

# **SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION SHARING MEALS IN AN ECOVILLAGE**

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BSocSc (Hons), MRes

Submitted on 17 October 2014 in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Masters of Research, 2014

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## **THESIS ORIGINALITY STATEMENT**

This work is substantially my own, and where any part of this work is not my own, I have indicated this by acknowledging the source of that part or those parts of the work. This material has not been submitted in whole or in part for the fulfilment of any other diploma or degree.

Signed .....

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## **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this thesis, within the expansive field of the anthropology of food, is the relationship between cooking, kitchens and identity. The contemporary landscape of food production and consumption is continually changing. More recently, issues of sustainable practices have entered into popular discourse around the food we eat and where it comes from. In order to understand the relationship between food and ideas of sustainable, conscious consumption, I undertook my fieldwork in an Australian ecovillage. My research was conducted over a period of eight weeks in the summer of 2014. I lived and worked in the village during this time as an active participant in the community's practices and projects.

My time in the village kitchen gave me insight into the different cooking philosophies of everyone I cooked with – their traditions, beliefs and attitudes that were just as essential to the meals they cooked as the raw ingredients. In the ecovillage, I observed people performing and reinforcing their identity through the process of creating a meal. This research also speaks to some of the rapidly growing organisations attempting to change the way Australians eat food in order to promote an appreciation of the environmental and social impact of their food choices.

## INTRODUCTION

‘You’re cutting that tomato wrong.’ David pointed at the chopping board as he strode through the community kitchen. I looked down at the round slices of tomato. ‘One day, one day I will show you the right way to cut a tomato.’ I wasn’t sure that there was a *wrong* way to cut a tomato. Someone would have to try very hard to cut a tomato incorrectly. Nick, who was chopping cucumbers across the bench, looked at my tomato slices. ‘Oh yeah, that’s not the way,’ he said as he nodded. ‘David showed me how he wants tomatoes cut. Here, I’ll help ya.’ He came around to my side of the bench and took a tomato in hand. He used the knife to gouge out the small indent where the stem grew from the fruit. ‘That’s it,’ he said. ‘David wants us to do them like that so we don’t waste any of it.’

\* \* \*

The anthropology of food is a rapidly growing area of study within the discipline. While anthropologists have been concerned with food since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002: 100), it is only within the last 30 years that ‘the study of food has moved from the margins to the centre of intellectual discourse’ (Watson and Caldwell, 2009: 1). This trend reflects the ubiquity of food across conversations about culture, ethnicity, economics, religion, ecology and health. Food is present across all

aspects of contemporary media: we engage with food not simply through cooking and eating, but also through recipe books, magazines, reality television and Internet blogs. The variety of meals we can create and the combination of flavours we can produce are so innumerable as to seem endless, but as the title of E. N. Anderson's book on food and culture emphasizes, despite differences in *what* is consumed: *Everybody Eats* (2005). David Sutton also explores the intersection of food and culture, through a theoretical and ethnographic exploration of memory and material culture (2001). While Sutton seeks to understand meals through the memories they evoke, Joy Adapon (2008) suggests food is communication in itself, akin to a language that can be read and interpreted. Her particular consideration of home and commercial cooking in Mexico provides an account of the relationship between food, people and cooking.

The focus of this thesis, within the expansive field of the anthropology of food, is the relationship between cooking, kitchens and identity. Food production and consumption are essential to our understanding of contemporary life. The processes and exchanges we observe and partake in when we cook and eat provide insight into how we interact with other people and our environment. Sutton's (2001) and Adapon's (2008) approaches to food and cooking were especially useful in engaging with these ideas and applying them to my experience in the field.

The aim of my research is to examine the different processes, philosophies and identities people embody through their cooking. While these issues have been covered to an extent by anthropologists, including Jack Goody (1982, 1998) and Paul Stoller (1989), this thesis engages with a location, community and distinct set of issues that are unexplored within the discipline. The contribution of this project within the broader field of anthropology lies within its potential to establish a discourse on food production, consumption and knowledge that speaks to some emerging lifestyle and ecological trends that will inform the future climate of food anthropology and ethnographic practice.

The contemporary landscape of food production and consumption is continually changing. More recently, issues of sustainable practices have entered into popular discourse around the food we eat and where it comes from. A growing number of

people want a better sense of the origin of their meals, where and how the ingredients were grown and whether the processes involved in producing their food aligns with their ecological, nutritional or ethical philosophies and values. Michael Pollan, journalist and food activist, is one of the loudest voices arguing for a return to “real food” rather than processed nutrition. He suggests that in order to combat the Western diet and all the detrimental effects that may emerge from it, consumers need to ‘Shake the hand that feeds you’ (2009: 160), to understand the journey of food from producer to plate and to appreciate the potential impact of those food choices. In this sense sustainability has shifted from a term connected only to ecological and biological discourse, to one with social, cultural and political resonances. This is reflected in the prevalence of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes, a model that facilitates the purchase of seasonal locally sourced fruit and vegetables; the wealth of information available on cultivating balcony or ‘urban’ veggie patches; and even the increasing amount of detail the big supermarket chains provide on the origins of their produce.

In order to understand the relationship between food and ideas of sustainable, conscious consumption, I undertook my fieldwork in an Australian ecovillage. The ecovillage was relatively young, but established and gradually expanding. My research was conducted over a period of eight weeks in the early summer of 2014. I lived in the village during this time as an active participant in the community’s practices and projects. I approached this particular ecovillage as a potential fieldsite as their website and village ethos reflected a strong emphasis on celebrating community through cooking and eating. From the first day of my stay it was clear that the way people interacted with food in the kitchen revealed some aspects of their relationship with the rest of the inhabitants of the village and their own attitudes and motivations towards cooking, eating and sustainable practice. This approach is both informed by and opposed to the idea that from an anthropological study of food we might learn more about ‘broad societal processes’ (Mintz and Du Bois 2002: 99). Rather than engaging with expansive theoretical applications, this research is interested in establishing a personal, individual-based account of cooking and food. My approach intends to be a ‘bottom-up’ rather than a ‘top-down’ consideration of the meanings embodied through the activity of cooking and commensal experience.



The ecovillage endorsed certain values: it emphasised sustainable production and consumption alongside shared ownership of and responsibility for the surrounding environment. The founding vision behind the ecovillage is described on the ecovillage website: 'Our common thread is a deep belief that through living cooperatively we can enjoy more rewarding, environmentally sustainable lives that nourish each other and which can ultimately benefit the planet'. The philosophy of the ecovillage is cooperative living through an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, and as such speaks directly to the equilibrium between human influence and the physical landscape.

My time in the village kitchen gave me insight into the different cooking philosophies of everyone I cooked with: their traditions, beliefs and attitudes that were just as essential to the meals they cooked as the raw ingredients. This idea was confirmed through the discussions I had with residents and helpers about cooking and food and their own relationship with the community kitchen. Attitudes that directed people's actions and feelings towards the community kitchen reflect more than personal taste preferences and habits. They reveal something about the connection of the individual to the kitchen and the meals produced therein, and their relationship with the people who consume their food.

In Chapter 1, I establish the fieldsite and explain some of the logistics of the ecovillage. Here in this chapter I also introduce the inhabitants of the village who had the most influence on the development of my research and their position within the community. Chapter 2 gives an account of the kitchen in the ecovillage and develops the importance of it in fostering a sense of consensus and accord amongst the inhabitants of the village. Chapter 3 follows the description of the kitchen with a closer examination of the meals that were produced therein. This chapter engages closely with the experiences of different cooks in the kitchen. In Chapter 4, I develop the insights of the previous chapter into an analysis of the ways that identity is expressed through action in the kitchen. How does each person cook their meal and what does it suggest about their philosophies, values and attitudes? Finally, Chapter 5 considers the role of the kitchen within the ecovillage and the ambiguities it represents. Following this chapter are some concluding thoughts on my research, including future directions for study and its implications.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **The village**

David, the ecovillage founder, assured me ahead of my arrival that he would arrange for someone to pick me up from the airport and not to worry about booking a seat on the bus, they ran infrequently. After I had waited an hour at the airport, David called me to let me know Ravith would pick me up on his way back from the city. Ravith arrived an hour later, hung over and tired from the night before. From the airport the trip follows the highway; one long stretch punctuated by road signs warning of wombats and kangaroos. As the crow flies, the distance between the village and the city looked tiny, a trip that would take no more than half an hour, but the village is on a peninsula and the freeway follows a broadly curving loop up and around the coastline. About 15 minutes into the two-hour trip we drove past a McDonalds. Ravith asked me if I'd like to stop there for a drink. 'Last food for the drive,' he said pointing out through the passenger window. 'Last McDonald's you have for a very long time,' he laughed. I declined, and we drove on. Bushfires had swept through the peninsula the year before. We drove through country where the bush had started to regenerate in parts, all scrubby green undergrowth and black trees stretching to the sky.

The ecovillage sits on a 23-acre property overlooking Williams Bay. The land is a combination of river flats, grassland and bushland. Water is sourced from a permanent creek, three dams and rainwater tanks. The village is bordered by farms to the north and east, the ocean to the west and a small pub and bottle shop to the south. The nearest town, two kilometres down the freeway, has a population of around 300 people. The town centre consists of a primary school, a small supermarket, a pharmacy, a petrol station and a post office. A billboard outside the pharmacy encourages residents to support the petition to open a credit union in town. A small, single-storey hospital was recently opened to serve the peninsula's growing population. The population of the town itself is fairly small, but it functions as the regional centre of the area. While other parts of the peninsula command higher property prices and attract more tourists, the town is its largest commercial centre, and is colloquially referred to as the 'CBD' by the ecovillage residents and visitors. There is a fish-and-chip shop and a police station just outside of town. A lone sergeant, who lives behind the building with his family in a small fibro cottage, mans the station. According to locals, the main problems he deals with are underage drinking, speeding and noise complaints. When the sergeant takes his annual leave he is relieved of his patrols by officers from other districts, who come and stay at a local motel during their weeklong shifts.

We arrived at the village about 10 minutes after we had exhausted seemingly all potential topics for polite small talk. Balinese flags lined the steep slope of the dirt driveway. To the right of the driveway a large sign advertised the Bay Retreat, a motel on the ecovillage property. In the 1970s, the land on which the village is built was occupied by a golf club with adjoining motel accommodation, and some signs of the course remain: a few grassy clearings, and bands of pines surrounding the property. David, the ecovillage founder, refurbished and reopened the old motel in order to generate a steady source of income and attract interest in the project while he established the village and community proper. The refurbishment also included opening a small café restaurant, the Hub. The Hub was one of a small handful of restaurants on the peninsula, and was fairly popular with the locals and tourists.

The houses and other buildings of the village will be built in and around the existing structures of the motel. Ecovillage residents live in a cluster of two-bedroom

suites at the rear of the motel site, while the remaining rooms serve either as functioning motel accommodation, or housing for volunteers. The long-term plan for the expansion of the village includes repurposing the current motel and existing infrastructure as a village centre, with a food co-op, office and studio space, and multipurpose rooms available to residents for recreation and work. A reduced-scale hotel operation will continue, comprising the café and a small amount of accommodation for guests of the village, as well as tourist accommodation.

Volunteers or ‘helpers’ carry out most of the day-to-day operations of the motel and café. Helpers also assist in the ecovillage itself, harvesting vegetables and fruit grown on-site, tending the various gardens, planting for the season and maintaining the multiple compost heaps and worm farms. Helpers are not paid, but receive room and board for the duration of their stay. Most of them are ‘Woofers’, backpackers from overseas who participate in an unpaid help exchange program called Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF). The program is popular with backpackers and other visitors to Australia who are interested in applying for a second-year visa. By working in primary industry for at least three months, they become eligible to extend their stay in Australia. Helpers stay in shared accommodation in a few of the unrefurbished motel rooms. In summer, when the retreat is at its busiest, the population of the village almost doubles from 15 to 25 due to the influx of helpers.

The village itself was smaller and less developed than I had expected. The website, a resource for prospective community members, avoids clearly describing the current status of the village and property. Enthusiastic blurbs describe the end goal of the project in a manner that seems to suggest it has already been realised. There is no mention of expected completion dates, current occupation levels, or the status of construction projects on site. A cursory read of the information available online would suggest that the ecovillage is well established, with numerous options for interested investors. These options, however, are for houses that currently exist only as blueprints. The studio and two-bedroom apartments described on the website are the former motel rooms. Beyond the motel and gardens of the village, orange-tipped wooden markers, barely poking out of knee-high grass, indicate the boundaries of vacant lots. At the time of my fieldwork, earthmovers were shifting and leveling soil to start work on a road that will become the main street of the ecovillage site. The

planned road will follow a circuit outside the existing motel buildings. My overall impression was that construction work on the site was fairly slow, and, as I learned, entirely dependent on new and sustained interest in the ecovillage project itself. As people join the village as residents or investors, their stake will be used to begin the next stage of development.

### **The residents**

In this chapter I document some of the residents of the village and their relationship to others in the community. The residents I have included below are the people with whom I had the most contact during my fieldwork, and the residents most closely involved in collecting, organising and preparing food for the village.

Most of the long-term village residents rented, rather than owned, their homes. Julie and Steve, a middle-aged couple who were among the first people to join the community, were the only village members living on site who owned their apartment. They had also purchased one of the commercial motel suites, which meant they had a reliable source of income over the summer months, during which the retreat is often fully booked by tourists and travellers. Before joining the community, Steve ran a successful contracting company in ‘the big smoke’, and was unofficially regarded as the village handyman. Though taciturn, he gave a strong impression of reliability and competence. His partner, Julie, had spent years in politics; first as a politician’s wife, then as a prominent advocate for environmental and social issues. Julie had also opened and run a vegetarian café and catering business before she moved to the village, and fell neatly (although somewhat reluctantly) into managing the accounts and administration of much of the community’s commercial activities. Their move to the ecovillage was a “tree change”, a retreat from urban living and a step towards a lifestyle informed by environmentalist concerns. For the couple the appeal of the ecovillage was the support it offered people who wanted to exist sustainably, support provided both in infrastructure and community.

Another residential couple, Helen and Ned, along with their son Dan, rented their apartment from David. Their living arrangement was temporary, as they worked sporadically on renovating a rundown old house they had purchased. The house, built in the early 20th century, sits on a small hill at the very edge of the property. Two shipping containers filled with their belongings occupied some vacant land behind their apartment, ready for the time when the house would become habitable. The apartments were too small to hold more than basic, everyday possessions. Despite this, Ned and Helen were not in any particular hurry to organise and establish themselves in their house. They were both artists, deeply involved in the Australian art scene, and would often spend whole weeks in the city or interstate. Helen joked that they had become so used to living without all the personal effects locked away in the shipping containers that they ought to just leave them there and start from scratch, rather than going through the effort and expense of hefting them across the creek and up the hill to their house.

Sara lived next door to Helen and Ned in a two-bedroom apartment with her 12-year-old daughter, Nellie, and four-year-old son, Jack. The two children shared a room, and Sara used the second room as a study rather than a bedroom. She slept on a lounge in the study, or on the bottom bunk with Jack when he had problems sleeping. Nellie, a very bright and mildly autistic girl, had attended public school for most of her primary school years, but was a victim of severe bullying. She was being home-schooled in her first year of high school by Sara, in the study or outside in the gardens when the weather was pleasant. Nellie loved animals and airplanes, and carried around a model Concord jet like a stuffed animal. Jack, her younger brother, was a 'bruiser', a rambunctious and very cheeky boy who seemed young for his age. He would be endearing and sweet one minute, then destructive and defiant the next. Sometimes he would kick and bite when he was unhappy or frustrated. Disciplining Jack for bad behaviour was a point of contention among the community; Sara was a very easy-going mum, and took a laissez-faire approach to parenting, which exasperated some residents when Jack was being particularly disruptive. One of the other long-term renters, Rae, was particularly annoyed by Sara's permissiveness. Rae was an outspoken and blunt woman who lived on her own. She managed the café and staff of the Hub, and had a reputation amongst the community for being combative

and moody. Rae and Sara frequently argued over Jack's behaviour, never reaching a resolution.

David lived in a three-bedroom house across the road from the village. His house stood within the borders of the property, but the freeway ran between it and the rest of the community. He bought the house along with the motel, and used it as a base of operations while he refurbished and reopened the retreat. The house was surrounded by small plots of herbs and vegetables and bordered by thigh-high chicken wire to deter the local wildlife. David's friends and frequent visitors to the village would often stay in the other rooms of his house, especially during the tourist season when the motel was fully booked out. The house was not considered part of the ecovillage itself by most of the residents, primarily because of its distance from the heart of the village. In conversation, it was referred to as 'David's house' and 'David's garden', whereas most of the other residences were referred to either by their location ('the place at the end of the row, near Hazelnut Garden') or by their former motel room number, rather than by who was living there. The homes in the village received a steady flow of visitors. People would pop in and out of their neighbour's house unannounced for social calls, to borrow or return something, or if they needed some peace away from their families. Doors were kept unlocked, even when residents were spending extended periods away from home. Because of the physical distance of David's house, and perhaps also because of a perceived difference or separation between his house and the rest of the village, it was not visited as frequently or readily by residents.

## **Governance**

The village was governed through consensus decision-making and conflict management, with an emphasis on maintaining strong personal relationships between community members. Decisions affecting the property, including current and future construction projects, were determined by the body corporate. Every village resident and every homeowner was a member of this group. As the ecovillage grew, owners would be able to elect representatives from their neighbours to the management

committee. David, as a resident and owner of the motel, had two votes in body corporate decisions, while other residents had one. The governance of the ecovillage project and the community was delivered through the Peninsula Ecovillage Association (PEVA). PEVA membership was compulsory for anyone purchasing or living permanently in the community, but was also open to friends, industry professionals and other interested individuals. The group also regularly used workshops and external mediators to address problems and tweak communication and decision-making within the association.

The emphasis on community encouraged by the social governance of PEVA and the body corporate was reflected in the shared kitchen of the ecovillage. The community kitchen was located right in the centre of the village. All residents had a responsibility to contribute to this kitchen in some way; whether that contribution amounted to harvesting, cooking or cleaning was up to the individual. The village paid for kitchen supplies that were not produced on-site through out of a fund generated from the small amount of money each resident paid for the meals they chose to eat from the kitchen. There was no obligation to eat in the community kitchen – as a resident, you could cook for yourself in your home kitchenette – but most people elected to come for dinner, and ended up staying and chatting long after the last plate had been cleared away. The ecovillage website echoed the sentiment expressed by the residents in their intent in establishing the kitchen: ‘Like a kitchen table in a house, the community kitchen is now the heart of our community’.

The kitchen was physically located at the village centre and also functioned as the social hub of the village, particularly at dinnertimes. It reinforced the regular connections and interactions of the community, while also providing a setting to establish new relationships and ideas. The following chapter gives an account of the physical layout of the community kitchen, including a detailed description of its function within the ecovillage



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **The kitchen**

When I arrived at the ecovillage, the community kitchen was in transition. The site it occupied had functioned as a recreation centre in the old motel, and was situated centrally to the ecovillage apartments. The space had been divided up and repurposed, with the kitchen at the front of the building, leading through to a dining room, which in turn led through to ‘the Shed’ at the back. The Shed was a large, high-ceilinged, open room, with a comfortable, worn-in atmosphere. Mismatched armchairs and end tables were scattered across a carpet covered in threadbare rugs. An old, squat wood-fired oven with a small-bricked hearth sat in one corner. One wall was taken up by a large roller door, which was often opened during summer evenings. A few large canvases lay propped against or hung up on the remaining walls, featuring art by some of the residents. A large laminated plan of the future ecovillage was tacked against the wooden supports of another wall. In its newer incarnation the Shed was a place for helpers and residents to socialize, play pool and watch TV. It was also used as a yoga studio and a place for community meetings and workshops.

The remodelling of the old recreation centre into this shared kitchen and dining space was undertaken fairly early on in the development of the village. The kitchen

itself was a long room, much longer than it was wide, although too roomy and open to be thought of as narrow. The north and south walls were mostly taken up by wide doorways. Tall open shelving lined the western wall, reaching to the bottom sill of a small row of windows that ran right under the ceiling. The shelf units were austere: welded metal frames with plywood shelves. Against the opposite wall stood a stainless-steel, commercial-capacity gas oven, stovetop and range hood. A cherry red laminate bench bordered the oven on both sides. There were deep sinks at each end of the bench. A huge double sink on the left end of the bench was used for washing and rinsing dishes. The sink on the right was much smaller, and used mostly for rinsing fruit and vegetables.

The kitchen, like the rest of the village and motel, relied primarily on water pumped up from the southern creek. Taken straight from the tap, the water was brown and lightly foamy. The creek water had to be boiled before drinking and needed to be blisteringly hot when used to wash dishes. The kitchen was also equipped with access to filtered rainwater from big drum tanks. The water was gravity fed through pipes to two taps, one inside the kitchen and one outside in a barbeque area. The rainwater was used to wash off fruit and vegetables gathered from the garden, and was fine to drink straight from the tap. Many of the residents, however, preferred to drink from the water filter David installed on the interior rainwater tap. The filter was controlled through a digital panel that allowed users to select the pH level of the water. David strongly advocated drinking alkaline water, in order to better ‘balance the body’ and promote wellbeing. He would regularly fill water cooler jugs and drink bottles with alkalised water, driving his station wagon up to the kitchen door to fill three or four jugs at a time, to take back to his house. The acidic runoff was collected and used on the hardier garden beds (such as the massive patch of mint just outside the kitchen door), or boiled and used for mopping the kitchen floor.

It was initially intended that the community kitchen would serve for the most part as a preparation space, where village residents and helpers could have access to shared cooking facilities. Residents and helpers were all living in repurposed motel rooms, with kitchenettes and microwaves rather than equipped kitchens and ovens. Unlike the recently renovated motel rooms, the ecovillage apartments still retained their 1970s décor and facilities, *à la mode* when the motel had last been opened to the

public. The kitchenettes were functional for the most part (the electric oven in my bunk no longer worked), but cramped and limited. They lacked the space, variety and freedom of choice of a home kitchen, where a person might have more than a small oven and a microwave to put together a meal. This ‘problem’, the restrictions imposed by the kitchenette in each home, was addressed through the establishment of the community kitchen. Its commercial-scale oven, its variety of equipment and its abundance of physical space offered residents a place to prepare meals beyond the capabilities of their private kitchenettes. It also gave residents access to utensils and appliances that would have been impractical to keep in their home.

On the ecovillage website, the community kitchen was described as another platform through which people would come together and strengthen their relationship to each other and the village, but it was also a compromise. The residents were the project pioneers, the laying the foundations for a future vision of a thriving and dynamic community. As pioneers, they were the people who grappled with ‘making do’ in many ways. The infrastructure and facilities of the village were still being developed, the community was small, and the most significant and attractive aspects of the ecovillage vision were still very much possibilities for the future rather than realities in the present. While permanent housing was still in the planning process, while the village roads were being paved, and while issues with blueprints and council permission were being resolved, the community kitchen was a concession or compromise that made life a bit easier for the residents.

In its first iteration, the community kitchen was only stocked with surplus from the village residents. Their small cooking spaces meant they had to be selective about what foods and equipment had a place in their kitchen. Sarah was an avid baker who would whip up cakes and biscuits on any pretence. She told me how, after moving into the village, she had to downgrade her collection of pantry stock and baking tins. The limited cupboard space in her rented apartment meant she had to choose which types of flours to keep on hand, and to decide whether plenty of brown sugar made muscovado sugar redundant. The ingredients that didn’t make the cut were donated to the community kitchen. Donated foods like flour and sugar were decanted into large plastic tubs and kept on the lower shelves. When Julie rediscovered her old salad spinner just after buying a new one, she brought the old one over to be used in the

community kitchen. Sara had most of a box of gluten-free pasta that was bought for a friend spending the weekend. After the friend left the village, Sara left the remaining pasta in the kitchen for anyone to use. The kitchen was fairly well stocked with these sorts of pantry items.

While everyone had donated goods and equipment, the bulk and variety on offer were mostly due to donations from David's own stock. Although his small house had a full-sized kitchen, the amount of food and number of utensils and appliances that he had donated put it functionally on par with the residents' kitchenettes. The gesture of donating most of his kitchen stock seemed to be an act of commitment, a way of demonstrating his belief in the success of the endeavour. It was a consequence of his generosity that every meal he had in the village would be in the community kitchen rather than in his own home.

Prior to my arrival, the community kitchen had functioned, essentially, as everyone's kitchen: open all hours for people to come by and prepare their own food. The rules and responsibilities of using the kitchen were informal and generally unspoken. The basic rules included 'Leave it as you found it' (i.e. clean up after yourself) and 'Be considerate'. The community kitchen was intended to supplement the smaller spaces of the residents' home kitchens, and these guidelines were commonly held throughout the village. However, most of the people using the kitchen were helpers rather than residents. The kitchen was popular with helpers for a few reasons. The Shed, attached to the kitchen and dining room, was a place where helpers could socialise without worrying about waking up sleeping roommates or disturbing guests of the retreat. Helpers also had unlimited access to the kitchen; part of the agreement in working at the ecovillage included the provision of meals, which were left to the helpers to create from anything available in the community kitchen. This practice was, according to Julie, disorganised, wasteful and messy. 'People put leftovers in the fridge and then forgot about them, or the kids would come in pissed at midnight to have a fry-up and then not clean up.' Helpers would come off their café shift late at night, tired and hungry, and make themselves some toast or instant noodles rather than deal with the hassle of cooking. Some residents were frustrated with the state the kitchen was left in by the helpers, and others were concerned that the helpers weren't eating well enough.

There was also some tension regarding the food in the kitchen, who ate what and how much they ate. David, as the owner of the retreat and ecovillage, and thus the ‘employer’ of the helpers, ordered regular deliveries of groceries (especially perishables) for the kitchen. These groceries, along with the donated supplies from the rest of the village and the produce from the gardens, comprised the food available in the kitchen. Friction arose over the way helpers ate this food indiscriminately. If Nick felt like eating half a kilo of ham and a loaf of bread for dinner, he would do so. He could do that even if the next delivery of bread was not for another week and if finished off the ham before anyone else had a chance to eat some. It seemed that since helpers were not being paid for their time working in the village, they felt entitled to eat whatever they liked. They worked hard, and sometimes felt unappreciated. There were no set meals or mealtimes, and the prevailing attitude seemed to be ‘If I don’t eat it now, someone else will’. There were times when someone would go to the freezer to grab ice cream only to find an empty 10 litre tub with the scoop still inside. The residents of the village, particularly those who devoted time and effort establishing the kitchen, felt frustration over rapidly depleting supplies (of the more ‘delicious’ foods), and the waste of some foods, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables. Residents decided that the kitchen needed to encompass more than a prep space; the kitchen should serve regular meals for the village and be a responsibility organised and shared by all members of the community, including residents, helpers and visitors.

The reimagined community kitchen would address the problems of the original space and foster a sense of community and shared experience between residents and helpers. It would provide lunch and dinner for all helpers, residents and visitors. A cooking and cleaning roster was devised to distribute responsibility for these tasks. All residents had an obligation to contribute in some way; whether that was to be done by harvesting from the gardens, cooking or cleaning was left up to the individual to decide (as much as was reasonable; there still a sense that the division of labour needed to be fair and equitable, in terms of both the nature of the chores and the time taken to carry them out). The ecovillage residents would pay for the kitchen supplies by contributing a small amount for every meal they ate in the kitchen. The amount (\$3 for lunch and \$5 for dinner) was similar or less than the amount residents would need

to spend to eat at home every day, along with the added incentive of not needing to cook or clean up some of the time. David paid for each meal helpers ate. There was no obligation to eat in the community kitchen (residents and helpers could cook for themselves with their own groceries), but most people elected to come for dinner every night. Fewer people would show up for lunch, as people would be out of the village or eating a light meal at home.

Despite the significant changes in the role of the kitchen in the community, from a preparation space to a service providing regular meals to a diverse group of people, it was very different to a typical home kitchen. The scale of each meal was beyond routine domestic cooking. When I began my duties in the kitchen, I was used to portioning out dried spaghetti for five or six people, but was at a loss as to how to measure out enough for twenty-five. Rae was a confident cook when preparing her own dinner at home each night but was seized with anxiety at the idea of cooking for the whole community. The potential expectations of friends, neighbours and new acquaintances were overwhelming, and she refused to do any cooking shifts in the kitchen. Despite this anxiety over cooking for others, she would readily offer criticism and comments on each dinner she ate. In doing so, Rae subverted the implied reciprocity of the communally shared meal. Adapon describes a food prepared for others as an object of exchange, and suggests cooks and diners engage in a transaction when a meal is eaten (2008: 40). This exchange takes many forms depending on the situation. In the ecovillage, the exchange consisted of an individual agreeing to spend time and effort in the kitchen to cook a meal, and the community tacitly agreeing to appreciate it. When Rae voiced displeasure over an aspect of the meal, she frustrated the exchange between herself and the cook in the kitchen, and undermined the intent of the community dinner project.

The following chapter considers the ways people performed the action of cooking for the community in the village kitchen. Different individuals engaged with the community kitchen in different ways, employing various degrees of creativity, patience, pragmatism and panic in their efforts to produce meals for the village.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **The cooks and their food philosophies**

Before cooking rosters and routine daily meals became common practice in the community kitchen, the residents of the village held a weekly ‘community feast’. This was an occasion in which residents and helpers could interact in a setting that was relaxed and friendly, and more conducive to conversation than bumping into someone while quickly toasting a sandwich in the kitchen. The dinners were always held on Tuesday evenings, when the Hub café was closed for a top-to-bottom clean and stocktake. While the café was closed to customers, community members would bring a plate of food to the Hub and sit together on the outside deck, overlooking the bay. In the summer months, the sun would set as the community gathered for dinner; everyone made sure they sat facing west over the bay. These weekly feasts were made redundant by the introduction of the formal community kitchen model and daily-shared meals between village inhabitants.

These regular get-togethers were motivated by a perceived need for people to connect with those with whom they would otherwise rarely spend time. Due to the timing of shifts, some helpers (particularly those working in the café) would only meet the residents by chance as they went about their duties. The feasts, it was hoped,

would help foster friendly relationships between the residents, who were largely preoccupied with ecovillage affairs, and the helpers, who mostly spent their time performing duties in the motel. David repeatedly emphasised the importance of the help exchange programme and its volunteers to the current and future development of the ecovillage. While the motel and village were two separate enterprises, the financial success of David's motel helped to solidify the progress of the village. The reliable flow of helpers in and out of the motel as seasons changed and demand waxed and waned meant that the only salaried positions on site belonged to the chef and the manager. Although I was not privy to the more detailed financial interactions of the motel and village, it was clear that the two were intertwined to such a degree that success for either would be a victory for both. I suspect this was due in large part to David's forward-thinking institutional leadership, strategically diverting the dividends from investment in the motel to drive the growth of the ecovillage, while keeping them formally separate.

The final weekly community feast was held in my first week of fieldwork. Most of the helpers had gone sightseeing for the day. Most of the helpers had Tuesdays off from work; the café was closed, and the motel usually wasn't too busy. David and Melissa were in the city, buying groceries for the community kitchen. If daily meals were now to be provided for everyone, the kitchen would need more stock, particularly pantry staples and fresh food. The donated goods were an eclectic mix of everyday items, imported curiosities left behind by backpacking helpers, and gifts from neighbours and local farmers. A white bucket on the shelf was filled with waxy amber honey from a nearby beehive. A local apiarist had given the honey to David as thanks for his help in clearing some scrub at the edges of her property. David fostered and encouraged these connections with the broader community, and made it very clear that absolutely anyone would be welcome to share a meal with the village. On this particular Tuesday, with half the helpers spending the day away from the village, and David and Melissa away in the city, the time for the community feast was pushed back an hour, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm.

I was almost finished cleaning up after lunch when Sara came in to the kitchen to start cooking her contribution to the feast. She had brought over some bags of vegetables, chuck steak and a block of tofu from her apartment. Sara's young son,



Jack, trailed into the kitchen behind her. Sara, Jack and Nessie ate sandwiches or leftovers at home for lunch, rather than come over to the community kitchen. Lunches were inexpensive at the kitchen, but were still not as cheap as the ones Sara could make at home. Nessie would eat a peanut butter sandwich for every meal if allowed, and Jack would only ever pick at his plate. I asked Sara what she was planning to make for the community feast. ‘Oh, just some curries, nothing special. I wanted to do something different this time but...’ she trailed off.

I offered to help Sara prepare her dishes for the feast, and she accepted. She pushed a bag of baby potatoes over the kitchen bench to me, and began cleaving carrots into fat discs. The community kitchen knives were dull and lightweight, and we needed to use the weight of our upper bodies to cut through the raw veggies. As Sara cut into the wider end of a carrot, a chunk rolled off the bench and onto the floor. Jack pounced on it and seized it off the floor. ‘Aha!’ he yelled. Sara offered Jack another piece of carrot, hand outstretched to take the dirty piece from him. ‘Noooooooo!’ he ran from Sara, laughing. Sara lunged after him and grasped the back of his shirt, but he twisted out of her grip and gleefully ran down the length of the kitchen away from her. ‘Aaaaaaaagh!’ he bellowed and threw the carrot through the hanging fly screens over the kitchen door. Jack was not a particularly helpful apprentice in the kitchen. Like most three-year-olds, he had a very short attention span and very little patience. While Sara and I continued to chop the potatoes and carrots for the curries, Jack opened one of the deep kitchen drawers full of utensils and containers. He ran around the kitchen bench with cylindrical cheese graters on each forearm, pretending to be a robot. Most of the helpers were very patient with Jack. He could be frustrating and distracting and loud, but he was also sweet and affectionate and funny.

Sara brushed her hair out of her eyes with the back of her hand. We continued prepping the veggies in silence, but it was a comfortable silence rather than an awkward one. Sara was very open, and would share her thoughts and feelings readily with the other residents and helpers. Most of the residents were very honest with each other, encouraged by frequent mediative workshops run to facilitate free and respectful communication and support harmony in village governance, but Sara was particularly candid with her own emotions.

Most of the meals Sara cooked were in the same vein as her curries. Her food was relatively simple and solid; carb-heavy comfort foods like tuna bake, macaroni-and-cheese, and lasagne. Sara's aim in the kitchen was to make nourishing, enjoyable food while keeping half her attention on her son. Jack's demand on Sara's concentration meant she was unable to stand over chicken browning in a pan or keep an eye on a simmering sauce. Cooking foods that could char or bubble over without careful attention was impractical while also caring for a three-year-old who was just as volatile and quick to change. However, despite Jack's frequently disruptive presence, Sara was rarely frazzled or panicked in the kitchen. The foods she prepared were the same meals she would cook at home, and she had been 'making them for a thousand years'. They were dishes that required practice and rhythm rather than finesse and creativity. The only difference between Sara's home cooking and her cooking for the community was the *scale* of the meal. The dish would be the same if cooked in either kitchen, with the exception that instead of cooking for herself and two children, she was cooking for 25 people. Most of the other regular cooks, including David and Julie, met dinner requirements by preparing a variety of separate dishes to be served buffet-style. While she would readily accommodate vegetarian preferences, Sara's dinner approach was to offer a single hearty and simple dish in abundance, alongside the requisite salad with lettuce from the garden.

Sara's meals were modest, particularly when compared to some of David's more imaginative 'cocktails'. This simplicity did not mean that her cooking was less well-regarded than the other residents who took turns cooking. In fact, Sara's cooking was a favourite with some of the helpers. Lara and Claire, traveling companions from England and Ireland respectively, would always eagerly anticipate dinner when Sara was cooking. The meals she cooked were similar to some of their favourite foods from home, dishes they had missed while backpacking around Australia. Claire would talk wistfully of her mother's fish pie, and spent her eight weeks at the ecovillage debating with herself whether to splurge on some fresh fish fillets so she could attempt to recreate her family dinner. Sara's tuna bakes, pastas and casseroles were the closest things Claire and Lara had eaten to home cooking while on their travels. It seemed to me that the emotional connection Lara and Claire had to Sara's food was also reflected in their relationship with her. Out of all the village residents, they spent

the most amount of time socially with Sara. She was easy going, attentive and empathetic. Sara's cooking contained some sort of echo of her essence; warm, genuine dishes made to nourish and please as many people as possible.

David tilted his head forward so that he could read the kitchen roster over his glasses. I leant in the doorway between the kitchen and the breezeway and waited, hands still damp from the sink. The dishes and cutlery from lunch were stacked in the drying rack, and the leftovers were sitting wrapped and labelled on the bench, ready to go into the fridge. A few flies slowly circled the pendant light above my head. 'So today is Wednesday, yes? Then I am not cooking. No wait, is it Thursday?' David had volunteered for some shifts in the kitchen at the beginning of the week. The routines of the village remained much the same from day to day, so residents and helpers often had some trouble keeping up with what day of the week it was. Julie had reminded him over lunch to check which shifts he had nominated himself for; the night before, he had forgotten he was meant to be cooking and it was a mad scramble to fill his place in the kitchen (he had been in the city, and didn't return to the village until the next morning).

David ran his finger down the chart on the wall. 'Oh yes, I am cooking. Hmm cooking with... Bridget!' He looked at me and smiled. I was still a bit nervous around David. He was charismatic and friendly, but he also seemed prone to snap judgments and quick changes in temper. As the founder of the village, he had invested large amounts of his own money and time to establish the community. He insisted on being involved in all aspects of the life and operation of the village, and it was clear that at times this responsibility spread his attention and patience very thin. David looked at me, thinking. 'I have maybe some ideas and maybe some interesting things to find in the garden. 'Do you know, do we have haloumi?' There was a block of cheddar in the freezer and a bucket labelled 'feta' in the fridge – perhaps it was feta, or maybe there were leftovers from an earlier dinner inside. 'Definitely no haloumi' I said. 'Oh, well that is a shame.' He looked to the ceiling. 'I am just thinking... I am just thinking maybe if the café can spare some haloumi. I think that should be okay. So David will sponsor some of the dinner tonight.' Although David's commercial café was ostensibly separate in all respects from the community kitchen, 'back-door' trades often took place between the two. Ravith, the head chef of the café kitchen, would

send staff over to beg for tomatoes or butter before dinner service, and cooks in the community kitchen knew if they were really desperate for something, they could take it from the café and replace it later in the week. I upended the rinsing bucket over the drain in the deep sink. The water was too soapy to go out onto the gardens, especially under the watchful eye of David. His preferences were frequently impossible to predict: one day he might insist on finding a use for the dirty dishwater, the next he would tip it out himself the moment someone finished washing up. Once the water was down the drain there would be no way to judge its soapiness.

‘Now Bridget, does cooking for dinner start at 4:30? Usually yes?’ I nodded in agreement. A full dinner shift in the community kitchen started at 4:30pm and finished at 8:30pm. Residents only had to do a two-hour shift, cooking or cleaning, but most of the time helpers did the two-hour lunch shift in the middle of the day and the four-hour dinner shift. If helpers were lucky with the resident they were working with on the clean-up after dinner, they might be finished in less time. ‘Just one-and-a-half hours. That’s not so much time, if dinner needs to be ready by six.’ No matter how organised everyone was in the kitchen, dinner was rarely served on time. Dinner was ‘at 6pm’ but most helpers and residents had learnt not to show up at the kitchen before 6:30pm. Sometimes even then people were too early. Earlier that week, Julie had introduced a ‘dinner gong’, a heavy-bottomed pot that was struck with a wooden spoon when dinner was ready. The gong was as much for the cooks as for everyone else waiting for dinner. If everyone knew dinner was ready when you heard the gong, there was no excuse to hover just outside the kitchen door or loiter in the kitchen under the guise of ‘helping out’ while waiting for food. ‘Well, I will say that we should meet earlier then, you think? We need more time to create our dinner. Let’s meet here at 4pm, yes?’ ‘Okay, no worries,’ I said ‘What are we cooking?’ David rubbed his palms together in an exaggerated parody of a mad scientist. ‘Who knows!’ he exclaimed and laughed. He patted me on the back and headed outside, ducking through the vinyl strips of flyscreen over the kitchen door. I left the dishes to air dry, to be put away at the start of the dinner shift. I glanced at the clock as I untied my apron. It was nearly 2pm.

David’s approach to cooking for the community was to celebrate local produce and to put out an impressive spread. He was just as concerned with the colour and the

shapes of ingredients in the meal as he was with their taste. David explained to me that he didn't follow any recipes or have any formal cooking experience. He was a self-described 'cocktail-maker' in the kitchen, pulling together dishes based on an imagined beauty or extravagance of flavour in the final product. Helpers and residents alike would dread being assigned to wash up after David cooked; he used every dish, every utensil and every surface in the kitchen. Many of the cooks would do some washing as they cooked, but when David made dinner he used all his time for putting the meal together, and there was no time for anything else. My impression was that David had no regard for cleaning and washing up; his role in the kitchen was to produce an impressive dinner, not to pointlessly give his attention to dirty dishes. When Claire, who usually worked in housekeeping, was assigned to work with David on a dinner shift, she stationed herself in front of the sink rather than the counter and spent the whole time washing dishes as he used them. David's intention in asking me to meet earlier in order to have more time to cook was not because a planned recipe needed a certain amount of preparation or cooking, but because the more time he had the more elements he could integrate and therefore celebrate by sharing them with the community. In these everyday activities – his approach to putting together a meal for the community, and his sense of priorities in the kitchen – David gave expression to his own philosophy of food and cooking.

Sara's dinners, while not particularly inventive or exciting, were reliable crowd-pleasers. Other community cooks were renowned for producing less palatable meals. For some residents, like Ned, this reputation was less to do with the tastiness of the meals he put together and more to do with his own ethics. As a vegetarian, his endeavours in the kitchen were viewed with something akin to distrust by a lot of the helpers, who were accustomed to meals with meat as the main component. This friction was exacerbated by the position of the helpers within the village: they were unpaid workers, compensated with accommodation and food. In essence, their daily meals were their 'earnings' for their labour and time. When a dinner failed to meet their expectation of what a complete meal should be, the helpers felt they had been short-changed. The fact that they only shared their dissatisfaction with each other, and not with the residents who cooked the meals, seemed to compound this friction by giving rise to an attitude of shared derision towards certain residents' cooking. According to the helpers, Julie was a 'great cook'; David produced a good spread and

a lot of tasty meals, but was a nightmare to cook with and clean up after; the news that Helen was cooking dinner would induce groans; and while Ned's meals might have been delicious, they were entirely vegetarian, so they barely counted as 'dinner' at all.

Helen was not an 'awful' cook. She was, however, a new cook. She explained to me one day, early in my stay at the village, that her mother had never taught her to cook. 'She never taught me and I never had any interest. So here I am, nearly 40 and trying to learn!' She revealed this without embarrassment, but rather with clear enthusiasm for the challenge. Helen was committed to developing cooking skills and had bravely nominated herself for cooking shifts in the kitchen. Before their move to the village, her partner Ned had cooked nightly for his family. As his increasing popularity as an artist led to frequent trips interstate and overseas, Helen applied herself to learning how to cook for her family and the community. She had some foundational knowledge of food preparation and cooking, and would readily ask for advice and guidance if she ran into any problems in the kitchen.

The 'problem' with Helen's cooking, or the reason helpers were unenthusiastic about her dinners, was connected directly to her values and goals as a cook. She was committed to providing healthy, wholesome meals for the village. This sentiment was echoed by many of the residents as they went about cooking meals during their shifts. However, the issue with this philosophy and its effect on Helen's cooking was that she cooked for health without any compromise for flavour and taste preferences. She thought salt was unhealthy and unnecessary, so she didn't include any in her dishes. She objected to butter, so she would leave it out of her cake batter. These ideas and attitudes towards certain foods and techniques are things that any cook brings to their dish. Helen's omissions and substitutions, however, were applied based on her experience of *eating* food, rather than *cooking* it. A cook with more experience would know that a dish without salt would need to be supplemented by other ingredients and techniques: herbs, spices, heat, and vinegar. Without the benefit of experience to guide her, Helen struggled to produce tasty, healthy, aesthetically enjoyable meals.

The different ways people fulfilled their obligation to cook in the community kitchen demonstrated aspects of their identity. The next chapter analyses the concept

of identity within the context of the ecovillage, and considers the relationship between the individual in the kitchen and the individual within the community.

## **CHAPTER 4**

In Chapter Three, I established some of the attitudes towards cooking and eating held by residents and helpers in the ecovillage. The disparate approaches taken by Sara, David and Helen (and others) to cooking for the community illustrated just a few of the various ways people brought together their own experiences, tastes and values towards food while fulfilling their obligations as active participants in the life of the community. These ethnographic excerpts are evidence of the ways that food and cooking are negotiated within the intentional community of the ecovillage; the motivations, pressures and preferences that guide the cook's hand in the creation of the daily meals in the community kitchen.

### **Food and identity**

The foods we eat establish more than individual dietary preferences; they also have the potential to establish elements of character and culture. Individuals align themselves with and apart from cultural groups by their own food practices and traditions. A considerable amount of anthropological research has been conducted on the ways that food contributes to ideas of national identity and history, of flavours



echoing through memory and time (Seremetakis 1994, Anderson 2005, Sutton 2001, Mintz and Du Bois 2002). The wealth of potential meaning within the foods we eat leads Anderson to suggest that food ‘may be only second to language as a social communication system’ (125: 2005). At a glance, food has the potential to communicate ethnicity, class, religion and lifestyle. The concept of a connection between food and identity certainly isn’t anything new. In 1825 the gastronome Brillat-Savarin coined the famous phrase: ‘tell me how you eat and I will tell you what you are’ (2009: 176). Food is more than sustenance; it is connected intimately to identity and representations of self.

One contemporary culinary philosopher, celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain, has suggested that ‘the way you make an omelette reveals your character’ (2001). Rather than talking about *what* you eat, Bourdain places emphasis on how you create it, but nonetheless ascribes to the process the same revelatory value that Brillat-Savarin assigns to food itself. In a household, the kitchen is the site where these identities are developed and expressed. The way a meal is created, what is cooked, who cooks it and how it is eaten all represent situations where individual, familial and cultural identity is produced and reproduced. The ecovillage community kitchen was no exception: a place where people would form and express a certain set of values and beliefs through the act of preparing a meal to be shared by everyone.

## David

By presenting a vibrant display of various home-grown vegetables and herbs each time he cooked dinner, David was not only *practicing* sustainable consumption, he was embodying it. His enthusiasm for the beetroots and carrots pulled from the gardens could be seen on the plate. David’s focus and primary concern in showcasing the community’s produce was aesthetic, an appeal to the senses, a call to revel in the offerings of the local landscape. Every action he made in the kitchen was a step towards celebrating both the flavours of the village’s produce and the very fact that the village provided such ingredients. What he said while cooking reinforced these intentions. ‘Look at this!’ he would exclaim, and draw attention to the size of a

potato, or the vibrancy of a freshly sliced beetroot. He would delight in the appearance of the ingredients, their size, colours and varied textures. Much of his enjoyment was built on sharing these sensory experiences and ensuring the others in the kitchen appreciated the elements in front of them. ‘Mmpf! You just have to taste this!’

In cultivating this appreciation for the gardens’ harvests, David gave the impression that he was solidifying aspects of his own identity within the community. As an advocate for making the most of what was produced by the village, he was clearly expressing his enthusiasm for sustainable consumption and respect for the environment. David would admonish people discarding too much of a veggie as scrap into the compost. ‘It is wasteful’, he would say, ‘but even worse, it is disrespectful to the land’. David not only vocally demonstrated his own attitudes towards food and the local environment, but also established himself in a position of critical judgment over the actions and attitudes of others within the community. As founder of the ecovillage, his words carried more weight than other residents, and he actively policed the ways people conducted themselves inside and outside of the community kitchen.

### **Slow food**

None of the villagers ever used the term ‘slow food’ to describe their attitude towards cooking and eating, but many of their actions and the meals produced in the kitchen embodied aspects of the slow food philosophy. The Slow Food Movement, founded by Carlo Petrini in 1986 (Leitch 2003: 438), aims to ‘counter the rise of fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people’s dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world’ (*About Us*, Slow Food International 2012). Slow food advocates encourage people to think critically about their food and how their food choices impact environments, populations and individuals. Leitch (2000, 2003) provides a compelling ethnographic account of the Slow Food Movement and *lardo*, a traditional Italian food considered an ‘endangered food’. *Lardo* is a salty and fatty preserved cut of pork, originating and produced primarily in Colonnata, in the Apuan

Alps of Tuscany. To the people of Colonnata, Each year, *lardo* is honoured in Colonnata with a festival; to the people of the hamlet, it represents a revival of tradition, history and an appreciation for culturally significant food produced locally.

While the produce of the ecovillage was not ‘endangered’, David’s approach to the village’s harvests echoed the community celebration of *lardo* that Leitch describes. His conspicuous and sometimes exaggerated praise of the local fruits, vegetables and herbs, and the soil that nourished them, reflected a dedication to acknowledging the origins of what the community ate. These foodstuffs were grown, prepared and eaten outside of regular avenues of production and consumption, such as supermarkets and microwave convenience foods. This attitude aligns with the description Crocombe provides for slow food advocates who ‘consider themselves to be co-producers rather than consumers of food, as they take a more active part in the process of production’ (152: 2008). David’s emphasis on home-grown greens, like the villagers of Colonnata and their *lardo* festivities, represented a set of values that relate to human activity, history and a connection with the local environment. The Slow Food Movement combines economics and politics both philosophically and in action (Leitch 2003: 440). The slow food ethos and the ecovillage village philosophy echo each other in many respects, as both exist in direct opposition to large-scale and multinational corporations, and their relative homogeneity of food production they engender.

### Sara

Where David, champion of home-grown vegetables and celebrator of conscious consumption, would base his meals around what was offered up by the gardens, most of the other residents in the kitchen would cook meals determined by other requirements and influences. Sara’s identity in the kitchen, and to an extent her identity within the village, was formed around her family. Her interactions and care for her children determined her actions in the kitchen as she cooked, the types of meals she would create and influenced her relationships with others in the community.

Sara's identity in the kitchen was based not only on the food she cooked, but on *how* she cooked those meals. Her cooking might seem distracted by the demands of Jack, but the ability to be so diverted while cooking such large meals suggested a level of skill and familiarity in the kitchen. Tim Ingold (2004) provides a concept through which we might begin to understand how we learn, practice and refine skills like those used when cooking. His idea is that to be skilled is not simply to adequately reproduce a technique; rather, 'the novice becomes skilled not through the acquisition of rules and representations, but at the point where he or she is able to dispense with them' (2004: 415). The importance of his point is that it implies adeptness not only, but also creativity. Creativity in this context is art and technique, and the ability to adapt and address problems and mistakes. Sara's creativity is not in the final product on the plate, but in the way she manoeuvres between cooking and Jack, and Jack and cooking. Producing meals under these circumstances suggests a flexibility and confidence in skill that allows Sara to make quick changes to the meal she is putting together for the village.

The skills Sara employed in the community kitchen were the same skills she would use in her home kitchen. The meals she created to be enjoyed by the village were the same meals she would cook for her children. For Sara, unlike the other residents who cooked in the community kitchen, cooking for the village was a transportation of the skills she had developed in her domestic life. Her identity in the kitchen was her identity at home: maternal, nurturing and adaptable. The demands of her children and the limited amount of time she could assign herself to create meals in the kitchen meant that there was little room for philosophy alongside her other concerns and motivations in the kitchen. Sara was an anomaly among the residents, who would often voice the values and ideas that guided their culinary processes as they worked on the meal. Sara was directed by the skills she had learned within her home, and an interest in sustainability and other food ideologies were afterthoughts that informed her decision to live in the ecovillage but had a negligible influence on the meals she prepared for the community.

## Helen

Helen's cooking inexperience meant her connection to food had been formed primarily through eating and appreciating the final product rather than the process involved in creating it. Her time in the community kitchen reflected this: she was absorbed in producing meals that aligned to her taste preferences, or to a very specific vision of a finished dish. Where Sara was slipping into attitudes and actions she had performed countless times, Helen was eking out her sense of herself as a cook in kitchen as she worked each shift.

Similar to the way that David cultivated his identity within the community kitchen, Helen had an approach cooking and food that was somewhat self-conscious. She was eager for assistance and praise in the kitchen, readily portraying herself as a novice who was desperate for advice. This assistance was sought in relation to preparation, to tools and cutting techniques, and to measurement. Helen sought affirmation regarding her planned meals, asking whether she would have enough time to braise a cut of meat, if people liked the taste of pumpkin, or if rice could be cooked in a slow cooker. These uncertainties were not extended to the overall meal itself. Helen applied her own food and health philosophies with conviction to the dinners she cooked for the community. She had applied these philosophies, such as reducing the amount of salt and fat in her food, to meals that had been cooked *for* her, so she relied on them when putting together meals for others. Unlike Sara, she lacked the potential for easy creativity afforded by experience in the kitchen, and it was reflected in the poor esteem most people had for her cooking. Helen had a reputation for bland, overcooked food, but because her cooking aligned with her personal food principles she had no reason to suspect it might be less well-received by people who didn't share the same beliefs.

Helen had one noteworthy success in the community kitchen. She had decided to cook spaghetti Bolognese and use a large portion of mince beef in the chest freezer. Julie had asked the residents to consider using the beef for a dinner sooner rather than later, as she had discovered it at the bottom of the freezer while trying to index the contents of the kitchen. The beef had been frozen without any date affixed to it, but

was determined to be ‘probably still good’ on the basis of Julie’s recollection of when the freezer had been moved into the kitchen. Helen endeavoured to use the mince as a way to help out Julie and avoid potentially wasting good food, and also because her husband Ned was away for the weekend. Ned was a vegetarian and Helen generally kept a meat-free diet out of convenience. During his absence, she was free to cook a meat-based dish without worrying about putting together an option for Ned’s dinner.

‘Why am I cooking pasta for fucking Europeans?!’ she moaned as she filled a pot with filtered water. This particular evening was the only occasion where she felt anxiety over what people might think of the taste of the final dish. From Helen’s perspective the helpers from Europe were privy to some sort of fundamental knowledge of pasta dishes she had no potential to grasp. As Helen cooked, she avoided some of the ingredients she used frequently (for their purported health benefits): apple cider vinegar, pomegranate juice and tamari, because they weren’t ‘Italian’ or ‘traditional’. Helen watched with apprehension as each person filtered in for dinner and was served a plate of spaghetti and a generous amount of sauce. After almost everyone had sat down to eat, she turned to the sink to start washing up rather than going to sit down with the community at the dining table. I encouraged her to get a plate for herself and go and sit down. ‘That’s my job now,’ I said next to her at the sink. ‘No, no. I’m okay here. I’ve got this.’ She continued washing up, head bent. After 10 minutes, some people started bringing their plates to the kitchen sink. ‘Oh Helen!’ Michael said, as he came up behind her. Michael was a German baker who had a great love of food and eating. ‘Helen, that was just beautiful. We are so happy.’ He gestured behind him to the rest of the helpers who were still eating their dinner, then went to the kitchen bench and served himself another plate of spaghetti. ‘You mean that? Wow, really?!’ Helen asked in disbelief, half smiling. The rest of the diners came back into the kitchen soon after Michael, many for seconds. The success in this particular meal lay in the fact that Helen put together the dish based on her idea of an authentic Bolognese sauce, rather than on her taste preferences or nutritional views. She was not cooking something that aligned with her identity as a cook in the community kitchen. Unlike her previous meals, the success of Helen’s spaghetti relied on its reception by other people, rather than her own evaluation of it.

\* \* \*

The identities cultivated by people in the community kitchen contributed in significant respects to their identities outside of it. Ned, a vegetarian, would occasionally cook meat for others when he was in charge of dinner. Sometimes he would choose not to cook any meat at all, and would have to hear some of the residents and helpers moan not having ‘real food’ for dinner. One of the helpers, Jim, would buy plastic trays of steaks and sausages from the supermarket in town. He would buy enough for the week and barbeque some meat every night to eat alongside dinner, no matter what was being served. If dinner was beef lasagne, he’d load up his plate with a slice and then add his steak and sausages to the plate. Jim would bypass the salad and joke about ‘rabbit food’. By unfailingly cooking a supplemental portion of his meal every night, he made it clear that the dinner served was not entirely adequate for his needs and that he did not expect it to be. Ned and Jim’s attitudes towards meat are a demonstration of the way people in the village expressed their identity through their food choices. Jim’s identity as a ‘meat eater’ put him at odds not only with Ned, but also with other residents who thought Jim was bad-mannered to show such offhand disdain for the efforts of someone cooking dinner for the community.

The faint conflict between Jim and the rest of the community over his firmly established identity as a ‘meat-eater’ begs the question: Is a person’s ‘kitchen identity’ also their ‘village identity’? The answer, for David, Sara and Helen at least, is ‘Yes, to an extent’. David’s passion for locally grown food and flavour is reflected in other elements of his everyday life. The convictions he expressed readily in the kitchen were repeated in routine tasks, casual conversation and most obviously in his financial investment in the success of the ecovillage. Sara’s focus was the same in or out of the kitchen. Her priority was her children and their happiness. Her unassuming approach to cooking and the simple and satisfying meals she produced as a result contributed to her ‘village identity’ as a maternal, caring, compassionate individual. Helen’s actions in the kitchen, eager to please and stubborn in equal parts, matched many of her interactions in the wider setting of the village. Most of the residents considered her flighty and unreliable, and she would prove them right by forgetting to show up to meetings or failing to follow through on commitments. However, Helen was also a keen community member who had a strong enthusiasm for the various interests of the ecovillage.

While each individual's sense of self and their social niche within the village was observed in their routine activity and interaction with others, the community kitchen allowed each person to express themselves in a setting that provided numerous potential methods of communication. The importance of the kitchen in creating and confirming individual identity lies in the idea that identities are fluid rather than fixed (Sutton, 2001: 9). Identity is manifested in kitchen through the repetition of certain actions, imaginative reconstructions of remembered meals and flavours, and the relationship between a cook and their ingredients. Sutton's perspectives on memory and food provide a concept essential to the discussion on the community kitchen and meals, which follows in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER 5**

This chapter considers the unusual character of the community kitchen and the meals people produced within it. The community kitchen is neither an entirely public or private space. The ways in which people used the kitchen and interacted with food are similar in some respects to both domestic and commercial kitchens, neither entirely one nor the other. In this chapter, I will address the ambiguity of the function of kitchen in the village and the influence of this on the community. This chapter also offers concluding thoughts on the ecovillage, community kitchen and the identities and practices acting within.

### **The kitchen**

It is problematic to think of the community kitchen as an entirely 'public' or 'private' space. Elements of the kitchen, including cooking, align themselves readily with both spaces while belonging wholly to neither. The difficulty of classifying domestic space and tasks is explored by Pink (2004). Pink's research brings together her ethnography of homes and housework together with a discussion of the research of other anthropologists on domestic life. She establishes some of the features that

characterize the domestic sphere as opposed to social/public spheres. ‘The housewife is “free from” but not “free to”. That is she is exempt from supervision, but not wholly free to choose her own activities’ (Oakley 1985: 44, cited in Pink 2004: 86). In this example, the housewife is limited, having restricted agency. However, Pink also suggests that domestic duties give housewives the potential to operate as active, engaged agents. They are the creative, emotional force behind the development and maintenance of the home, wielding emotional capital through the skills and care they employ in their daily activities (2004: 87). In this context, emotional capital should be understood as a ‘capacity to connect, involving acts, intentions and sentiments. It refers to moral thinking about personal connections and intimate life, related to the self and others’ (Silva 2000: 4, cited in Pink 2004: 87). In this sense while some domestic responsibilities and tasks are required, or essential, they are accompanied by practices and social relationships that would generally only be associated with creativity and leisure.

The community kitchen, like the family homes Pink explores in her research, allowed residents some form of freedom and creativity in the duties they carried out during their obligate shifts in the kitchen. Residents who elected to take a cooking shift were able to choose the ingredients and recipes that would be used to make dinner. They were free to use any of the tools and groceries available in the kitchen. While the shift was nominally two hours long, cooks could elect to use as little or as much time as they wanted, provided dinner wouldn’t be served too late. This autonomy was restricted, however, by aspects of the community kitchen that were more aligned with a commercial operation than a domestic one.

The ecovillage kitchen produced daily home cooked meals for the community. Despite significant aspects of the kitchen being firmly within the domestic or private sphere, it still represented functions and ideas that were different from those of a home kitchen. Most obviously, the scale of the daily cooking was much larger than most domestic kitchens. Dinners needed to feed at least 20 people on a regular basis, and on some nights where all the residents were in the village and there were a few friends and neighbours also dining at the ecovillage there would be almost 40 people who needed to be fed. Despite the often erratic number of diners, the amount of food made for dinner was almost always enough to feed everyone.

There was only one notable occasion during my time at the village on which some very close friends of the village association had to be turned away. Roland and his sister, Ingrid, had come to the kitchen with some wine to share over dinner. Roland lived on a property a short walk from the ecovillage. He eschewed shoes and would walk everywhere on calloused, dusty bare feet. He was softly spoken and friendly, and would hire the helpers to do odd jobs for him during their time off. The helpers appreciated the opportunity to earn some cash and get out of the village for a few hours, and Roland appreciated the company. It was widely known among the helpers that Roland paid well for their time, so he never had any trouble finding people willing to help him out with gardening or painting. Roland was also a member of PEVA, the ecovillage association. He was not active in village meetings or its organisation, but had a strong interest in the philosophy of the village model and the growth of the community.

Ingrid was visiting him from Melbourne, and on the first night of her stay, Roland brought her over to the community kitchen to meet the residents and helpers and to share in the community dinner. It was the first night one of the newer helpers was cooking in the kitchen. Chloe had confessed she was nervous about cooking for the group, and needed constant reassurance as she was putting together her planned dinner. Although she finished cooking on time and had made enough to cater for the regular number of diners, it happened to be one of the rare nights where *everyone* in the village was eating with the rest of the community. The servings were stretched far enough to cater for the residents and helpers, but when Roland and Ingrid showed up 10 minutes after the dinner gong was struck there was nothing to eat apart from a small portion of garden salad. David had to turn Roland and his sister away, with regret and apologies. Most cooks put together meals of enormous size in order to avoid the sort of mildly awkward situation of having to turn friends away from eating with the community. Chloe had cooked enough for everyone who lived on site to eat and be satisfied, but had not produced enough excess to allow the flexible sort of generosity village visitors were accustomed to.

In addition to the kitchen providing a much larger amount of food than a typical family dinner, there were also obligations, overt and implied, that were different to

those that might exist in the home. When it was someone's turn to cook in the community kitchen, they had a responsibility to produce a meal that was ample, tasty and timely. Everybody in the village would eat at the kitchen on a regular basis, but not everybody volunteered to cook for the community. However, *everyone* had an opinion on what was cooked (whether that was shared or not is another matter). It was nearly impossible to seek an opinion on the meal and expect people to be frank; people were largely reluctant to risk potentially offending others or injuring their feelings. There were notable exceptions to this. Rae would readily offer her own ideas and criticisms on the meal, despite the fact that there was no potential for reciprocity. Rae baulked at the idea of having to cook for the community, and admitted she felt considerable anxiety over the prospect of having others eat her food. When cooking for the community, the cook may also end up cooking for people they had never met before. The prospect of strangers eating one's 'home cooking', whether it is an old favourite or a creative new recipe, can be daunting.

In trying to conceptualise the community kitchen space and considering the indistinct boundaries between domestic and public space for the person creating the meals, the work of Michel de Certeau (1998) is particularly helpful. He provides a way of theorising the everyday and examining daily production and consumption that addresses some of the more problematic aspects of the kitchen and the meals it produces. His work studies the 'art of doing' and closely examines the textures of everyday life. He places emphasis on the activities that might be considered routine or mundane and suggests that they represent a range of different personal and social motivations, obligations and oppositions. He offers a perspective on dwelling within private and public spheres, or the home (private) and the neighbourhood (public) (1998: 145-148).

The community kitchen occupies a transitory or fluid space between these two spheres. The kitchen is essentially the heart of the home, or in this case the heart of the village, but it is also a communally shared space, and therefore exclusive for none. Actions that take place within the kitchen are both private and public. Private actions in the kitchen include cooking meals for loved ones and serving food to close friends and relatives. When Sara was on her cooking shift, she was preparing food for 20 people, but she was also cooking a meal for her son and daughter. Out of all the

residents, her actions in the kitchen most closely resembled those that would take place in a purely domestic setting, such as a home kitchen. Sara's purpose and identity in the community kitchen cooking for dozens of people was also her purpose and identity when cooking at home for her small family.

On the other hand, some residents cooked in a ways that seemed much more conscious of the gulf between the community kitchen and a household kitchen. The community kitchen provided meals for a fairly significant number of people each day. Meals also had to involve a certain level of effort. In a house, a person might decide to just have leftovers or a heat up a microwave meal for dinner. There were no 'nights off' in the ecovillage; residents had to commit to a certain number of shifts each fortnight in order to be fully contributing members of the ecovillage system. This reflects Oakley's concept of the housewife (in Pink: 2004) but extends it beyond the private sphere; residents were able to cook their meals with relative agency, but were compelled to perform the task of cooking to meet the expectations of the community.

David's actions in the kitchen were sometimes more akin to a public performance than a domestic duty. He would create a meal with enthusiastic abandon, using every bowl and platter, without thought to the task cleaning up afterwards. There was no economy to his cooking; he wouldn't try to reduce the amount of different dishes to reduce the pressure of getting everything ready on time. David didn't 'make do' or compromise in the kitchen, he followed the whims of his creativity every night he cooked for the village. He would interrupt the cooking for 20 minutes to go to his house to fetch an aged balsamic vinegar that would make the salad dressing 'just perfect'. If a person stopped by the kitchen to grab a glass of water David would make them sample the sauce he was simmering on the stove or he would rope them into getting him some coriander from the herb patch. He wanted to showcase the flavours, colours and textures of the village produce. The meals David cooked encouraged the rest of the village to experience the same level of enthusiasm for not only the home-grown veggies, but also the way of life that made their production possible.

The philosophy and motivations of each cook differed from the next and further obscured the contrast between public and private spheres in the context of the community kitchen. While Sara's attitude and action situates her within the

private/domestic sphere, the other residents display behaviours that align with both domains. Adapon (2008) further problematises this distinction by emphasising the very different cultural and social meanings attached to public and private cooking. Home cooking is intrinsically meaningful, generating ‘positive social meaning (community viability)’, while ‘other’ (commercial) cooking is concerned with economy and the individual (2008: 125). The cook in the community kitchen was between these identities of private and public, of catering for the requirements or desires of the community and catering for themselves and their own ideologies.

### **The meal**

The intent behind the institution of routine daily meals provided by and for all members of the village was to foster a stronger sense of community and belonging. The residents had all chosen to live in the ecovillage because of an affinity for the lifestyle the village fostered. All residents enjoyed and supported the ideas of sustainable consumption and communal ownership to varying degrees. The helpers, on the other hand, were mostly at the village to ‘earn’ enough time working to apply for their second year visa. In general, the sort of work available for tourists trying to extend their visa was physically taxing: usually fruit picking and general farm labour. Nico, a helper from France, had to move on from a mango farm in Queensland because he developed a sensitivity to the mango skin and trees. It was a common reaction among fruit pickers, as repeated exposure worsened the reaction. One girl had to be taken to hospital because of the severity of her allergic reaction. The ecovillage was regarded as a soft option, a cushy way to build up the required number of days and apply for the visa. However, the village was located in a quiet part of the state and a few helpers moved on from the village before their allotted time was up. This meant that in addition to the regular cycle of helpers in and out of the village, there were small frequent shifts in the number of people living on site.

The community meals introduced a measure of stability to the interactions between residents and helpers. Everyone got a chance to learn each other’s names and become familiar with each other. Residents enjoyed being social with the helpers, and

appreciated getting to know the people living and working so close to them. Some residents and helpers got on particularly well. Julie gave Pierre some of her old piano sheet music, and he would play for hours on the dingy little keyboard in the Shed. Sara would take any helpers with some free time down to the beach when she went with Jack and Nellie, even if meant taking two trips to drive everybody. The commensality of the meal facilitated bonds between the people of the community despite their varied motivations in residing there.

People paid a nominal fee for *eating* the meal, not for the meal itself. Regardless of the types of ingredients used, the complexity of the dish, and the amount of people catered for, the cost for each lunch and dinner remained constant. This gave the cook some freedom in their choice of what to cook: the consistency of the cost meant that every meal was equal *before* it was cooked. Every meal had the same worth and value according to the amount charged for each dinner, no matter who cooked or what was served.

The community kitchen is a space that occupies both the public and private spheres. ‘The meal puts its frame on the gathering’ (Douglas, 1972: 66). The form the meal takes, the way the food is served and shared, shapes the relationships at the table. What are the implications of this on the meals produced by cooks in this kitchen? The reception of the community dinner was also an aspect of life in the ecovillage caught between the two spheres. A cook in the home has intimate knowledge of their family’s likes and dislikes, preferences for spice and sweetness and salt. A home cook expresses care and love and social connection with the meals she produces. A chef in a restaurant cooks according to a menu, a list of dishes that represent her experience and specialities. The chef demonstrates her prowess and devotes the amount of effort and time to the dishes dictated by her assigned hours and pay. The cook in the community kitchen is caught in the middle: if they cook for themselves they might alienate people who have different tastes; if they cook for others they may neglect their own motivations and preferences. For most residents who regularly cooked dinners, the meals they produced were something of a compromise between the two approaches. These meals represent another difficulty in understanding the community kitchen and its place in the ecovillage.

Indeed, the potential for subjective interpretation around the success of a meal means it performs ‘more like music or painting than a language’ (Anderson 2005: 110). Each diner applies his or her own frames of reference, memories and personal preferences on the food shared with others, and the relative success or failure of a meal relies largely on the impression and emotion each individual attaches to a dish, rather than any attempt at an objective measurement of taste or nutritional value.

David Sutton (2001) has described what he calls ‘markers of memory’, a concept that is useful in trying to understand how the meal might be evaluated and appreciated by others. These markers are the points of recognition a cook relies on as she works in the kitchen, a basis for comparison to past meals, fragrances and flavours. A memory marker could be a finished pot of minestrone, and within that marker, the image of the final dish, and the flavours and fragrances and textures are all essential parts of the memory. The recollection of the meal allows the cook to ‘mak[e] constant adjustments in the process of cooking’ (2001: 130). These principles of taste are sensory fragments of memory or signposts that give the home cook an easy level of competence and flexibility in the kitchen. Sutton explains these ‘memory markers’ as tools of a kind for the cook to use as a way to guarantee the outcome of their work in the kitchen. As tools, they can be likened to Ingold’s theory of skill and mastery of tasks.

It is useful to think of these memory markers when attempting to better understand the reception of the meals served in the ecovillage among such a diverse and ever-changing community. In this case, however, the concept must be expanded beyond the process of cooking in the kitchen to encompass the action of *eating* a meal. Here, the concept can provide more context and depth to understanding whether and how a meal is successfully received in the village. If a meal aligns in some way with the remembered ‘images’ of successful meals past, it will be well received. The reception of Helen’s spaghetti Bolognese is an example of the way memory markers influence our reception of a dish. To most of the residents and helpers, the Bolognese was tasty and filling. For Michael and some of the other helpers from Europe, the meal evoked memories of familiar dishes and flavours that mirrored the sensory experience of Helen’s food on the plate in front of them. In this way, the community kitchen



fostered an experience between Helen, some of the helpers and her meal that would not have taken place outside the distinctive space of the ecovillage kitchen.

## CONCLUSION

Although in this thesis I have explored the different philosophies people carried with them while cooking, my intent was to retain focus on the individuals themselves. The advantage of an anthropological approach in this context is that it supports rather than obscures people's idiosyncrasies and the interactions between them, and as a result reveals a great deal more about the process of everyday life with the ecovillage community than might be possible from within a different disciplinary perspective.

I began my fieldwork with a vague sense of the motivations and values that might come into play while cooking in the kitchen. My research revealed that these factors are numerous and varied, occasionally in conflict and often expressed in action or behaviour rather than in words. The community kitchen represented a space that was difficult to conceptualise and evaluate. In some respects (both material and practical), it resembled a domestic kitchen, in which meals would be created for close family members and friends. But in other ways, what took place in the community kitchen resembled what one might see in a commercial-scale kitchen. The ambiguity of the community kitchen as a public/private space facilitated the expression of certain ideas and values, and encouraged interaction between people, food and the community, that could not be neatly classified as either public or private.

David's and Helen's divergent yet strangely complementary approaches to cooking for the community reflected this ambiguity. Their behaviours and attitudes while cooking were specific to the community kitchen, and the unique responsibilities and freedoms attached to producing a meal within it. Sara's cooking process, by contrast, was firmly domestic, and lacked the occasionally self-conscious expression of intent and ideology of some of the other community cooks. Significantly, Sara has left the village since my fieldwork and now lives in a small two-bedroom cottage with her children. Her break with the ecovillage was amicable and she is still in contact with most of the residents. Sara's move is not surprising. While she subscribed to the principles of sustainable and conscious consumption that formed the foundation of the ecovillage, her main priority was her family and their happiness. This was reinforced through my experience cooking with her in the kitchen.

The study of sustainable communities and their food practices reflect on more commonplace interactions between people and their meals. In the ecovillage, I observed people performing and reinforcing their identity through the process of creating a meal. This research also speaks to some of the rapidly growing organisations attempting to change the way Australians eat food in order to promote an appreciation of the environmental and social impact of their food choices. These organisations also disrupt the distinction between public and private in different ways, including encouraging relationships between farmers and other producers who would otherwise be remote commercial entities. The essential contribution of this sort of ethnography is increased as an awareness of more sustainable alternatives to supermarkets and pre-packaged convenience foods becomes prevalent in daily conversations about eating and cooking.

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## **Appendix A:**

### **Ethics Approval**

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## Final Approval - Issues Addressed - Ref. 5201300806

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**Faculty of Arts Research Office** <artsro@mq.edu.au>

5 December 2013 at 13:37

To: Dr Deborah Van Heekeren <deborah.vanheekeren@mq.edu.au>

Cc: Faculty of Arts Research Office <artsro@mq.edu.au>, Miss Bridget Jay <bridget.jay@students.mq.edu.au>

Ethics Application Ref: (5201300806) - Final Approval

Dear Dr Van Heekeren,

Re: ('Creating sustainability: eating, ecovillages and the environment')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee.

Note to researchers:

Your responses to the Committee's requests and queries have been considered and they address and remove all of the concerns raised during the review process.

The Committee notes your reference to attainment of agreement from both [REDACTED]. If you have copies of the written/email communications indicating their agreement, please forward copies of these to the Committee for our records. If agreement has only been verbal, the Committee would encourage you to ask for email confirmation from both people, as this is always a wise precautionary measure for researchers.

Approval of the above application has been granted, effective 5/12/2013. This email constitutes ethical approval only.

If you intend to conduct research out of Australia you may require extra insurance and/or local ethics approval. Please contact Maggie Feng, Tax and Insurance Officer from OFS Business Services, on x1683 to advise further.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf).

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Deborah Van Heekeren  
Miss Bridget Jay

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 05/12/14  
Progress Report 2 Due: 05/12/15  
Progress Report 3 Due: 05/12/16  
Progress Report 4 Due: 05/12/17  
Final Report Due: 05/12/18

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:  
[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms)

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms)

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/>

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/policy](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy)

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at [ArtsRO@mq.edu.au](mailto:ArtsRO@mq.edu.au)

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz  
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