer and Adorno and Deleuze. For all three thinkers, our ways of representing and thinking about the world have a direct effect on our ideas of what transformations might be possible. In a line that could have been penned by Deleuze, Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/2002) wrote,

The mythical scientific respect of peoples for the given reality, which they themselves constantly create, finally becomes itself a positive fact, a fortress before which even the revolutionary imagination feels shamed as utopianism, and degenerates to a compliant trust in the objective tendency of history. (p. 33).

For my purposes, I can read in Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/2002) and Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006), Law (2004, 2008), Mol (1999), and other thinkers cited in this dissertation, a fear of this “compliant trust.” But more importantly, I can see a positive hope that this trust might be shattered, that ossifications might be undone, and that given realities might be freed to become multiplicities. In summary, this is my praxis hope for this dissertation research that it might be a little machine that someone might plug into and find some

means to shake free of a positive fact, a compliant trust, and contribute to the opening of utopian imaginations.

When I set out on this research project several years ago, I thought I knew where it was headed, but to my surprise, a rhizomous conversation unfolded. It feels as though I have plugged into a monstrous abstract dissertation machine, in terms of genre and convention, and have produced multiple lines of flight that are in the form of chapters—each serving a type of imprint—a snapshot of thought on paper, but a part of a larger assemblage that is a becoming. My thought moved in directions and ways that I did not expect, unsedimenting my methodological thinking and opening new connections. I hope that the openness of this discovery process is a strand available to the reader.

In the remainder of this chapter, I wrap up a few remaining strands with an emphasis on some concrete practice implications for the community food worker. In the first section, I return to my original research questions. In light of my analysis, I consider, not just the responses to the questions, but the questions themselves. As I returned again and again to my original research questions, I was struck by the way that my understandings of the questions have changed along with the development of this research. I once thought I would answer the questions in a fairly set way. I did not know what I would find through my research, but as I muddled my way through the design and operationalization of the project, I have realized a shift from the expectation of epistemological discoveries to new methodological and ontological problems and questions.

The next section of this chapter is devoted to questions of implication and practice, from the perspective of the community food worker and the scholar/researcher? I address some potential connections to ontological politics, the art of transcendental experimentation, which I then connect to the Freireian concept of generative themes and William Connolly's particular

take on agonistic pluralism. In the third section, I address some of the limitations of this research project, and in the final section, I suggest some possible future directions for research.

Return to the Research Questions

From an epistemological standpoint, I contend that the rhizoanalysis alone would be a complete analysis—unfinished and on-going, but complete. However, given the nature of the genre of doctoral dissertations, I use this section to augment the rhizoanalysis—not to fix the meaning of the mappings, but to bring my methodological and ontological reflections together with my original research questions and the cartographies. I consider each research question in their original order.

Research Question One

The ways in which practitioners and those involved in community-based initiatives perform community food work.

The very short answer to the epistemological question of “ways” is: ...in a multiplicity of ways, but, to be fair to the question, it bears greater ontological and methodological explication. Manuel DeLanda (2006) begins his book, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, by noting that if the “human mind ceased to exist” almost all social entities, from the very minute to the large nation states, would “disappear altogether” (p. 1). The taxonomies and essentialized characteristics that humans use to categorize and name the world would disappear. In the place of these organizers would be swarms of difference. As May (2005) posited, difference outruns thought; so the best one can do is to palpate a difference that lies beyond the grasp of thought. May described palpation as the mechanism through which doctors attempt to understand a bodily lesion that they do not see.

The create a zone of touch where the sense of the lesion can emerge without its being directly experiences...We might say that palpation ‘gives voice’ to the lesion: not in its own words, for it has none, but in a voice that will at least not be confused with something it is not. (p. 20)

Ontologically, heterogeneity cannot be known. It can only be palpated. The cartographies of the previous chapter do not speak of epistemological certainty in practices of community food security. It is my hope that they, instead, point towards a level of respective uncertainty.

In this context, the question of performativity is still relevant, although somewhat modified. Instead of looking at each narrative as a particular vantage point on a fixed, singular reality, I have approached the ontological field as one that is much flatter, with space for not just different perspectives on reality, but multiple realities. Instead of viewing each narrative as competing with the others for the most astute rendering of reality, I read each story as a description of a distinct assemblage, an idiosyncratic reality. While one could take a strong theory and trace it over each interview to describe “what is really” being produced, I argue that when these stories are pulled into a larger assemblage (like the above cartographies), clear sense recedes into some degree of heterogeneity.

If difference outruns thought, if it outruns essentialized categories, how could I attend to the performative effect of the narratives? Methodologically, how could I respond to the question of what realities are being made, or more significantly, how can they be made differently? This idea of making goes back to the way the stories were originally constructed from swarms of difference. Recalling Chapter Four, Ducey argued that is affect that coheres language and intensity into something that becomes actual—a story. Roy (2003) supported this and noted, “How we construct something conceptually is inextricably linked with our structures of

investments, feelings, and desires” (Roy, 2003, p. 154). Thus, the stories that are told, those that came through in the initial interviews, are the performative effect of an assemblage that includes events, practices, investments, feelings, and desires.

In many applications, narrative analysis has been used to communicate and analyze broader, more contextually “complete” stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). Had I employed such a method, it might have allowed for a greater analysis of the performativity of the stories. In connection with my earlier arguments, this would have been incongruent with an anti-essentialist perspective, but I suggest that it would have been problematic in another respect. It involves a slightly more in-depth look at the Deleuzian (and Guattarian) concept of desire.

Conventional philosophical concepts of desire are based on the idea of lack—the human subject desiring an object which s/he does not have. This idea, which extends from Plato to Freud, relies on a representational image and its relation to the subject. In this way, desire is viewed as a negative force. Deleuze and Guattari posit desire as a more positive productive force that is pre-representational. Colebrook (2006) wrote,

Deleuze...frees desire from representation: desires are not images we have that we lack; desires are positive events—including all the perceptions and sensible encounters of all bodies. Once we free desire from representation, once we see desire as the act of a body itself and not the representation or wishful hallucination of an act, then we can also free desire from the human. (p. 99)

In the same way that difference and heterogeneity pre-exist representation, following this reading, so does desire.

To differentiate desire as lack from their conception of desire, Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983) created the concept, desiring-production, and posit it as that which produces the social realities,

...the truth of the matter is that social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions. We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire...There is only desire and the social, and nothing else. (p. 38)

So, what relation does this concept bear on research question one, on the performativity of community food practices? It goes back to the Foucauldian conception of power and the significance of desiring-production in the enactment of realities.

While Deleuze and Michel Foucault developed philosophies that were conversational and consonant with one another (c.f. Deleuze, 1998; Foucault's preface to Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1983), one point of divergence was regarding the role of power. For Foucault, assemblages were the effect of power. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1988) argued, "To us the assemblages seem fundamentally to be assemblages, not of power but of desire (desire is always assembled), and power seems to be a stratified dimension of the assemblage" (pp. 530-531). To state it differently, power is an element of assemblages produced by desire; it is not the productive force—it is an effect of desire. This raises the question: as a component part of an assemblage, what is it that is done by power? Seigworth (2005) has argued that power, as a stratified dimension, plays the part of coagulating, or sedimenting, the "temporary arresting of the assemblage" (p. 165). This brings us back to the research question. Not only does a more traditional analysis of narratives essentialize assemblage components, it also serves as a coagulant. It freezes the assemblage, which following the above thought, is the working of

power. This might be said in another way; the arresting of an assemblage closes off lines of flight, possibilities for new thought.

Here I briefly conclude this section and the question of the performativity of practices of community food security. The live surface of the stories, in their unfinished quality, are like a book without meaning. The meaning is made via the plugging in of the reader into the various assemblages of material and semiotic relations. The understanding of community food practice is made through the performativity of their work, but the effect of the performativity is ultimately made through, and immanent to, the reader. I summarize here: first, the interviewee plugged into swarms of difference and desiring-production to pull together stories that affected them. Second, I coded the data in a non-representational manner, congruent with anti-essentialism, reading for affect—which Deleuze has described as, “...every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational” (in Seigwick, 2005, p.161). This provided a new middle point to enter the rhizomous assemblages. From there I was able to make connections and lines between different narratives—unsettling ontological certainty. Rather than seeing clearly, a reality that was being enacted through the performances of the narratives, I was able to see other possibilities of what might be. The third and final level of performativity is created through the reading of the cartographies, of the rhizoanalysis. As the stories bump into and through one another, what lines are created, what potential for new thought does this performance effect?

Research Question Two

The ways in which this work and the component practices might be read as heterogeneous and imbued with new possibilities and the capacity to make a reality different than the dominating and totalizing realities of neoliberalization.

Similar to the first research question, through the process of conducting this research project, I have come to realize that this question is a much different question than the one I thought it was when I wrote it months ago. In retrospect, I realize that I was expecting to find an answer with some degree of sedimentation—that the difference and heterogeneity would be describable and representable through language and words. In a way that is, perhaps, poorly suited to doctoral dissertations, but well suited to Deleuze’s imperative to experiment, I found myself in a very different space than where I began months earlier. Due in part to this re-framing of the questions, much of my “analysis” related to this question occurred in conjunction with question one, but several strands still remain: a methodological question of the ways of reading for heterogeneity, and the more general question of what can be said about neoliberalism through the rhizoanalysis.

The Networked Quality of Meaning

In the cartographies, several of the excerpts were repeated across different mappings. While this may appear as an accident or an editing error, I suggest it points to the way that the meaning and performativity of the narratives is not an essence within the stories themselves, but is made relationally. I brought each of these repetitive anecdotes into each assemblage from a different direction. The meaning of each is then made by the reader and in relationship to the other narratives within the assemblage.

Looping Back to a Totalizing Neoliberalism

This networked nature of meaning re-connects to the question of what this rhizoanalysis might say about neoliberalism as a strong and totalizing theory. These anecdotes could have been assembled in such a way that they traced a macro-structure of neoliberalism across the community food practices of the narratives. As Law (2009) suggests, I, as the researcher, could

have stripped away the difference and heterogeneity in such a way that this work could have been read as complicit with neoliberalism. But as I have argued elsewhere in this dissertation, I am uncertain of the action this would make possible, and am suspect, from my own experience working with the theory in that way, that it would close down more transformation than it enabled.

I feel that it is important here to emphasize that I am not dismissing the concept of neoliberalism. Rather, I see this research pointing toward the need for using different ways of making use of the concept beyond its received usage as a totalizing structure. Gilbert (2008) has suggested that neoliberalism is what Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1988) termed an “abstract machine.” They describe such a machine as,

...like the diagram of an assemblage. It draws lines of continuous variation, while the concrete assemblage treats variables and organized their highly diverse relations as a function of those lines. The assemblage negotiates variables at this or that level of variation, according to this or that degree of deterritorialization, and determines which variables will enter into constant relations or obey obligatory rules and which will serve instead as a fluid matter for variation. (p. 100)

In other words, the abstract machine draws sedimented lines through an assemblage. When an assemblage is plugged into such a machine, possibilities for new lines of flight are limited and cut off. Gilbert (2008) has described it like this:

The diagram of neoliberalism is easily sketched, delineated as it is by the will to generate lines of flight which are lines for capital and only for capital: all other routes are blocked, all other becomings delegitimated; mobility is only permitted precisely to the extent that

the object, subject or agent in question...can take on the form of capital or the commodity. (p. 174)

This reading of neoliberalism as an abstract machine offers one example of a possible anti-essentialist conception of this form of capitalism. It diminishes the strong explanatory power of neoliberalism, but does not diminish the effects of such an abstract machine. Employing a rhizoanalytic method is not mutually exclusive of an analysis of the way that an assemblage is plugged into the abstract machine of neoliberalism, but rather than re-enacting the lines of flight that are closed, rhizoanalysis allows for a focus on what could be different, a form of ontological politics.

Praxis

It is this idea of new possible worlds and ontological uncertainty in community food work that undergirds and shapes my thinking on praxis. In the machine of community food work, the praxis pieces of this research, are dependent upon the cultural worker's role within their assemblage. I suggest that there are implications for workers at all strata—those whose efforts are focused on-the-ground with communities, and those who are dealing with more abstract issues. To introduce this section, I return to a quotation from Law (2008),

This...is the leitmotif of this turn to the ontological. It is to refuse to be overawed by seemingly large systems, and the seeming ontological unity of the world enacted by large systems. It is, instead, to make the problem smaller, or better, to make it more specific.

To deal with the materialities of specific practices. To discover difference. And then to intervene in ways that might make a difference to those differences. (p. 637)

This is a return to the idea of ontological politics, but hopefully, on this side of the empirical, the relevance and heed to turn have been contextualized in specific practices. In this section, I

unpack this idea further, but also work with some theories that support and explore these politics through empirical work, and finally, contextualized for community and adult educators, I suggest where these exportations and empirical experimentations could lead.

Return to Ontological Politics

The experience of thinking, doing, and reflecting upon this research has awakened in me the relevance of empirical research to questions of ontology. Plugging into a post-structuralist, anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist machine, one that posits multiplicities as opposed to a singular reality, the ontological can only have meaning in the singularities of the multiple. Put differently, due to my theoretical positioning, I imagined I could read for difference and heterogeneity in central Appalachian community food work, but I had no idea what I would find—the meaning I could make. It was only in the particularities of specific practices that difference could be reasonably palpated. This idea of palpation, again drawing on May (2005), suggests that my reading of difference in the practices only scratches that surface of protean swarms of difference. The difference that I read was immanent, it did not come from a universal outside, so accordingly, each readers' reading of the cartographies in this dissertation would also be unique.

This has led me to even reconsider my previous readings of ontological politics. In my initial study of the concept, particularly Law and Urry (2004), I somehow imagined that the question of politics was associated with a certain set of possible realities—i.e. social scientists have the option of enacting, or making more real, reality a., reality b., reality c., or reality d. Perhaps, this was a hold-over from received notions of ontology as singular, or at least mostly singular, but the process of doing this research project has opened up a new line of thought for me. The politics of ontology are done on the minutest level, and while certain possibilities are

certainly more probable than others, there are interminably more possible realities than those three or four that I might have imagined. While this might point to my linearity of thought, it also points to the importance of experimentation. We have no idea what is possible unless we experiment with thought, with concepts, with the material world. This raises the question of what it means to experiment in this way.

Experimentation

To respond to this question, I return the opening chapter of this dissertation where I briefly described my conception of social justice. I introduced an ethical question central to the Deleuzian canon: “What can a body do?” to extend the quotation, “...of what affects is it capable?” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1988, p. 60). For Deleuze, what a body can do is directly correlated to its ability to be affected—which in turn, holds some answer to the question. But first, let me briefly elucidate the relationship between affect and doing (or action). Deleuze (1988) used an example from the natural sciences to illustrate this point. For a tick, three affects directly guide its doing:

The first has to do with light (climb to the top of a branch); the second is olfactive (let yourself fall onto the mammal that passes beneath the branch); and the third is thermal (seek the area without fur, the warmest spot). (p. 125)

While the tick may have this limited range of affects that effect this particular action, Deleuze, drawing on 17th century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, has argued that this question of affective capability is a perennial ethical question.

Deleuze also makes a distinction between two different types of affect and their corresponding effect on possibilities for action and new thought.

Affects are becomings: sometimes they weaken us in so far as they diminish our power to act and decompose our relationships (sadness), sometimes they make us stronger in so far as they increase our power and make enter into a more vast superior individual (joy).

(Deleuze & Parnet, p. 60)

I return to this concept later in this section, but believe that this idea of affect, their posited relationship to freezing or freeing transformation, is important for the praxis implication of ontological and affective experimentation.

This thought returns to the idea of strong theories that engender a sadness, a despair of probable possibilities (e.g. the abstract machine of neoliberalism). As a critical practice, reading for neoliberalism can be employed over and over again, each time generating despair, more homogeneity, more neoliberalism. Rhizoanalysis, as I employed it, validates the affective register. It frees up the reader to experiment with affects, to encounter the new, remarkable, and interesting—to free thought from knowledge. Here Deleuze and Guatarri (1994) make a similar argument,

To think is to experiment, but experimentation is always that which is in the process of coming about—the new, remarkable, and interesting that replace the appearance of truth and are more demanding than it is. What is in the process of coming about is no more what ends than what begins. (p. 111)

To experiment is to immanently and affectively deterritorialize assemblages that have been sedimented and to, in the process, open new lines of flight, palpating difference and “allow the new to emerge” (Baugh, 2005, p. 92). I suggest that this deterritorializing is followed by a territorializing, composition instead of critique, but yet, unfixed, a becoming.

In terms of ontological politics, I suggest that the process of determining which reality to be made real be one of experimentation. The process of experimentation laid out here is not one of fixed beginnings and ends, but, rather one of on-going experimentation and composition. The realities are made through this process of experimentation with thought, concepts, and the singularities of material-semiotics. To return to the Law (2008) quotation from earlier in the chapter, this means a continued and embodied notion of the existence of greater difference and the “[refusal] to be overawed by seemingly large systems, and the seeming ontological unity of the world enacted by large systems...”(p. 637).

Praxis - Potential Directions

Heterogeneity and Generative Themes

In this section I move into greater detail regarding applications and frameworks for praxis. As I have noted elsewhere, this research has been conducted within the context of a larger USDA funded project, the Appalachian Foodshed Project. A significant amount of effort within this project has been focused on the development of a regional network, and sub-networks, for the purpose of re-thinking and organizing collaborative efforts to increase equitable access to fresh, nutrient-dense foods. Due to a variety of factors, the development of sustained and strategically coordinated efforts within these networks has been a slippery objective. Drawing on my research and experience working within these emerging networks, I believe that part of this difficulty is due to a recalcitrant ontological rigidity within the various assemblages that compose these assemblages of actors. I also posit that this particular methodological approach, of rhizoanalysis via narrative inquiry, could be a possible mechanism for loosening elements of this rigidity. To illustrate this point, I draw on a post-structural reading of Paulo Freire’s generative theme and suggest a possible connection to notions of agonistic pluralism.

“To investigate the generative theme is to investigate man’s thinking about reality and man’s action upon reality, which is his praxis” (Freire, 1972, p. 97).

Generative themes, Paulo Freire and beyond. The Freireian concept of the generative theme is folded into his concept of conscientização, conscientization, or critical consciousness. For Freire (1972) conscientização is the process whereby the oppressed become aware of their exploitation by an oppressor and actively seek to challenge this arrangement. In Freire’s pedagogy, generative themes are abstract concepts that are used to produce dialogic conversation within oppressed groups. It is Freire’s contention that through dialogue, these broad themes percolate down to the particulars, to everyday lived experiences. This dialogue enables the participants to see the “true aspect” of “objective reality” which no longer looks like a “blind alley,” it becomes “a challenge which men must meet” (p. 96). These themes are not prescribed in Freire’s early work, but some contemporary scholars in this lineage have suggested the use of generative themes such as neoliberalism and capitalism. The idea is that such terms will generate consciousness-raising dialogue about the particular ways that these concepts intersect with ordinary experiences of ordinary people.

Freireian concepts such as the generative theme and conscientização have been subject to several revisions over the past forty years. While I want to retain some general ideas from these concepts, I suggest a several revisions that might make the concepts useful points of praxis within the context of my research. It should be clear that idea of the generative theme described in the previous paragraph relies on the ontological supposition of a singular reality that might be known through particular inquiries—the position that Law (2008) has referred to as common

sense realism. Feminist adult educators, such as Hart (1990), have also suggested that the received Freireian approach minimizes the importance of subjective experience by beginning with a pre-set, abstract theme. The assumption of tacit agreement overlooks the importance of the personal embodied and lived experience. I would further augment this revision and argue that both Freire and Hart demand and expect a certain level of homogeneity amongst dialogic participants. Hart even argued that without homogeneity of race, class, and gender, the conscious-raising groups, of interest to her, would not serve their intended end. It is worth noting that Hart was primarily interested in raising women's consciousness to their gendered oppression. Even through Freire's and Hart's incongruities, I suggest that both are working from the assumption that oppression and oppressors can be known and named, thereby leading to certain praxis, and the development of the participant into one who is more fully human.

As Roelvink (2010) has argued, a pitfall of this particular approach to praxis is that it has the capacity to actually squelch action, rather than enable it. This is linked back to the Deleuzian reading of Spinoza's work on affect. Rather than producing a joyous affect, the result of such critical analysis tends to evoke one of sadness (Roelvink, 2010; Sedgwick, 2003). As I noted earlier, Deleuze linked sadness to inaction and joyousness to action. To put it another way: the critical knowing of an assemblage actually serves to sediment it, to close off lines of flight to delimit the body's possible capabilities. The result is a muting of possible transformation.

Building upon this argument by Roelvink (2010), I suggest that rhizoanalysis has the potential to serve as a post-structural version of the generative theme. But the ideal end result is not critical consciousness, per se, but ontological destabilization. As in the case of my research, the generative theme flows, not from a prescribed abstraction, but from the singularities of small systems, and from the affective connections drawn between these singularities. Following with

my arguments about knowledge and thought in Chapter Three, I suggest that such an approach to the generative theme would focus not on the knowledge of “what is really happening,” (the critique approach) but on what could be made (the composition approach). Knowledge would no longer be the point of action and praxis; it would be replaced by thought—thinking difference.

Let me describe a possible way that this approach might be operationalized within the context of a community education project, like the Appalachian Foodshed Project. Stories of practice could be collected in the manner presented in this dissertation, using appreciative inquiry with a focus on narratives. The resulting stories could be analyzed as I have done, via affect, and then rhizomatically linked through affect and immanence. Now I diverge from this dissertation: the re-assembled stories might then be orally presented in a larger meeting, via a public reading. Participants would then break into smaller and then larger groups and discuss the affective sentiments and thoughts engendered by the narratives. Given quality facilitation, these sentiments and thoughts could then be used as a basis for developing strategic processes and goals for the purposes of the group: social justice, community food security, etc. This is, of course, a very rough sketch of a potential praxis application for this type of rhizoanalysis, but it provides a point for further thought.

Madness, Composition, and Agonistic Ontology Flattening

This idea of cultivating joyous affects and the making of worlds of heterogeneity, or an ontology of becoming (White, 2009) leads me to a final thought regarding praxis—agonistic pluralism. Agonism is etymologically related to antagonism. In ancient Greece, the agon was a place of competition, but rather than a sole focus on winning or losing, the focus was on the productive nature of the conflict. In addition to negation, how could the conflict also be affirmative and productive? Conflict in and of itself was not a negative, but rather a point for

bettering the polis (Acampora, 2013). This idea was taken up by Nietzsche and then by others, political philosophers such as Chantal Mouffe (2000) and William Connolly (1999; 2005). Mouffe and Connolly have applied the concept to questions of democratic politics. Connolly (1999) has argued that in contemporary political life, differences are essentialized and then privatized—sedimented and individualized. Antagonisms are favored to the detriment of agonism. Activist artist Krzysztof Wodiczko (2012) has argued that democracy does not just exist, ready to be taken-up, rather, it has to be done, to be made; it is a job. He has suggested further that tacit consensus, or the unwillingness to address conflict, is as repressive as some authoritarian forms of politics. Drawing from these theorists, I suggest that the relevant question for this rhizoanalysis is, not “how to avoid conflicting ontologies” but rather, “how to bring them into productive conflict.”

I posit the type of rhizoanalysis presented in this research as a contribution to the ongoing work of agonistic pluralism—or, drawing on DeLanda (2006), what I call agonistic ontology flattening. Martin (2009), writing about Connolly’s work, has suggested that this type of pluralist ethos is less about individuals’ “thinking twice so much as [about] institutions and practices that expose them to alternative and competing points of view” (p. 139). The work of these institutions and practices is then not to avoid ontological conflicts, but to stage them in such a way that “we can successfully distinguish adversaries from antagonists, disputants from outright enemies” (p. 140). Martin is writing here in relation to the rhetoric of evil that is used in discourse between states, but the general sentiment remains. In community food work, how can we stage conflicts so that the focus is less on negation, but on productive dialogue, and the affirmation of ontologies of becoming? To put it differently, how do we focus less energy on epistemological critique and re-direct collective effort to the composition of new ontologies?

In both Connolly's agonistic pluralism and in the rhizoanalytic research of this dissertation, the affective register plays an important role as a potential force for mobilizing new lines of thought and dislodging sedimented ontologies. For Connolly, the "visceral attachment to life," or desiring-production, is the "preliminary soil from which commitment to more generous identifications, responsibilities, and connections might be cultivated" (in Grove, 2009, p. 187). Similarly, in this dissertation research, the primacy of the affective has been a central piece of my rhizo-methodology. In received ideas of politics and research, this protean force has often been invalidated, but the cultivation of this intensity, in both agonistic pluralism and agonistic ontology flattening, allows for new possibilities of thought and social transformation.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research project should be considered within the context of my attempt to conduct research that is not oriented to a common-sense realist ontology. So many of the limitations typically ascribed to that form of social science research are not a pertinent here. But this is actually a critical limitation of this study. Because I am not applying many epistemological and ontological standards that are part of common-sense realism, I am at risk of producing a work that is only considered worthwhile by a small portion of the academy. It is my hope that the larger work and arguments of this dissertation might mollify this limitation, but it is a reality, no less.

Future Directions and Considerations

At numerous moments during the writing of this dissertation, I have restrained myself from allowing my reading and researching to head down some new but divergent path. Had I kept a careful log of these paths, this section would be longer than anyone would care to read, but here, I offer several possible future directions for this work.

At a general level, I believe that there is much work to be done with the methodological concept of rhizoanalysis. To borrow from Deleuze, we have no idea what it is capable of. In my review of rhizoanalytic research, no two operationalizations of the concept were even mildly similar. I suppose this is the accomplishment of a (non)method. Even so, it seems that there is much work to be done investigating its potential for ontological deterritorialization. Because of Deleuze's affinity for empirical work, I believe that there is considerable room for inquiries within numerous fields and disciplines, but particularly in the applied social sciences and education.

From the particular research presented in this dissertation, there seems to be a potentially productive area of experimentation and inquiry related to the application of this methodology in a more participatory context. I alluded to this in this final chapter. To be more specific: this work employed the affective registers of the interviewees, myself as the cartographer, and you as the reader. A more participatory approach might include more interviewee participation in the cartography level. How might the inclusion of a greater range and manifestation of affections make for more robust and affectively-engaging cartographies? I would like to see this question explored.

Following this line of thought, I suggest an additional consideration for future research: this involves the degree to which this method might or might not be instrumentalized for certain purposes and agendas. Even within the context of my usage, I came with a particular theoretical idea in mind. I wanted to read for difference in the face of reading for neoliberalism. How can this methodology be taken up and used in such a way that the pursuit of difference remains the primary motivation?

Given the previous considerations, my final suggestion for future research is at the intersection of this dissertation research and the concept of self-organizing social networks. It is important to note that this does not refer to the social media/social network concept, rather it refers to what DeLanda (in Escobar & Osterweil, 2010) has called, self-organizing meshworks. . In multiple fields and disciplines, both within and beyond the academy, there has been a growing interest in adaptive social networks as a modus of social change (Vandeventer & Mandel, 2007; Holley, 2012; Escobar & Osterweil, 2010; Evans, 2010; Kania & Kramer, 2013). Though these conceptions vary significantly, they all share a similar interest in the formation of non-hierarchical networks. Escobar and Osterweil (2010) noted the relationship between hierarchical and self-organizing meshwork-type networks,

Hierarchies entail a large degree of centralized control, ranks, overt planning, homogenization and particular goals and rules of behavior; they operate under linear time and conform to tree-like structures. The military, capitalists enterprises and most bureaucratic organizations have largely operated on this basis. Meshworks, on the contrary, are based on decentralized decision-making, self-organization, heterogeneity and diversity. They develop through encounter with their environments, while conserving their basic organization (their autopoiesis). (p. 197)

There is a distinct similarity between the concept of meshwork and that of Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1988) rhizome. Action does not flow from a singular starting point at the top of the quintessential hierarchy, it rather emerges from middles of the organization, always moving in unpredictable ways. This is a fitting foreground for understanding networks as Terranova (in Escobar & Osterweil, 2010) has conceived them as, "the least structured organization that can be said to have any structure at all" (p. 198). If flat ontologies (Escobar and Osterweil, 2010) could

promise to provide anything, it might be less structure. I have suggested that rhizoanalysis might be a (non)method capable of flattening ontologies. For me this then raises the question of how such a method might be taken up by social meshwork-type networks.

Conclusion

As I have mentioned elsewhere, my original aim for this research changed significantly over the course of the months that it took me to plan, do, and write it. At several points, I have found myself viewing this as a weakness that somehow reveals errors in my thinking, but from a more Deleuzian-perspective, I have come to see this as a becoming and indicative of multiplicity and difference. When I began this work, I had a critical project in mind, one that would point to instances of neoliberalism in particular, place-based community food practices. My thinking was that this would point to points of praxis, or how things might be done differently, so that new tools of community food practice might be taken up, particularly those that were not made from the raw materials of neoliberalism. But as I dug deeper into theory, into the real lived experience of people working for a more equitable food system, that even the critiques of neoliberalism relied on the same capitalistic raw materials. If I wanted to imagine new tools and new possibilities, I had to dig, not deeper, but somewhere else altogether.

I hope that the narratives within this dissertation move the reader, maybe not deeper, but somewhere else—to a place where reality might look a little more complicated, where it is harder to sift difference out of one's ontological beliefs. In writing this dissertation, I have found many points where my other post-positivist-self wanted to say something very conclusive about the world, about the research. I hope to have avoided, at least parts, of that representational trap; but at the same time, I believe that, even in this incoherence, there is space to read parts of the world anew.

⊕ CODA

After refrains, repeats, more refrains and repeats, I want to jump to the coda of this dissertation, to a space different than the rest of the document, but critical to its finish. Much of this dissertation has focused on the creation of a machine—but one that is worthless unless it is put to use. My interests in this research have been borne of my work with the Appalachian Foodshed Project. In this USDA-funded project we (university and community partners across three central Appalachian states) have worked in what seems like a stuttering and circular pattern in an attempt to enhance community food security in the region of the U.S. This dissertation developed from the middle of this effort and so I want to finish by drawing some concrete connections back to this work in an attempt to demonstrate “the juice” (as one of our community colleagues has said) that one might expect to find when plugged into this particular version of rhizoanalysis.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the industrial global food economy is a form of madness. It is so exceedingly complex, non-coherent, and unknowable that it is difficult to find moorings, to determine what can be done to compose a food system that produces more equitable worlds and materialities. In such complexity, a given theory of change does not necessarily lead to the point its advocates might expect—there is too much unknowable, non-causally related chaos between means and ends. I think this is what some like Guthman (2008, 2011) has been alluding to in her critiques of community food work as neoliberal. But, I suggest that when we stop trying to concretely know what is “actually” happening and therefore what can logically be done, and instead shift of a position of not knowing, we are (non)intuitively moving in the direction of new possibilities for our food system.

In my experience as a community food practitioner and scholar, I have found that when adrift in the sea of complexity and disorder that I want to reach out for something that can be known—foundational facts. But taken through my poststructural dissertation lens, I find these facts to often be the raw materials of polemics. I.e. in community food work, markets are bad, worker-owned cooperatives are good; conventional is bad, large-scale organic production is a little less bad, but the small local, biological farmer is good. In the midst of the unknowable, hyper-complex, global food system, these fixities have been comforting to me—a place to grab onto, a starting point. But I suggest that these fixed points, while comforting and productive of moral arrogance, do little to open new possibilities.

I posit that narratives, such as the affectively mapped cartographies of chapter five, as a powerful tool wherever there exist polemics in community food work. These narratives are not a one-stop-shop panacea or a metaphorical snake-oil, but they contain a capacity to humanize and destabilize the polemics of food system work. When reading these cartographies, sweeping explanations of the good and bad start to recede into the background—the everyday realities of smaller systems starts to become more visible.

Rhizoanalysis is only one way to use the power of story to unsettle polemics. In many ways, artists have known of this power for millennia. But a large amount community food work is being done, not by artists, but by the academy, an institution known for its strict boundaries of is and is not considered valid or true knowledge. To draw a line back to my work, the Appalachian Foodshed Project is a good example of community food work happening through the university, in relationship with community organizations. In these more rigid epistemological settings, I suggest that rhizoanalysis has the capacity to make valid the use of narrative realities—other ways of knowing and making worlds.

I suggest narratives (again, like the cartographies of chapter five) offer an entry point for locating oneself in the swarm of food system madness and a starting point for experimental action. Recall that the narratives were developed using Appreciative Inquiry. The interviewees were asked to focus on the joyous, the “positive exceptions, successes, and most vital or alive moments” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 6). I then used a similar focus to read the stories and pull out the mini-narratives that joyously moved me. In the cartographies, these joyous moments are brought into a positive conflict—where one story does not invalidate another, but rather points to the complexity of food system work, of the failure of polemics.

In concrete terms of action—these points of positive conflict also indicate new possible connections—of new ways to view work that might have been previously sedimented by the reader. These thought connections can provide fertile ground for strategizing new action and new possibilities—not those based on strong abstract, overly explanatory theories, but those based on new ideas of what might be possible.

In our work with the Appalachian Foodshed Project, we have discussing taking these cartographies back to our communities. One possibility is to do public readings, or a readers theater type performance—and to use ensuing dialogue as a generative space for thinking about new modes of experimental self-organizing around food system change. This might mean asking questions like: How did the stories add a new level of complexity to your view of the food systems in which you work? What moment(s) gave you pause, grabbed you, or felt connected to the work you do with food systems? Who might you work with to bring this/these strand(s) into your current efforts? How can we experiment with these ideas together? As I noted at the end of the previous chapter, I think there is much work to be done connecting these rhizomatic ways of

makings meaning with some of the networked ways of thinking about social change (Escobar & Osterweil, 2010; Terranova, 2004, Delanda, 2006).

In summary, there is a tremendous amount of work yet to be done to create a food system that is equitable and just—in deed, it is arguably an endless process. Embracing and accepting the complexity of food systems in an important component of working in the madness. I argue that in our applied work this means avoiding the use of polemics to create a sense of certainty. It means telling our stories, it means listening to the stories others tell, and I think overall it means investing ourselves in the idea that as Escobar (2009) has put it, “Other words are (already) possible.”

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APPENDICES
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Date, 2014

Participant
Street Address
City, State

Dear _____,

Over that past three years I have been working with Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP). At the same time, I have been completing a Ph.D. in Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education. Working with individuals and organizations like yours, has been a highlight of my schooling process. I am writing now to request your participation in my doctoral research project, entitled: Possibilities for Transformations: Rhizomatic Explorations of Community Food Practice in central Appalachia. I am interested in how the recent and current work of your organization has unfolded and how your descriptions and stories of these efforts might be told in order to prompt new ways of thinking about food, agriculture, and social justice. In my experiences, the work of your organization, _____, is a boundary-pushing example of regional work happening at this nexus.

Briefly, I am seeking volunteer participation from three organizations in central Appalachia, one from each state associated with the AFP: North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. Each organization will be asked to allow me to visit their spaces and interview six employees or volunteers. The one-on-one interviews should last about an hour and will take place during a time of each individual's convenience during this summer, 2014.

If you and your organization agree to participate, I can work with you to develop a list of additional interviewees. The overall process is conditional on the interviewing of at least six individuals associated with your organization.

If you would like to participate, or would like more information, please contact me at pdadamer@vt.edu or 217-306-1799. I would be happy to set up a time to meet or chat with you about the process. If you have further questions or concerns, you may also contact my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Kim Niewolny at niewolny@vt.edu or 540-231-5784.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Phil D'Adamo-Damery
Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Title: Possibilities for Transformations: Rhizomatic Explorations of Community Food Practice in central Appalachia

Investigators:

Phil D'Adamo-Damery (Advisor: Kim Niewolny)
Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education - Virginia Tech
pdadamer@vt.edu / (217) 306-1799

Kim Niewolny, Assistant Professor
Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education - Virginia Tech
niewolny@vt.edu / (540) 231-5784

I. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and highlight the stories of community food system work in the three-state region of West Virginia, southwest Virginia, and western North Carolina. By gathering these stories via interview, we hope to learn more about the community transformations that are occurring through the work of your organization, particularly as it relates to food, agriculture and social justice. We hope to use your story and those of your organizational and regional colleagues to a) share best practices across central Appalachia and b) highlight and explore the localized complexity of community food work related to social justice and fairness. This study is part of Phil D'Adamo-Damery's research for his Ph.D. in Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education.

II. Procedures

This study involves three different organizations in the region covered by the Appalachian Foodshed Project—one in each state. In each state, the investigator (Phil D'Adamo-Damery) will interview at least six different individuals who are either employed or closely involved with the given organization. Should you agree to participate, your interview will last between 60-90 minutes. You will be interviewed once, unless you and the researcher determine that a subsequent interview is needed. The interview will take place at a location of your convenience and comfort. The interviews will be audio-recorded and later transcribed by Phil D'Adamo-Damery

III. Risks

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Virginia Tech. This board is responsible for protecting the rights of humans involved in university-based research. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Should you agree to participate, the interview will focus on your past, present, and future work with food, agriculture, and social justice. After the interview has been completed, you will be contacted to review the transcript. You have the right to either remain anonymous or to publicly share your identity. Neither is compulsory. If you chose to share your name for future Appalachian Foodshed Project and scholarly publications, you will be asked to sign a second consent form in which you agree to publicly share your story.

IV. Benefits

There are no financial benefits for participating in this study. If you chose to publicly share your stories, you and your organization may benefit from increased publicity and the potential for new regional connections with other groups working on issues related to community food and social justice. You will also have access to the transcriptions of your interview upon their completion. That stated, no promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

As noted above, you are free to remain completely anonymous throughout this research process. If you choose to share your full identity, only your name and organizational affiliation will be used. No personally sensitive information will be collected during the interview process. If you choose to share your full identity, you will agree to do so via a second consent form, sent to you after the review of your initial transcript.

If you choose to maintain your full anonymity, all identifying information will be removed from the transcripts. Only the investigators will have access to this information. In subsequent documents and publications, a pseudonym will be used for both you and your organization.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

You will not receive financial compensation for participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit. You are free to choose not to answer any question. If you choose to withdraw from this study at any time, the data that has been collected will be destroyed.

VIII. Questions or Concern

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact Phil D'Adamo-Damery or his advisor, Kim Niewolny. Their contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research participant VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Date _____

Participant signature

Participant printed name

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Principal Investigators:

Phil D'Adamo-Damery (Advisor: Kim Niewolny)

Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education - Virginia Tech
pdadamer@vt.edu / (217) 306-1799

Kim Niewolny, Assistant Professor

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Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board:

David Moore, Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board

(540) 231-4991

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Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Script

Introduction

Hi, I'm Phil D'Adamo-Damery. I am a student at Virginia Tech where I work with the Appalachian Foodshed Project, and as a student, completing a Ph.D. in the Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education. Over the past three years, I have become familiar with the work of your organization through name of contact person. I am excited to hear your stories about your work with the organization—your experiences and the things that excite you and keep you motivated to do the work that you do. I have a number of questions here to help guide the conversation, but am really interested in hearing your stories and your hopes for food, agriculture, and community in this area and region.

1) When you wake up in the morning, what gets you excited about the work that you do with food systems?

probe a: What motivates you to do the work that you do?

probe b: Tell of a story that captures the essence of why you do the work that you do?

probe c: What are your hopes for the food system and your community that drive you to do the work that you do?

2) Think about your doing work related to food/agricultural systems. Describe an “ah-ha” moment, a time when something really clicked for you.

probe a: What factors in the environment (social, cultural, physical) contributed to this being an ah-ha experience for you?

- i. What was it about this experience that really grabbed your attention that makes you remember it?

probe b: How does this event stand out in relation to other parts of your work?

3) Think about your history working with your organization, what has been a key event in that experience? A peak moment? A story about something that went really well?

probe a: What factors in the environment (social, cultural, physical) contributed to this being a peak experience for you?

probe b: What made this experience seem more significant or more successful than other parts of the work that you and your organization have done?

4) What is it about working in (your location) that makes your food system work meaningful to you?

probe a: What is it about this community, this area, that draws you to this particular food system work?

5) Tell me about something your organization is currently doing that you feel is really successful or that holds potential for changing your community's food system?

probe a: Can you tell me more about why this particular effort points towards the food system and community you would like to see?

- 6) Tell me a story about a partnership (formal or informal) that you have had with another individual or organization that has gone well?**
probe a: How did this partnership develop?
probe b: If this partnership could go in any direction, where would you see it going?
What would be the best outcome of this collaborative effort?
- 7) If you were able to look back 20 years from now and see the lives of the people in your community, what would you like to see in them? What sort of life capabilities and capacities would you like to see?**
probe a: What would the lives of individuals look like if they are able to live their lives to the fullest—be most fully themselves?
- 8) In your time doing food systems work, what political, institutional, or cultural changes have you seen that have given you hope about the future of the food system SW VA (W. NC or WV)?**
- 9) If were able to look back five years down the road from now, what would you like to see having happened in your specific work?**
probe a: What are some steps that might be taken to get there?
probe b: Who might be involved over those five years?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to tell me?**
- 11) Is there anyone else associated with organization's name that I should talk to?**