

Veganism at the Bottom of the World: A Case Study of Vegan Communities in the South Island of New Zealand Aotearoa

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Abstract

The world has entered a new geological epoch, known as the Anthropocene, which is characterised by human-induced deforestation, biodiversity loss and climate changes on a planetary scale (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill 2007). This is a time where human activity has been likened to the great forces of nature, contributing to changes in the atmosphere, water, land and affecting all living things. Industrial animal agriculture is one of these human activities causing harm to the environment, humans and non-human others. My research explores what the practice of veganism has to offer in terms of moving away from intensive animal agriculture towards more ethical and resilient futures. Using a case study approach, I investigate three vegan societies in the South Island of New Zealand Aotearoa, the Christchurch Vegan Society, Dunedin-Otepoti Vegan Society, and the Invercargill Vegan Society. The South Island was chosen for the geographical and historical significance of animal agricultural industries in the region. My methods included interviews and discussion groups with members of the vegan communities, as well as participant observation of vegan potlucks. To frame my research, I draw upon ecofeminist approaches to explore care ethics and Gibson-Graham's (2013) community economies framework.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed): _____

Candidate's name

Date: 04/11/2019 _____

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Preface

Four years ago, I decided to go vegan. This was around the time that the World Health Organisation broadcasted their findings that red meat was a known carcinogenic. I was motivated to give up meat due to health reasons and was yet to make any sort of deep environmental or ethical connection to my food sources. I was aware of veganism for some years before becoming vegan myself, although I often scoffed at the thought of living “cruelty-free”. I was particularly jarred by the idea that people thought by not eating meat they were absolved from harming others, while at the same time, they could be donning Nike sneakers which were most likely made at the expense of exploitative human labour. In my mind, I couldn’t reconcile the two – how can we live cruelty free towards animals but not towards fellow humans? It is these kinds of questions I still ponder, even as I practice a vegan lifestyle today.

At the end of 2017, I decided I wanted to go back to study. I knew I wanted to do a research degree, but I was not sure what my area of expertise would be. By that point, I have been living a vegan lifestyle for two years. Within that time, I travelled around Europe for six months eating only vegan foods in the most unexpected places. From then on, I was convinced there was a story to be told. I had started to develop even more questions about the challenges of living as a vegan in a non-vegan world. I decided to do a research degree on the topic of veganism to better understand the social, environmental, economic and political complexities of veganism. I was also eager to develop my academic language skills to better articulate critical talking points about the subject.

I was drawn to fieldwork in the South Island of New Zealand as I had learned about the Invercargill Vegan Society accidentally one day while scrolling through Facebook (interestingly again, as this was many years before I became vegan myself). Even though I had no engagement with the group online, the fact that the society existed in a rather incompatible environment was always interesting to me. When it came time to decide on a topic for my thesis, I was immediately drawn to this case study. In talking with the founder of the Invercargill Vegan Society, I was introduced to other vegan communities throughout the South Island. It was through this process that this thesis came to fruition.

While I identify with many aspects of veganism, at the same time, I take a critical perspective on the matter. I am cognisant of the differences between individuals and communities and recognise that veganism is not a one size fits all approach. There are many social, cultural, economic and even health barriers that can limit an individual’s exposure and willingness to adopt this lifestyle.

I am interested to learn how vegan ethics and practice manifest in different spheres of everyday life. At present, I would argue that the environmental effects of industrial animal agriculture on our land, waters and atmosphere cannot be ignored. While I do not advocate an abolitionist approach to social and environmental change, I do advocate for the recognition of individuals and communities in society who are trying to make a difference through their ethics and practice. That is what motivates me to keep learning, to think critically and contribute to the growing literature on veganism and be a part of the changes I wish to see in the world.

1. Introduction and Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

The world is facing an ecological crisis including biodiversity loss, species extinction, climate change, land and water pollution, deforestation, rising sea levels and overconsumption of the earth's resources. Scientists are calling this time in human history the Anthropocene – a new geological epoch where human activities are causing environmental changes at a planetary scale (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill 2007). Scholars within the environmental humanities draw our attention to the fact that not all humans bare the same level of responsibility for these anthropogenic changes (see Moore 2016; Haraway 2015, Wright 2016) and contribute to interdisciplinary discussions about planetary change futures (Cook, Rickards and Rutherford 2015, p. 231).

Within the Anthropocene, industrial animal agriculture is a major cause of damage. This form of agriculture contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, widespread land clearing for feed and pasture, overconsumption of water for irrigation, pollution of waterways, as well as poor treatment of humans and non-humans within industrial farm complexes. Given the adverse effects of industrial animal agriculture within the Anthropocene, it is critical to consider more caring and ethical possibilities that recognise the multispecies world around us. The emerging challenge is how to transition to more ethical and resilient food systems in order to avoid the future that lies ahead if the socio-ecological challenges of industrial animal agriculture remain unchanged. This thesis addresses these challenges by exploring the possibilities veganism can offer in generating new knowledge to address some of the most pertinent socio-ecological challenges of the Anthropocene epoch.

Veganism is a lifestyle practice that refrains from the consumption and use of all animal products. Often associated with animal rights, the vegan movement is increasingly reflecting a broader range of concerns including ethical, environmental and human health perspectives (The Vegan Society 2019). Proponents argue that veganism offers new ethical and resilient ways of life that lessen human impact on the planet (The Vegan Society 2019). Central to this writing, particularly from an ecofeminist perspective, is the interconnectedness between humans, non-humans and environments (see Kheel 1985; Plumwood 2003; Held 2006; Adams and Gruen 2004; Bellacasa 2017; Twine 2017). In this thesis I explore these claims.

Current literature on the topic of veganism within the field of human geography is scarce, with some exceptions including recent work by Giraud (2013), White (2018; 2015), and McGregor and Houston (2018). This is in line with Gordon and Hunt's (2019) observation that the ecological, cultural and economic relations that sustain vegan food systems are yet to be properly studied. At present, much of the broader academic literature about veganism (and vegetarianism) is concerned with philosophical enquiries into human-animal relations or

scientific debates about health, diets and food production science. Philosophical debates about human to non-human ontologies can be dated back to ancient Greece, particularly debates about whether humans should even consume animal flesh (Ruby 2012). In more recent times, the welfare, basic rights and moral responsibility towards non-humans have been widely discussed within critical animal studies, with most positions arguing for a vegetarian or vegan diet as a way of enacting moral and ethical positions (for example, see Singer 1990; Adams 1990; Donovan and Adams 2007; Joy 2012).

Similarly, recent scientific reports have presented evidence arguing for plant-based based diets for environmental reasons. An article in *Nature* by Springmann et al. (2018) found that GHG emissions can be significantly reduced if diets traditionally high in animal products transitioned towards more plant-based foods. Additionally, the EAT-Lancet report (Willet et al. 2019) which investigated aspects of food, environment and health, found that plant-based diets offer both improved health and environmental benefits. Most recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019) argued for a shift towards plant-based diets, finding significant co-benefits in terms of human health and emissions reductions.

While the physical sciences call for a change in human diets and food production, the social sciences and humanities offer valuable insights into how these changes can come about and how they are integrated into everyday life by exploring the social, environmental, economic and political effects on society. The study of veganism within human geography can produce socio-spatial epistemologies of consumption that lead to cultural and spatial changes (Harper in White 2015, p. 30) which is a core outcome this research.

To further these debates, this thesis uses a case study approach to examine how and why people are transitioning to veganism as well as the types of community economies and possibilities that emerge from these transitions. The case study area involves communities from the South Island of Aotearoa¹, a landscape dominated by pastoral animal farming. The key research question for this thesis is:

What can be learned from vegan communities in the South Island of Aotearoa in the context of Anthropocene?

The following three sub-questions have been developed to explore the main research question:

- ***What principles, ethics and concerns underpin veganism in the South Island of Aotearoa?***
- ***How have these principles been manifested in everyday practices?***
- ***How can vegan ethics and practices contribute to a hopeful reimagining of future food systems in the Anthropocene?***

¹ Throughout this thesis, I use Aotearoa to refer to New Zealand. Aotearoa is the Māori name, meaning “The Land of the Long White Cloud” (Brooking 2004).

These questions aim to amplify the often-marginalised voices of vegans in a landscape defined by intensive animal agriculture. Through a critical exploration of the ethics and practices that underpin veganism in the South Island of Aotearoa, the project can contribute to the global debates about transitions towards more ethical and resilient food systems. I summarise some of these debates below.

1.2. Research on Veganism, Ecofeminism and Community Economies

In this section I outline what is currently known about veganism, from the history of the movement to recent scientific arguments for plant-based diets. This is followed by an overview of research relating to individual motivations for and practices of veganism and a reflection of criticisms of the movement. I then introduce ecofeminist perspectives which have previously engaged with veganism and underpin my methodological approach. The subsequent section introduces the community economies perspective, another lens I use to analyse vegan practice. Gibson-Graham et al.'s (2013) community economies approach enables researchers to bring to light marginalised and alternative economic activities to reimagine the economy. These two methodological approaches complement one another as ecofeminist perspectives extend the community economy coordinates to include relationships between human, non-human and environments (Roelvnik and Gibson-Graham 2009, p. 149). The literature review concludes with a conceptual model to explain the research process and a discussion about the need for further research about veganism, particularly within the frameworks of ecofeminism and the community economies literature.

1.2.1. Current Research on Veganism

There are various bodies of research about veganism. These range from health sciences focusing on the nutritional aspects of plant-based diets, environmental sciences studying the ecological effects of animal versus plant-based agriculture, as well as philosophical and moral debates about our ontological relations to non-human others (for a summary see Ruby 2012). While this research references these debates, the thesis is situated within the field of human geography and as such, the focus is on how vegan communities form and sustain themselves in particular places.

Veganism is defined as a practice that seeks to exclude, as far as possible, all forms of exploitation and cruelty to animals for food, clothing and any other purposes (The Vegan Society 2019). Veganism builds upon a long history of vegetarianism, which has found different expressions across time and space. Maurer (2002) found that in recent history, vegetarianism (the practice of abstaining from meat consumption, but not all other animal products) peaked in the western world around the mid-1800s and reignited as a movement again in the 1960s and 1970s. Some significant vegan organisations formed in the 1980s such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) who “sought to give caring people something more that they could do and to provide them ways to actively change society” (PETA 2019). Wright (2015,

p. 35) argues that interest in veganism swelled in the 1990s following a flood of scientific evidence supporting vegan diets. In present times, Radnitz et al. (2015) argue that we are currently at a historic transition point towards veganism, driven by greater awareness of animal abuse, evidence of the health and environmental benefits of a vegan diet, and an increase in the convenience of meat and dairy substitutes.

There are increasing criticisms about the current state of industrial animal food systems that suggest a global transition towards plant-based food production and consumption may be optimal for both planetary and personal health. For example, Springmann et al. (2016) argue that dietary changes toward less animal-sourced foods can help mitigate expected growth in food-related greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). In a more recent study in *Nature*, Springmann et al. (2018) found that GHG emissions can be reduced by 29% if diets traditionally high in animal products transitioned towards plant-based eating. In practice, this would require developed nations to cut their beef intake by 75%, pork intake by 90% and reduce egg consumption by half, by 2050 (Carrington, 2018). Veganism would presumably have even more benefits. Additionally, more recent reports on food, environment and health, such as the EAT-Lancet report (Willet et al. 2019) argue that plant-based diets confer both improved health and environmental benefits.

Social science studies about the attitudes and motivations of vegans and vegetarians have found that there are strong shared beliefs about animal welfare, meat-eating and caring for the environment (see Ruby 2012; Cramer et al. 2017; González-García et al. 2018; Martinelli and Berkmaniene 2018; Marletto and Sillig 2018). In their study of vegan motivations, Janssen et al. (2016) found that animal-related motives played the most important role in the decision to follow a vegan diet. Interestingly, Maurer (2002) found that a move from one single motivation to multiple motivations for adopting a vegetarian diet can strengthen the commitment to vegetarianism (and in this case, veganism), leading to social activism. Martinelli and Berkmaniene (2018) found that the rise of veganism and social activism appears to have also coincided with an increased centrality of food in social, political and cultural discourses. Beverland (2014) argued that although researchers in health studies have identified the need for plant-based diets, the socio-cultural meanings associated with meat and vegetable consumption remain under-researched. To understand these meanings, a critical perspective of veganism that extends beyond personal consumptive or lifestyle choices is needed (White 2015, p. 30).

In terms of vegan demographics, Radnitz's et al. (2015), Twine's (2017) and Martinelli and Berkmaniene's (2018) research indicates people who identify as vegan tend to be female, generally more educated, politically left-leaning and more likely to live urban areas. These findings suggest that only a relatively affluent and urban few have the means to self-identify with and have access to a vegan lifestyle. This raises socio-economic issues related to class, race, and justice. Plumwood (2003) highlights the need to recognise these issues, arguing that

all or nothing approaches to veganism tend to universalise a privileged western ‘consumer’. These universalised perspectives are problematic as they tend to ignore contexts reflecting different cultural priorities and norms. Dominik (2015, p. 28) similarly argues that social context plays a large role in the uptake of vegan lifestyle choices in terms of the “relative purity” of these choices. Plumwood (2003) goes on to argue that claims to universalism risk making veganism highly ethnocentric by treating non-vegans as deviant ‘exceptions’ in terms of what it takes to be the ideal or norm. She gives the example of Indigenous hunting which many vegans oppose despite the ethic of care that can inform such practices (for example, see Rose 1999; Bawaka Country et al. 2016). Based on this, and drawing on ecofeminist perspectives, it is important to account for differences, context and nuance when approaching the expressions of veganism.

Critics of veganism recognise that refusing animal products does not absolve vegans from being enmeshed in other oppressive or exploitative practices. In his criticism of veganism and anarchism, Dominik (2015) argues that despite altruistic motivations, vegans exist in a system where individuals continue to purchase products made with exploited labour. Additionally, Dominik (2015, p. 34) calls out veganism for “fetishizing the power of personal consumption, without acknowledgment of the chain of relationships between one’s palate and those who deal suffering and death to animals”. White (2018) similarly argues that the idea of veganism as inherently “cruelty-free” is problematic as this overlooks the hidden complexities of exploitative human labour. White (2018) suggests “adopting a more critical vegan approach would involve investigating the wider and hidden networks of production, exchange, and consumption that underpin these foods, and evaluating these on ethical grounds”. These critiques foreground the complexities of veganism and demonstrate the need for further research in the social, political and economic dimensions of a vegan practice, as well as its spatial and place-based expressions. Rather than approach veganism as a universalising approach to overcoming the challenges of the Anthropocene this thesis explores the multiple expressions of veganism and the possibilities it enables for living well and living with human and non-human others in a time of planetary change.

1.2.2. Ecofeminism

Ecofeminist literature has long sought to improve how humans live with human and non-human others. Ecofeminist theory recognises the need to connect the social concerns of feminism with broader concerns relating to human-nature relations, environmental sustainability and better multispecies recognition (Roelvink and Gibson-Graham 2009). This research adopts the social ecofeminist perspective advocated by Plumwood (1992) to explore the power dynamics underpinning the continued oppression of humans and non-humans alike. Social ecofeminism differs from earlier conceptions of ecofeminism that were based on cultural ideals which essentialised the relationship between women and nature (Plumwood 1992). These cultural concepts served to reproduce the feminisation of nature by romanticising the discourse of mother earth (Twine 2001, p.3). In contrast to these earlier conceptions, social

ecofeminism highlights the need for an intersectional politics (Plumwood 1992) that can be applied across an array of social, political, economic and environmental issues experienced by humans and non-humans. This is important in the context of veganism as it prevents the promotion of a universal set of applied ethics or practices, given the multiplicity of contexts in which veganism can exist. An intersectional social ecofeminist approach recognises that a vegan practice can still be entangled in unethical practices (such as exploitation of human workers) (Twine and Taylor 2014). Moreover, ecofeminist theory provides ethical guidance to challenge inequalities (Adams and Gruen, 2014) and actively work through the complex set of demands to achieve a life of flourishing which does not diminish the flourishing of others (Curtin 2014, p. 55). In the context of ecofeminism and food, Curtin (2014) argues that food practices should promote compassion for the human and non-human victims of contemporary industrial food systems.

Recognising the need to extend compassion towards human and non-human others can enable humans to see themselves as part of ecosystems and accept the ways ecologies support human life (Plumwood 2009, p. 117). Compassion, in the context of industrialised farming, is particularly important as non-human animals are systematically stripped of their autonomy and agency, effectively rendering them “de-aminated and invisible” (Arcari 2017, p. 69). From ecofeminist perspectives, an ethic of care that actively considers the multispecies world around us provides the basis for creating more ethical and resilient human-nature relations in the Anthropocene. Based on this, some ecofeminist scholars have explored veganism as a form of care. For example, Curtin (1991) argues that ecofeminist research about veganism should be understood as a form of care that is contextual, rather than a universal set of principles and ethics which create the basis for better human to non-human relations across space. Although expressions and acts of care vary across individuals and contexts, this thesis explores the possibility that care for animals can act as a springboard for new instances of care for others in everyday life. As Veron (2016) suggests, the act of refraining from eating, wearing or using animal products makes veganism is a form of pre-figurative activism oriented towards creating better worlds.

1.2.3. Community Economies

Along with ecofeminist theorising, this thesis draws upon the community economies literature to understand veganism in practice. Gibson-Graham (1996) first introduced the community economies concept to argue for a post-capitalist re-thinking of how the economy is understood. Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) develop the idea of ‘community economies’ as a way to explain the diverse (but often hidden or under-appreciated) economic activities that sustain societies. Gibson-Graham (2017) define the study of community economies as a way of theorising ethical moments of resilience-building through the transactions of everyday life, as illustrated in their iceberg model (Figure 1.1).

Daily activities such as fundraising, farmers markets or composting, are conceptualised as the important but often obscured transactions of everyday life. By demonstrating that these activities are integral to the functioning and flourishing of communities, they become more visible and credible as objects of policy and activism (Gibson-Graham 2008, p. 613). Gibson-Graham et al. (2016) argue that the community economies approach allows consideration of the kind of practices and enterprises that should be supported in the Anthropocene.

Understanding veganism through a community economies lens (reflected in Figure 1.1) turns attention to the forms of care and everyday practices through which veganism is performed. It

highlights the alternative ethics and concerns that co-exist outside of, or are entangled within, capitalocentric practices that are the focus of so much research. Studying community economies is a political decision oriented at highlighting and empowering economies beyond those of capitalist relations. Ecofeminist and feminist perspectives are useful here too, particularly as feminist approaches within human geography highlight marginalised voices and embrace an ethic of care. Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003, p. 145) argue that feminising the economy is a “deconstructive project” which opens the economy to difference and reimagines it as a discursive construct that can be reconstituted in ways leading to social transformation. Feminist approaches to knowledge and research provide a lens and language through which care for others can be articulated and practiced through everyday transactions.

At present, there is a lack of research about veganism within community economies research. While there is considerable research with the Community Economies Research Network (CERN) (2019) relating to post-capitalist approaches to food practices (see Davies et al. 2017a; Davies et al. 2017b; Gordon 2018; Loh and Agyeman 2019; Ribeiro 2019; Sariemento 2017), veganism remains a topic yet to be explored. Researching veganism from a community economies approach is worthwhile as the study of food is a potential site of “political and social transformation” (Wilson 2013, p. 719). It is important to note that understanding veganism within a community economies approach does not assert that veganism is an alternative to conventional food practices. Framing veganism exclusively as an alternative furthers the notion of dualistic thinking (Wilson 2013), which is what post-capitalist and ecofeminist approaches are working against. Instead, a more nuanced approach is required to avoid essentialist claims about ethical and non-ethical food politics (Wilson 2013, p. 723). Taking an ecofeminist

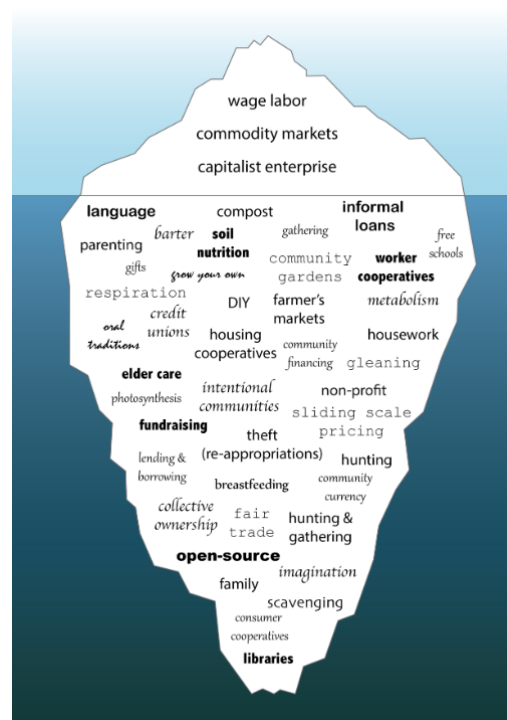


Figure 1.1 Iceberg Model (Community Economies Research Network 2019)

perspective that considers the influence of context upon veganism is critical to further studies on the topic.

1.3. Summary and overview of chapters

Drawing on the brief review above, there is a need for more research on veganism by building on the existing work of ecofeminist scholars and developing new knowledge within the community economies approach. The following conceptual model has been developed to illustrate the thought process for this research (Figure 1.2).

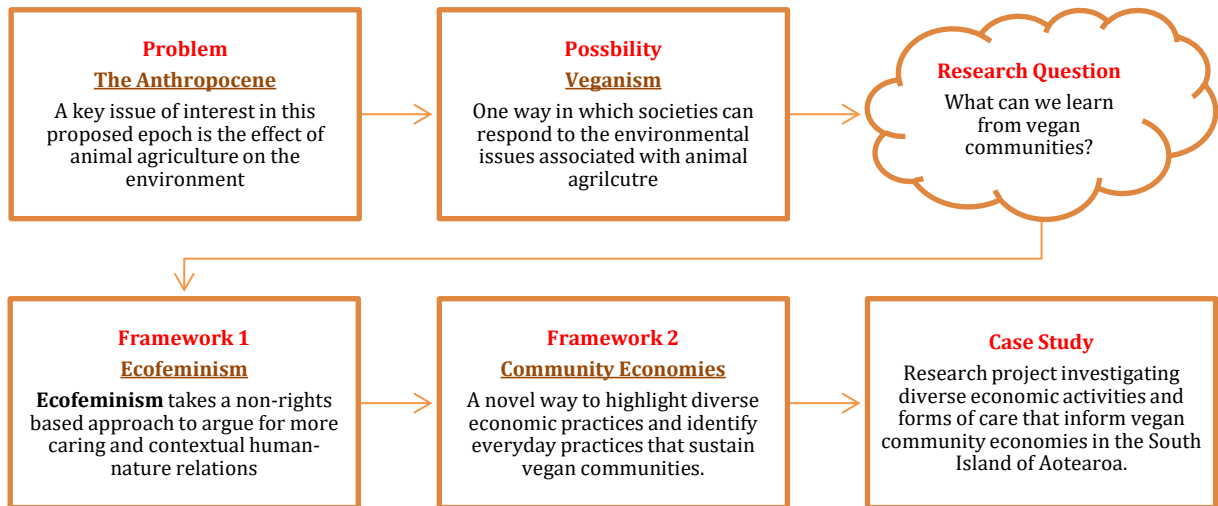


Figure 1.2 Map of Research Process

In what follows, this thesis will explore the key question - what can we learn from vegan communities in the South Island of Aotearoa? This introduction chapter has provided an overview of the relevant literature about veganism, ecofeminism and community economies. Chapter two discusses how ecofeminist and the community economies approaches inform the methodological approaches for this project, and outlines the methods used. Chapter three provides a brief introduction to animal agriculture in Aotearoa and ends with a discussion about what is currently known about veganism within the South Island and Aotearoa more broadly.

The research findings, which are arranged in line with research questions, are the focus of Chapters four to six. Chapter four draws on the research findings to explore participants' motivations for veganism, the importance of compassion and introduces the idea of a multispecies ethic of care. Chapter five explores the diverse economic practices of vegan communities in the South Island and how these practices contribute to the notion of a community economy (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). Drawing on examples such as vegan potlucks, ethical consumption and other diverse economic activities, this chapter explores how a multispecies ethic of care is practiced. Chapter six examines current trends in the business sector in the South Island, from the growth of all-vegan businesses to investment opportunities

in growing vegan markets. This is followed by a section on participants' ideas about possible institutional changes geared towards vegan futures as well as the risks of corporate capture.

The findings are summarized in chapter seven, the conclusion chapter. This chapter argues that veganism is one possible way to transition away from industrial animal agriculture as a major food source and is a way to realise more caring community economies. The conclusion shows that vegan communities in the South Island have insights to offer, particularly how to care for multispecies others in everyday life. The chapter recognises the under-studied gap in the literature relating to the study of veganism and reflects upon opportunities for further research.

2. Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I develop the methodological approach of the thesis drawing on ecofeminist and community economies insights. The first section of this chapter provides a brief discussion of the significance of these approaches to my case study. The next section outlines how these methodological positions informed the methods chosen for this research. The chapter ends with a discussion about data analysis and limitations.

2.1. Methodology

2.1.1. Ecofeminism

Ecofeminist perspectives emphasise the importance of emotions, narratives and an ethic of care to research and knowledge (see Adams and Gruen 2014, Twine 2017, Van Dooren 2012, Plumwood 2000, Twine 2001). Traditional masculinist scientific research has downplayed such approaches, seeing them as unreliable or not based on fact. I discuss each below.

2.1.1.1. Emotions

Slicer (2014) argues that within ecofeminist literature, there is a strong emphasis on emotional responses towards socio-ecological issues. These responses can inform “moral action” (Curtin 2014) in terms of navigating what individuals care about and how to enact care. The focus on emotions is a way to create more open discourses that builds on the feminist project of challenging the dualisms such as the “reason/emotion dichotomy” (Giraud 2013, p. 60). Ecofeminist argue that an emphasis on emotions does not imply the exclusion of reason (Kheel 1985, p. 144), instead, emotions accompany reason and enable the recognition of value systems that account for the subjective epistemologies of lived experience.

2.1.1.2. Narratives

Emotions are part of personal narratives that help understandings about the significance of place and context. Van Dooren (2012, p. 54) asserts that through narratives, researchers can weave diverse information from scientific research, history, ethnography and philosophy, into a single account. Narratives can challenge and reshape established and accepted ideas about human-nature relations, while addressing broader social, political, economic and ecological issues. In this research, participants were invited to tell stories and reflect on their emotional responses and forms of care towards humans and non-human alike.

2.1.1.3. Ethic of Care

Ecofeminists advocate an ethic of care for marginalised human and non-human others. These ethics are informed by the question of how to enact our interdependence with humans, non-humans and the environment (Roelvnik and Gibson-Graham 2009). Such ethics calls into practice “radically different economic progress that is sustainable, ecologically sound, non-

patriarchal, non-exploitative, and community-oriented” (Held 2006, p. 166). In what follows, I explore the ethic of care that inform vegan practice.

These three aspects of ecofeminist approaches to research informed the research methods, as did community economies approaches to research outlined in the next section.

2.1.2. Community Economies

The second methodological frame draws upon Gibson-Graham’s et al. (2013) concept of community economies. This idea is discussed in the previous chapter and is based on the concept of the “iceberg model” (see Figure 1.1). This approach focuses on researching communities, interactions between people and identifying more-than capitalist relations in daily life. Within this approach, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) assert that decisions and commitments to each other and the earth ultimately shape the economies we live in. The community economies approach is a way for researchers to pay close attention to what is “actually taking place” (Huron 2018, p. 39). Therefore, it is the goal of CERN researchers to shine a light on the everyday transactions that sustain us and explore how these practices contribute to more ethical and resilient futures. Gibson-Graham (2006, p. 9) provide researchers with the theoretical tools to pursue “new political imaginaries” (2006, p. 9), to broaden understandings of the economy in ways that make “no presumptions about predictable relationships between economic activities” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, p. 13). Scholars within CERN (2019) draw upon ethnographic methods to gather data about community economies in practice. These methods tend to include interviews, participant observation and discussion groups (see Cameron and Gibson 2005; Hwang 2013; Cameron et al. 2014; Diprose 2017 and Diprose et al. 2017). Such ethnographic methods are in synergy with ecofeminist approaches to social research through their focus on personal narratives and emotional responses.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Case Study

This thesis used a case study approach. This approach was chosen as it enabled an in-depth exploration of veganism in a particular context (Baxter 2016, p. 132). As such it focused on contextual veganism – or how veganism is expressed in a particular place and time. The case studies were focused on three vegan societies in the South Island (Figure 2.1):

- Christchurch Vegan Society (CVS)
- Dunedin-Otepoti Vegan Society (DOVeS)
- Invercargill Vegan Society (INVSOC)

The location of these communities is shown in Figure 2.1. These three societies were chosen as they are the most active vegan groups in the South Island based on a preliminary analysis of their social media sites. Given the relatively small size of each area geographically, there was some overlap between the groups. For example, the founders of each society knew of, or were friends with, the founders of the other societies.



Figure 2.1 Map of Aotearoa
(Zeald 2019; labels by M Bojovic 2019)

At each location I conducted interviews, discussion groups and participant observation of vegan potlucks, run by each society. A potluck is a community food-sharing event where each attendee brings a plate of food to share with the group. I conducted the fieldwork from the end of January to late February 2019 as outlined in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2-1 Fieldwork Schedule

Location	Length of Stay
Christchurch	28 th January – 3 rd February
Invercargill	3 rd February – 8 th February
Dunedin	8 th February – 15 th February
Christchurch	15 th February – 19 th February

2.2.2. Interviews

I conducted 18 semi-structured, one on one interviews with key informants from each location (Table 2.2). Interviews were initially organised with the founders of each society; these informants provided me with further interview contacts who were all in some way affiliated with each vegan society, a technique known as “snowballing” (Cloke et al. 2004). Most people contacted responded positively to the research invitation.

Table 2-2 Number of Interviewees per region

Location	Number of Interviewees
Christchurch	7
Dunedin	6
Invercargill	5

As a researcher, I intentionally allowed respondents to take time to “think, meditate and reflect” before answering a question (Dunn 2016, p. 166). Taking a flexible approach to the interview questions enabled respondents to speak freely about topics of interest (Bryman 2012). This approach was valuable as it put participants at ease, allowed participants to comfortably and openly speak about topics that were not necessarily part of my initial line of questioning. This process also creates a site for transformation for the interviewee and the interviewer who co-create new knowledge (Rodrigues 2018, p. 50). Moreover, interviews also enable a framework to create and sustain social change by enabling participants to reflect on their experiences (Diprose 2017). My open approach resulted in positive feedback from many participants in the form of emails or comments during, or after, our conversations. For example, during one interview, I apologised as we were running over time, to which the participant responded:

“No it’s ok - This is really nice, this interview makes me reflect on my journey... it’s really good to think about why I made those decisions and why I am going down the path I’m going down now” (Female, Christchurch)

Another participant remarked on how some of the questions challenged his positionality:

“You’ve got me thinking... You’re challenging me which is good. It’s good to challenge people’s views” (Male, Invercargill)

By providing participants with time to reflect and engage in topics they were passionate about, participants gave responses which suggested that they felt they were contributing towards something meaningful. For example, one participant stated:

“This is fun, I’m having so much fun. Well like, not only is it fun, I am so proud of you, am I allowed to be proud of you? Like for doing this. Like a whole masters about veganism... We need people to take us seriously and reach out and read articles like yours that are vegan related” (Male, Invercargill).

Cloke et al. (2004, p. 152) refer to these instances of digression as “unexpected chat” where participants feel comfortable enough to speak freely producing a “fruitful research moment.” Interview locations included cafes, libraries and offices that were agreed upon by participants. Each location was quiet and private enough to ensure there was little to no interference with the recordings (Bryman 2012, p. 473).

2.2.3. Participant Observation

I attended three vegan potlucks, one from each society. The purpose of participant observation was to immerse myself with the vegan communities. Kearns (2016, p. 317) notes that participant observation is a useful method for human geographers as it enables an understanding of place and the contexts of everyday life more fully. I intended to observe the care ethics and practices in a group setting and identify diverse economic activities in action. Each potluck varied in terms of numbers, venue setting and food choices. I made it clear to all attendees I was doing fieldwork and should anyone not want to be involved, their responses would be omitted from my fieldnotes. I was fortunate that no participants wished to opt-out of my observations, so I was able to retain all notes. At the potlucks, there was plenty of discussion and sharing of information, ideas and anecdotes about daily life as a vegan in their respective city or town. During the participant observation, I took “jotted notes” (Bryman 2012, p. 450) which were made up of very brief notes written on paper, to be transcribed and drawn out after the event. To accompany my fieldnotes, I kept a reflection logbook of my experiences after each event. This logbook has become integral in the analysis of my data (examples of my fieldnotes and reflections are in Appendix 4).

2.2.4. Discussion Groups

Originally, I aimed to conduct a group discussion for each vegan society after attending their vegan potluck. However, I was unable to facilitate a group discussion with INVSOC as the potluck was made up of people I had already interviewed one on one (there were only 4 attendees at this potluck, not including myself). Therefore, two discussion groups were held in Christchurch and one in Dunedin. Table 2.3 provides an overview of the discussion groups for this research.

Table 2-3 Summary of Discussion Groups

Location	Number of Participants	Summary notes
Christchurch (group 1)	3	The discussion group began as a one on one interview with a committee member from CVS. However, during the interview two of her friends from the vegan community came to join us, which resulted in an impromptu discussion group. The participants talked about the influence CVS has had on the local community and the challenges of raising vegan children. The discussion also spiralled into a conversation about the semantics of “vegan” (see Appendix 5 for this discussion).
Christchurch (group 2)	3	The second discussion was held a day after the CVS potluck. This was a much more intimate and emotionally charged discussion. At one point, one of the participants broke down in tears upon reflecting on the treatment of farmed animals. I ensured participants were not negatively affected by the charged atmosphere by creating a safe space in which deep, trustworthy and mutual interactions and understandings emerged (Cloke et al. 2014, p 1650). In guiding the discussion and taking a “sensitive grasp on the emotions” (Cloke et al. 2014), participants appeared comfortable and willing to contribute.
Dunedin	6	I was fortunate to hold the DOVeS discussion group directly after the potluck. The discussion highlighted the process of producing knowledge about veganism in terms of how meanings are constantly reworked within the discourse (Cameron 2016). For example, in the discussion, participants to reflect on what it means to be an “active member” of the vegan society and whether or not they see themselves as activists.

2.2.5. Data Analysis

In addition to my fieldwork notes and personal reflections, all interviews and discussion groups were voice recorded and typed as transcripts. Data analysis of the transcripts was conducted through NVivo software which included the process of coding. Coding can be described as “detective work” as the researcher engages in data reduction, exploration, theory building and most importantly, identifying key themes (Cope 2016, p. 377). Through the process of coding, a thematic analysis emerged and three distinct themes were identified (Bryman 2012). These informed the key findings, which were about the ethic of care informing vegan practice; the practices sustaining vegan community economies; and social, economic and environmental possibilities. These themes went on to inform the structure of the results chapters.

Each interview and discussion group followed the same set of questions, with additional questions added as participants opened up new lines of relevant enquiry (see Appendix 3 for interview questions). All data relating to individual’s personal information has been kept anonymous to protect participants’ privacy, as stipulated in the signed consent forms (Appendix 2). Additionally, all names have been removed, with just the gender and location used to delineate individuals’ responses. The research which was approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Committee in late 2018. I ensured that all data was stored safely and securely on Dropbox online with a secure password and two-factor authentication.

2.3. Conclusion

Together, ecofeminist and community economies approaches are relevant and novel ways to generate new knowledge for understanding the significance of veganism, particularly in the context socio-ecological challenges of the Anthropocene. The conceptual model below (Figure 2.2) summarises the research process for the chosen methodological approach.



Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model

The methodological frameworks inform the basis for exploring ethics in practice in a novel and interesting way. Through interviews, discussion groups and participant observation, rich data is generated to inform the research question about what we can learn from vegan communities

in the South Island of Aotearoa. The focus on narratives, emotions and an ethic of care informs how participants are navigating their ethics and practice amidst planetary change. The interviews and discussion groups are useful in generating fruitful data that engages with personal stories, captures emotions and explores how everyday transactions within the vegan communities contribute to a thriving community economy. The conversations with participants gave them a platform to voice their ideas, concerns and discuss different views. Participant observation was valuable towards understanding how these vegan societies engage with their members and encourage active participation.

Overall, the methodological framing and methods generated rich data for this research, although there were some limitations. For example, if time permitted, I would have extended the duration of my fieldwork and engaged in participatory action research, a favoured method amongst community economies scholars (for example, see Cameron and Gibson 2004; Cameron and Gibson 2005; Cameron et al. 2014; Diprose 2017; Diprose et al. 2017; Rodrigues 2018). This method can include the co-creation of a research team between researchers and participants with the mutual goal of initiating and sustaining some form of social transformation (Cameron and Gibson 2005). Another limitation was the relatively small sample size for this study. This means that the participants selected for this study are non-representative of vegan communities elsewhere in Aotearoa. A final limitation to consider was the lack of Māori voices in the vegan community. At the time of fieldwork, none of the participants identified as Māori. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully engage with Māori worldviews, their perspectives would have been valuable towards understanding the place of veganism in the South Island and Aotearoa more broadly. Despite these limitations, the qualitative methods used for this project were useful for investigating the ecofeminist ethic of care and identifying the diverse economic activities of vegan communities and individuals.

3. Contextualising Aotearoa

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the case study by exploring the significance of intensive animal agriculture industries, as well as current knowledge about veganism, in Aotearoa. If there is a transition occurring from animal-based to plant-based food systems, it is important to understand the cultural and economic significance of animal farming and its alternatives. The chapter discusses the history of animal farming, the current environmental issues associated with animal farming, and finally, what is currently known about veganism in Aotearoa. This chapter provides the broader research context for exploring vegan communities in the South Island.

3.1. A Brief History of Agriculture in Aotearoa

Aotearoa is a country made up of two main landmasses, the North and South Islands², as well as the smaller Stuart Island. The Māori people moved down from the Pacific Islands and inhabited the islands for approximately 800 years (Brooking 2004). Although the arrival of European settlers in the 1800s disrupted Māori livelihoods (Bell 1996), Māori people continue to inhabit their lands and preserve their culture, amidst the ongoing effects of colonialism. Within a Māori worldview, there is a sense of deep connection with the land; “As tangata whenua – people of the land - Māori ensure the unique connection of tangata whenua is respected” (Ministry for the Environment New Zealand 2019a). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage deeper with Māori worldviews, it is important to acknowledge that these views differ from western hierarchical ideas of the dominant human subject over the “passive animal object” (Dunn 2019, p. 48). As Dunn (2018) argues, Māori narratives contain layers of genealogical information which explain how everything is interrelated and it would be inaccurate to reduce these narratives to fit western ideas about human to non-human relations.

With European settlement, the introduction of plant and animal species immensely impacted Aotearoa’s indigenous peoples, landscape and ecology (Freitas and Perry 2012). Radical changes to the landscape have occurred since European settlement with over 53% of forests cleared, much of this for agriculture (Memon and Wilson 1993). The earliest settler economy focused on whaling, gold mining, timber, and raising land animals for wool, meat, and dairy products (Bell 1996). Farming became essential to ideas about Aotearoa’s Pākehā (white) culture, economy, and identity (Potts and White 2008). In the context of animal farming and colonisation, Anderson (2004, p. 4) argues that across cultures which experienced European colonisation, imported animals systematically transformed forests into farmland to configure “new world” environments to suit European purposes. Animal agriculture and development of land for farming was an expression of colonialism, leading to the dispossession of land for Māori and eradication of native flora and fauna.

² The Māori names for the islands are: Te Ika a Maui (North Island) and Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) (Brooking 2004)

Māori claims to sovereignty and Britain's desire to formalise their colony resulted in the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (Brooking 2004). This agreement promoted the existence of "harmonious, bicultural Aotearoa" (Bell 1996, p. 9). As a result, Māori worldviews (relating to human-nature relations in particular) are formally acknowledged amidst the dominance of Eurocentric worldviews. For example, a recent report by the Ministry for the Environment New Zealand (2019a) acknowledged the importance of Māori relationships to their lands with excerpts written in Te Reo Māori³ asserting that "Māori ensure the unique connection of tangata whenua is respected by bringing a way of thinking that helps us all see ourselves as a part of, not apart from, the environment". However, despite this recognition, the prevailing worldview informing approaches to land and resource management continues to privilege Eurocentric interests, particularly in terms of identifying more efficient extractive practices (such as industrial animal agriculture) (Ministry for the Environment New Zealand 2019a). As Dunn (2019, p.55) argues, industrial animal agriculture based on the conceptualization of "the animal as an object" stands in conflict with the Māori worldview of interconnectedness. Māori agricultural practices were different to European practices, particularly as prior to settlement, there were no native land mammals apart from large bats (Potts 2013, p. 103). The main cultivated crop was kumara (sweet potato) (Holland and Williams 2014) with special ceremonials attached to every stage of cultivation from planting to harvest (Anon 1926, p. 283).

3.2. Animal Agriculture Economies and Environments

Agriculture and forestry comprise up to 6% of Aotearoa's total workforce with projections for a significant increase in the needs for dairy farm workers as the industry expands (New Zealand Government 2019). Agriculture, forestry and fishing contribute over \$50million to the nations GDP in the most recent quarterly data (NZ Stats 2019). In recent years, between 2002 and 2016, there has been a 42% increase in areas designated for dairy farming, driven by a combination of social, cultural, environmental and economic factors (Ministry for the Environment New Zealand 2017). In terms of social and cultural factors, Tulloch and Judge (2018, p. 9) argue that dairy farming plays a key role in the national psyche, underpinning an idyllic rural mythology, which remains an enduring fantasy from the colonial era. In terms of environmental factors, Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand (2019) state that favourable natural conditions such as a temperate climate, great soils and abundant water make the nation ideal for dairying. Finally, in terms of economic factors, Rundgren (2016, p. 109) finds that for a country with only four and a half million people⁴, Aotearoa already contributes just over 3% of the world's total milk production. Dairy milk (mostly in the form of milk powder) remains the nation's largest export, with 95% of production exported (Rundgren 2016, p. 109).

³ The Māori language

⁴ 0.06% of total world population (Worldometers 2019)

3.2.1. Public Concerns

Around Aotearoa, the environmental effects of intensive animal agriculture, particularly dairy farming, remain a primary concern amongst the population as declining waterways threaten local livelihoods (Fish and Game New Zealand 2018). The most sizeable dairy conversions have taken place in the South Island, throughout the Canterbury and Southland regions (Morton 2019). Dairy cattle in the South Island has increased from 0.6 million animals in 1994, to 2.6 million in 2017 (NZ Stats 2019). This has been a contentious issue for residents in the South Island, particularly around the Mackenzie Basin where a \$100 million dairy farm is currently planned to go ahead (Williams 2019). Throughout the fieldwork the issue of dairy intensification in the South Island was a common concern for participants. Many reflected on their feelings of loss, anger and frustration at the declined state of their local waterways due to dairy farming:

“I grew up in Waimati, South Canterbury. I had fond childhood memories swimming at the Waihou River. We had this very popular family swimming hole, called the black hole, half the town would go swim there. There were always heaps of cars, families, kids. I went there recently and there was a big sign, “this river not fit for swimming in.” And I was like woah... You know, it just hit me at a personal level... I feel a personal sense of loss” (Male, Dunedin)

“I am quite horrified... When I find out we can’t even swim in our local river, it breaks my heart, all I know is that it’s devastating. For me, water is sacred, and we are completely insulting Papatuanuku (mother earth)” (Female, Christchurch).

“I don’t go to the rivers here... my father from Timaru, used to take his dog to the river, splash around have fun for ages, that would be his Sunday afternoon. He can’t do that anymore because if his dog goes into the water it will get sick. It’s a known issue in the community” (Male, Dunedin).

These personal stories of loss were communicated through narratives and emotions, which is an important theme for this research project in terms of taking an ecofeminist approach to the research data. Additionally, these responses offer a qualitative insight into the current state of Aotearoa’s waterways, complimenting quantitative studies such as a recent Fish and Game New Zealand report (2018) on New Zealanders perceptions of the environment, which found that 82% of the population said they were very concerned about the state of their waterways.

3.2.2. Zero Carbon Bill

In the context of the environmental challenges, the Aotearoa government recently introduced a Zero Carbon Bill which aims to transition the country towards lower emissions and improved climate resilience by 2050 (Ministry for the Environment New Zealand 2019b). Despite the high amount of emissions derived from cattle populations, it remains uncertain how this bill

will affect the animal agriculture sector.⁵ Some critics have condemned the bill for its “soft approach” to cattle methane emissions (Vance 2019) which reflects the strong industry opposition to the new emissions targets. For example, Dairy New Zealand (2019) stated they do not support the provisional range for the 2050 methane reduction target and instead favour research and development into technological solutions for farmers. Aotearoa’s government appears to face an impasse; on one hand they are committed to reducing total greenhouse gas emissions, while on the other, they do not want to compromise what many consider to be the backbone of the nation’s economy. In particular, the Ministry for Primary Industries New Zealand (2019) suggests that dairy revenues are set to increase 5.7 per cent to \$17.6 billion in 2019, while milk production is expected to rise 2.3 per cent. Despite contradicting reports by the Ministry for the Environment New Zealand (2019a) which highlight the need to rethink dairy production, the Ministry for Primary Industries New Zealand (2019, p. 16) remains optimistic about the future of dairying due to “sustained global demand”, “favourable weather” and “strong pasture growth”. The future of the Zero Carbon Bill in relation to tackling methane emissions from the dairy sector remains contentious and requires further research to evaluate what strategies best meet the 2050 targets within the animal agricultural sector.

3.3. Veganism in Aotearoa

Veganism can be understood as a practice that is antithetical to colonial ideals of pastoral farming, which is what makes the case of veganism in the South Island so interesting. The most comprehensive study of veganism (and vegetarianism) in Aotearoa was published by Potts and White (2008). They found that the subject of vegetarianism/veganism has been under-investigated, which they argue was due to the ways in which animal agriculture had significantly influenced the culture and economy of the nation. They found that most vegetarians felt disconnected from their nations “omnivorous culture” and that their identity was in conflict with the country’s national identity. My study builds upon the work of Potts and White (2008) taking some of their ideas and analysing these through community economies frameworks.

Vegans and vegetarians are a growing but marginalised group within Aotearoa’s society and culture. Claims of vegan diets differ markedly. For example, in 2012, 1.2 per cent of the population identified as vegan (Judge and Wilson 2019). By contrast, consumer research group Colmar Brunton (2018) found that from 15,600 respondents, 27 per cent of people maintain a vegan and/or vegetarian diet (up from 7 per cent from 2014). They also found that women are more likely to eat a vegetarian meal at least once a week (up from 55 per cent 2014 to 72 per cent in 2018) (Colmar Brunton 2018). In terms of public attitudes about veganism in Aotearoa, Judge and Wilson (2019) find that vegans tend to garner negative attention from the general

⁵ The government found 22.5% of greenhouse gas emissions came from dairy cattle during the periods of 1997-2017 (Ministry for the Environment New Zealand 2019a). This is a considerable amount as the transport industry accounted for only 19.7% of emissions, while horticulture and cropping accounted for only 4.7% during the same period (Ministry for the Environment New Zealand 2019a).

population. Additionally, they found that veganism tended to be associated with femininity, which provided the basis for vegans to be generally perceived as weak or sentimental and “deserving of derogation” (Judge and Wilson 2019, p. 175). Furthermore, in their study of vegans in Aotearoa, Potts and Parry (2010) found derogatory terms such as “vegansexuals” were used to describe vegans who chose to be in relationships with other vegans. Such findings emphasise the cultural difficulties of pursuing veganism in an economy strongly dependent upon animal agriculture. Learning from vegan communities is an important step towards amplifying the often-marginalised position of vegans in Aotearoa.

4. Identifying a Multispecies Ethic of Care

This chapter explores the ethic of care that informs vegan practice. In doing so, I structure this chapter into four parts. Part 1 considers the motivations participants nominated for choosing veganism. Motivations were expressed through a variety of emotions, particularly in the form of compassion for others. Curtin's (2014) argument that feelings of compassion inform moral practices is used to establish a link between emotion and the moral practice of veganism (as explained in chapter two). Part 2 identifies two forms of compassion that emerged from interviews and discussions, from broad compassionate worldviews to more focussed and narrow expressions of compassion for particular things. Part 3 explores the argument for more contextual approaches by recognising how different expressions of compassion (from compassionate worldviews to more narrow expressions of compassion) create a more nuanced understanding of vegan practices. Part 4 discusses the ways in which feelings of compassion towards non-human others are a catalyst for a multispecies ethic of care. Based on participant responses, a multispecies ethic of care is conceptualised as care for non-human other(s) (animals and environments), care for human others (social care), and care for personal health and wellbeing (self-care). This chapter explores the thinking and ethics behind participants experience of veganism, while the following chapter explores how these ethics inform everyday transactions and practices.

4.1. Part 1: Motivations

In this section I explore motivations for practicing veganism. Discussions with the founders of each society revealed a shared passion for animal rights and experience in animal and social activism. Each society included committees, events, websites, merchandise, online forums on Facebook and brand logos (Figure 4.1)



Figure 4.1 L-R: DOVeS website logo (DOVeS 2019), CVS website logo (Christchurch Vegan Society 2019), INVSOC website logo (Invercargill Vegan Society 2019)

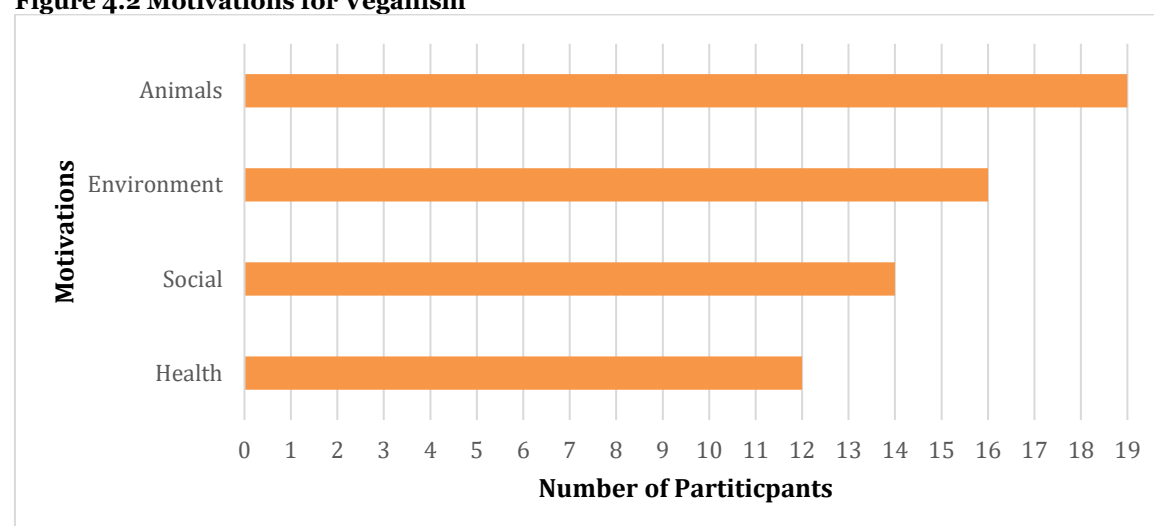
Each society formed in response to a growing community desire to formalise a group where people who shared similar values, ethics and lifestyles could meet one another. Community events such as vegan potlucks facilitated a place where members (and non-members) of each society could feel a sense of solidarity within their vegan community. The responses in Table 4.1 describe the core reasons each society formed.

Table 4-1 Interview question: How did this vegan society form?

Vegan Society	Participant responses
CVS	<i>"I needed to help create an environment where people could be vegan and stay vegan. My thinking was we need to create a space... A bit like Christians going to church, they don't go to church because they forgot the story of Jesus, they go to be topped up – so I was thinking the same thing for vegetarians and vegans; we needed spaces to be validated for our decisions to be vegetarian and support and share info and knowledge and for people to meet each other because social connection is very important".</i>
DOVeS	<i>"The vegan group formed in Dunedin in 2005, basically it was an email list, every month or two there was a get together in local café or restaurant. Once or twice, there would be a project to advocate for veganism, like talks at universities about animals, environment or health, but mainly it was a social group. So in 2015 – DOVeS was my idea. I was passionate about setting up a vegan society, I was hugely inspired by the vegan society in Invercargill".</i>
INVSOC	<i>"Around 2010 I decided I would create a group, an actual formal group, in my area. I thought that my area of Invercargill in New Zealand could do with having a vegan society, and could have a formal presence that people can get in touch and be a bit more professional really".</i>

The motivations of each of the founders overlapped in terms of their desire to create connection based on mutual values within their local communities.

Interviewees connected their veganism to care for animals in some form, although this was not always the principle cause for committing to veganism. The difference in motivations is shown in Figure 4.2. The data for this table was generated by going through the interview transcripts and making note of each time a participant linked their veganism to one of the other motivating factors (care for animals, environment, society or health).

Figure 4.2 Motivations for Veganism

Care for animals was the most frequently cited motivation in terms of animal ethics, rights and liberation. For example:

"I am vegan because I don't actively consume or commodify animals, but I am also on the side of animal rights." (Male, Dunedin)

“Veganism is more than a diet, its an it is an ethical standpoint towards animals... There is no dietary benefit to not wearing wool, leather, you know what I’m getting at” (Female, Invecargill).

“Generally, I see liberation as an animal liberation... Social justice movements as in movements that exist in order to make society more fair and equal, I would include animal liberation in that” (Female, Christchurch).

Care for animals was a common finding amongst other vegan studies about motivations (see Ruby 2012; Cramer et al. 2017; González-García et al. 2018; Martinelli and Berkmaniene 2018; Marletto and Sillig 2018). After care for animals, 16 out of 19 participants connected their veganism directly to care for the environment (such as avoiding dairy due to water pollution). Twine (2017) suggests it is a false dichotomy to distinguish “environmental veganism” from “vegan for the animals” by arguing that the former is essentially the latter. Many participants also reflected on this sentiment as they recognised the interconnectedness of care for the environment and animals alike. One participant in particular stated that:

“I guess it’s like, once you’re vegan, then you start looking at other things... the concerns within veganism and the concern for environment and the effects that you have on it... I think it definitely compliments one another” (Female, Invercargill).

Only three participants didn’t mention concern for the environment as part of their motivation. Additionally, some participants who had been committed to veganism for several years discussed how in recent times, they tended to care more about environmental issues or personal health rather than exclusively care for animals. For example, one participant reflected on his journey from animal activist, to environmentalist:

“I started for animal rights but now its environmental for me and I think the health benefits are a plus” (Male, Christchurch).

In terms of other motivations, data showed that 14 out of 19 participants connected their veganism to care for social issues:

“It’s encouraging to see people who are buying vegan products are likely to care about other ethical considerations in using their money and so these tend to be toward paying a living wage, fair trade and trying not to use unethical practices” (Male, Christchurch).

Other motivations for veganism related to self-care in the form of healthy eating as discussed by 12 out of the 19 participants:

“I feel more free to eat what I want and to fuel my body with foods that I think are healthy... When our bodies aren’t clogged with saturated fats from animals, we tend to be healthier and save on healthcare costs” (Female, Christchurch)

These findings demonstrate that the motivations for veganism extend broader than solely caring for animals. Rather care for animals is intertwined with care for the environment, human others and self.

4.2.Part 2: Compassion

Analysis of the interview and discussion group data revealed a shared sense of compassion amongst participants. Curtin (2014, p. 46) describes compassion as a feeling, a cultivated emotion and “a place where how we feel, think and act come together, a deep, ongoing pattern of engagement”. Kelch (2007) suggests that emotions such as the feeling of compassion, can guide us in obtaining knowledge and information necessary to take ethical action and perform in the interests of those we value. These perspectives are particularly important when listening to emotional responses relating to individual motivations for and experiences of veganism. Emotions based on compassion were common amongst participants yet were exhibited in distinct forms. For example, some participants exhibited holistic compassionate worldviews that incorporated humans, non-human and environments, whereas others tended towards focussed expressions of compassion, directed exclusively at animals or at oneself (achieved through a focus on food and diet). These differences are shown in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2 Different forms of compassion

Compassionate worldviews	Focused expressions of compassion
<i>“It started off as health with all the documentaries but then got into the animal rights and then it opens your eyes to be compassionate with everything” (Female, DOVeS discussion group)</i>	<i>“I am vegan because I don’t actively consume or commodify animals, but I am also I am on the side of animal rights... So I cut out all commodification and consumption of animals. That’s me passively helping the animals by no longer, participating in their harm in society” (Male, Dunedin)</i>
<i>“Veganism is like.. when you start thinking about it, or examining it, you’re pulling a thread of society, and everything is unravelling. There are so many aspects it touches on like climate change, freeing animals, then we are saving the environment... if we free animals we are allowing our native flora and fauna to regrow, and through saving animals we are saving ourselves” (Female, Christchurch)</i>	<i>“I think veganism is just about diet to me, it’s a healthier way to live. I would even argue even if you ate some eggs you’d still be vegan. I don’t think we have to put so many labels on it but I would order vegan food at a restaurant. People need to mind their own business” (Male, Christchurch)</i>
<i>“When you become a vegan, generally people are more compassionate, understand the need for looking after the world where live, caring for out backyard, we need to acknowledge what is happening environmentally” (Female, Christchurch).</i>	<i>“Once you get over the initial shock of food you can’t eat it, it’s pretty simple to do. Just the thought of seeing an animal suffer just reinforces it. Why would I ever eat it again? I very much doubt I would ever be a non-vegan. I just wish I had done it much earlier. I do feel guilty about that” (Male, Invercargill)</i>

Both positions demonstrate the different ways in which compassion is internalised and expressed within vegan communities. Focused expressions of compassion were sometimes viewed negatively by participants who engaged in more holistic approaches, for ignoring the ways in which veganism intersected with many other parts of everyday life (not just human-animal relations). Some participants viewed narrow forms of compassion as a barrier, hindering the progress of the vegan movement:

“I think quite a high proportion of people who become vegan makes them less compassionate. It’s a controversial thing to say but I think a lot of vegans are so compassionate about animal rights, it becomes less compassionate to other people. People can become very aggressive and cruel to people, comes from a really good place but I think they actually forget to be kind to other people” (Female, CVS discussion group).

“If we are going to make change, you’ve got to understand other people’s views and preaching at them isn’t going to change them. It drives me nuts... I don’t consider myself to be an animal rights activist although I do have a lot of compassion in that area” (Male, Dunedin).

However, those with more focused approaches argued that veganism needs to start with and remain about compassion for animals. For example, the environmental movement was viewed as a distraction from the bigger goal of animal liberation:

“Veganism needs to be based on the belief that animals are not ours for our use and abuse... No ownership of animals. So I feel that aspect movement has lost some of the traction, because the environmental movement is easier to get more vegans” (Female, Dunedin).

These debates about compassion highlight the diversity of emotions and views within vegan communities. The more holistic compassionate worldviews coincide with ecofeminist approaches to veganism, whereby compassion affects all co-inhabitants of the social world through a “connectedness of self and others” (Curtin 2014, p. 54). This connectedness enables compassion to flourish and can solidify a “moral practice” such as veganism (Curtin 2014). In terms of moral practices, Adams (2007, p. 34), suggests that holistic expressions of compassion and care can lead individuals to discover they are part of broader networks that supports them and their values. This speaks to Tronto’s (1993, p. 9) work on a feminist ethic of care, which argues that compassion and meeting other’s needs can serve a moral value and contribute towards the political achievement of a “good society.” It is important to identify different expressions of compassion, as these perspectives are valuable in validating a nuanced approach to the study of veganism. These findings demonstrate that more holistic forms of compassion tend to act as catalysts for addressing an array of social, environmental and political issues in society. However, this is not to say that more narrow expressions of compassion (such as a

focus exclusively on animal rights or personal health) will always detract from broader social issues. Rather, it would appear that a narrow compassionate focus can eventually broaden out to more compassionate worldviews.

4.3.Part 3: Contextual Veganism

The different approaches to compassion as a cultivated emotion inform different ways of enacting caring practices. More narrow forms of compassion prioritise animals while holistic approaches foster care for a wider range of entities situated in place. Held (2006, p. 3) argues that understanding the values involved in care should be based upon individual experiences, reflections and concerns, which vary across contexts. Therefore, as per Kheel's (1985) assertion, place-based contextualised approaches to care are needed.

Feminists scholars committed to vegetarianism (see Donovan and Adams 2007) have argued that a contextual approach to veganism (and vegetarianism) is essential, as living a vegan lifestyle does not exclude the possibility of making choices that result in some form of oppression or exploitation. Therefore, taking a more nuanced approach to understanding vegan motivations, ethics and practice can further what is known about the values that inform care. There are multiple ways in which care for others manifests in a vegan practice, particularly as all individuals have different needs, geographies, cultures and levels of access to plant-based foods (Twine and Taylor 2014).

In his criticism of veganism and anarchism, Dominik (2015) argues that we cannot ignore that vegans still exist in a system where some products are made with exploited human and non-human labour. Additionally, Plumwood (2003) criticises universalistic approaches to veganism as a type of cultural colonialism, insufficiently sensitive to place-based difference. These critiques are useful for navigating the complex terrain of veganism and understanding care ethics. For example, White (2018) argues that there are grounds for optimism and confidence that a vegan activist practice can be realised in multiple ways without having to be conflated with conventional animal rights-based approaches.

The need for a contextual approach to veganism was evident in this study. For example, although all participants identified as vegan at the time of this research, it did not preclude them from occasionally engaging in non-vegan practices in circumstances they deemed beyond their control. This suggests contextual veganism is more about exhibiting compassion for others and making careful choices, rather than abiding by rules-based absolutes associated with stricter forms of animal rights. Examples are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Examples of contextual veganism

Location	Participant responses
CVS Group	Male: <i>“I’m pretty much vegan, but sometimes will have milk in my coffee when I am out. I feed my cat a meat diet which I don’t like. That’s why I say its hard to judge others for using meat”</i>
DOVeS Group	Female: <i>“I’ve only been vegan for a year, I find I socially avoid situations because I feel don’t want to be a burden... I’ve probably gone to friend’s house and eaten something once or twice. I don’t want to create a problem for people. So I just keep quiet because I don’t want that. I don’t want to lose friends. I think socially it is quite difficult”</i>
Christchurch café Group	Female: <i>“We recently lost our dog and I realised early on I don’t want to be petless... I checked out a person who was breeding those dogs, and I did my homework and I was satisfied that it was not from a puppy mill. I was satisfied that those dogs will be loved to pieces in their new family home so I bought one of their puppies”</i>
Christchurch interview	Male: <i>“I want to make veganism seem approachable. If my grandma makes a cake and I eat it that’s ok I just move on and not eat animals for rest of the month”</i>
Christchurch interview	Male: <i>“I’m wearing wool because the synthetic alternatives are horrendous and if you go walking and tramping, you can’t wear cotton. If you want to wear polyester manmade fibres, it is going to shed and put plastics in the oceans”</i>
Dunedin interview	Female: <i>“I often fall back on chips or I will do something like, I know it isn’t vegan but having a scone, I don’t know it, its just easier”</i>
Invercargill interview	Female: <i>“I have to admit I’m not perfect, like my car tyres, I could of paid twice as much and got totally vegan tyres, but I drew the line at that”</i>
Invercargill interview	Male: <i>“I wear leather boots to work, I’ve tried different things, they just rot. Car paint just kills them. So, I buy a pair of second-hand leather boots. Otherwise, you’re just adding to rubbish in the world”</i>

These examples of contextual veganism show that despite not always choosing the vegan option, most participants were still practicing compassion for others (such as grandmothers, dogs or environments) in different forms. These choices demonstrate the ways in which consumption choices are both shaped and constrained by social and ecological contexts (Plumwood 2003) such as eating non-vegan cake to appease close relatives or buying wool due to the reduced environmental impact. The examples in Table 4.3 show that expressions of compassion and acts of care are consistent within veganism but are expressed in different ways according to individual circumstances and context.

4.4. Conclusion: Veganism and a Multispecies Ethic of Care

The diverse motivations, expressions of compassion and instances of contextual veganism described above suggest that veganism can be conceptualised as an expression of multispecies ethic of care. The feelings of compassion inform an ethic of care that extends to all earth-others in diverse ways; from care for humans, non-humans and the environment. Compassion as an emotion manifests differently, according to individuals’ values, beliefs and contexts, informing the moral practice of veganism. This is particularly the case for those individuals who have developed compassionate worldviews and are able to make deeper connections in terms of the way veganism intersects with other social and ecological issues. In taking a position that highlights the multispecies relations that sustain us, this recognises that “care is not one way; the care for conforms to the carer too” (Bellacasa 2017, p. 219).

Contextual approaches to understanding veganism enables a broader reach by not prescribing absolutes about what is vegan and what is not. In turn, this can have positive effects on the human and more-than-human communities in the Anthropocene while also providing a framework for thinking about compassionate responses for all (White 2018). Furthermore, a contextual approach allows for the recognition that despite trying to live ethically and sustainably, many of us still buy at least some products made with “superexploited labour” (Dominik 2015, p. 28). While living a life that causes the least amount of harm and suffering towards animals remains ideal, in the Anthropocene, “human entanglement with the non-human world is neither entirely malignant or benign – it simply is” (Wright 2016, p. 2). While harm towards others is not always avoidable, a conscious effort can be made to reduce harm where possible. The vegan communities of Aotearoa show that such efforts can be prioritised through compassionate practices.

5. Practicing a Multispecies Ethic of Care

While the previous chapter focused on the multispecies ethic of care that motivates vegans in the South Island, this chapter explores the practices that are informed by this form of care. Examining the everyday practices of vegans provides a basis to comprehend the knowledge required to successfully perform vegan practice (Twine 2017, p. 195). The community economies framing (as discussed in chapter 2) is used to analyse these practices and consider their roles in a vegan community economy. This chapter is organised in three parts. Part 1 explores how integral vegan potlucks are to create inclusive vegan communities. A potluck is a community food-sharing event where participants bring a plate of food, usually prepared at home, to share with other attendees at the event. Potlucks can be understood as a diverse economic activity event that contributes to the success and longevity of vegan communities. Part 2 explores how vegan practices extend to other ethical consumption issues, such as reducing plastic or buying fair trade. Part 3 explores other instances of diverse economic activities related to veganism, such as engaging in forms of paid and unpaid labour. The chapter concludes with a discussion about how a multispecies ethic of care results in practices which reduce exploitation of the environment, human and non-humans. In turn, these practices can contribute to more a caring economy and better multispecies relations for the Anthropocene.

5.1. Part 1: Vegan Potlucks

As discussed in the previous chapter, many participants expressed compassion for animals, environments and other humans. Through food choices and other practices, vegan communities contribute to more caring economies by seeking to minimise harm towards human and non-human others. In focusing on the diverse economic activities people have developed to ethically encounter others, these activities become more visible and considerable (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). Moreover, these encounters contribute to overall social, material and environmental wellbeing (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, p. 10). Each of the vegan societies in the South Island are engaging in such activities, the most prominent of which is the monthly vegan potlucks. Each societies website provides a brief description of their potluck event:

- **CVS:** “The group meets several times a year on Saturday evenings. Everyone of all ages are welcome. It remains the best value meal in town and a lot of fun!” (Christchurch Vegan Society 2019)
- **DOVeS:** “The aim of these gatherings is to enjoy delicious vegan food with like-minded people in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Everyone is welcome at our potlucks; vegans and non-vegans alike” (Dunedin-Otepoti Vegan Society 2019).

- **INVSOC:** “The Invercargill Vegan Society holds a monthly Vegan potluck dinner on the first Wednesday of each month. A regular meeting of 20-30 people, you’re always welcome to come along :-)” (Invercargill Vegan Society 2019).

The food at the potlucks I participated in was diverse, colourful and creative. Participants were enthusiastic about their dishes and were happy to share their recipes with other attendees. The set up and clean-up of the events was shared amongst attendees. Figure 5.1 shows some of the food offerings at the Invercargill and Dunedin potlucks.



Figure 5.1 Vegan potlucks (photos by Milena)
Left: Food sharing at INVSOC potluck

Right: Food sharing at DOVES potluck

These vegan potlucks are an exemplar of a diverse economic activity within a community economy. The food on the plate represents a nexus of values and practices, all of which contribute to more ethical ideas and practices about how to encounter others. Moreover, the potlucks are based on the premise of inclusivity and openness as any member of the public is welcome to join. Identifying as vegan was not a necessary precondition for attending potlucks or even being a part of the society. Instead, each society asks that people who wish to attend have at least some interest in veganism, be it from an animal rights, environmental or health perspective. As the founder of CVS put it:

“We are open to everyone! We welcome all... anyone who is interested in vegan lifestyle or just a plant-based diet, everything can make a difference. Most of us were meat eaters before so it’s usually positive interactions which help people go vegan” (Female, Christchurch).

When asked about the purpose and function of potlucks, the founder of INVSOC stated that:

“Potlucks were to build community, to have a fun and approachable event for people to meet... where there is a sense of community, especially in an isolated area for vegans like Invercargill, it helped build a sense of purpose, and the feeling of support that you know, that you weren’t the only vegan in the village” (Male, Invercargill).

Creating an inclusive environment is well received within the community. Group discussions revealed that participants were happy to be included in the potluck, meet new people and share

recipes and ideas. Many cited that the opportunity to engage with others who shared the same views was a motivating factor for attending, as shown in Table 5.1

Table 5-1 Interview question: Why attend a vegan potluck?

Location	Participants responses
CVS (Christchurch)	<i>"I'll make something and show up and see what happens. It was a lovely evening really, I enjoyed the experience, I felt very welcomed. I loved seeing the families, and the children. I thought, this is human, this is absolutely real. It was my first foray into vegan land, I felt brave"</i>
CVS (Christchurch)	<i>"It was the talk that drew me in, and also I thought it would be a good chance to meet people. First ever potluck of any kind last night!"</i>
CVS (Christchurch)	<i>"I really wanted to have the opportunity to say what I did about this party we are starting up and also wanted to meet people and make more connections"</i>
DOVeS (Dunedin)	<i>"It's great food, vegans know how to cook good food" "I wanted to meet vegans in Dunedin cos I was new here. I googled vegan places and came across that. It's a good place to meet vegans and the food is really food"</i>

Additionally, many participants expressed great pride in showing off their creativity and labour. For example, at the CVS potluck, I asked one participant to explain how he made his grilled zucchini dish, to which he responded:

"I've only been vegan for a month... I've had to form a new relationship with my barbeque!" (Male, Christchurch).

Some participants at the potlucks were relatively new to veganism, which suggests that the potlucks can also play a transitional role. Individuals can join in on the community events and eventually fall away as they become more comfortable with their lifestyle choices. This was also noted in some interviews with key informants:

"I don't go to potlucks because I just don't want to meet new people, I've got enough friend's. In terms of being part of the vegan community, like yeah I attend vegan events and I own a vegan business, but I am not fussed about a sense of community, I think it's more important to just be a normal person" (Male, Christchurch).

The voluntary act of accumulating, preparing, bringing, consuming and cleaning food are all diverse economic activities which sustain a community economy. Participants attend these events as a way to share food, ideas, and values simultaneously. Food in this case, is not just what we eat, it is also an expression of who we are both bodily and politically (Curtin 1991, p. 71). Curtin (1991, p. 70) suggests that morality and ontology are closely connected within food choices, arguing that the choice to not eat animals is an expression of an ecological ethic of care within economically and technologically advanced countries. This position comes from the recognition that there is indeed needless and violent suffering in the industrial animal agricultural complex. When individuals have a choice in what they count as food and what they

choose to eat, Curtin (1991) argues that not eating animals is the best way in which to enact an ethic of care.

5.2.Part 2: Forms of Ethical Consumption

Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) advocate for ethical action by calling on consumers to support markets where care for the well-being of others is built into the encounter. These actions can include; supporting buy-local campaigns; promoting ethical consumer guides; supporting new markets; and preventing trade based on violent regimes and inhumane practices (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). It is important to recognise and explore these encounters as a praxis of both interconnection and coexistence with others within a community economy (Roelvink and Gibson-Graham 2009, p. 147). Ethical action derived from this awareness informs daily life and the economic decisions that come with it.

Participants' committed to ethical food choices were similarly committed to other ethical consumption choices such as avoiding plastic or reducing their reliance on fossil fuels. Overall, there was an underlying ethos to seek out more caring patterns of consumption. This is important to note as Gibson-Graham et al. (2013, p. 19) argue that in order to take back the economy, "we need to consider our working lives in the context of our well-being and the well-being of other humans and this planet." In many cases, participants recognised that suffering was not always limited to animals and there is a need to consider how our actions affect other humans and the environment. For example, one participant reflected on how his veganism affected his other consumption choices:

"A band I like have an album called "strive to survive for the least suffering possible" and that's what I base my life on. Once you get into being a vegan you look into everything else don't you? It goes like, best I start looking into all the stuff into my house. Like shower products, washing products, recycling becomes big. What's the point of being vegan if you produce a lot of waste that goes into the ocean... I haven't used a plastic shopping bag in years" (Male, Invercargill).

Much like the example above, many other participants recognised the environmental and human impacts of their plant-based food choices. Buying local, organic and fair-trade produce was discussed as other ways to redress the disconnect from "distant others" (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). These examples are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5-2 Fair Trade

Participant	Participant responses
Male, Dunedin	<i>"I often compromise, I don't always buy organic because I am on a low income. For example, the bananas in my cupboard are not organic or fair trade, but if I get extra money this week, I will buy organic fair trade. I make ethical choices as I can, when I can"</i>
Male, Dunedin	<i>"We do try to source our food locally and reduce imported goods. Luckily there is a lot of fruit being grown around, we get most of our fruit locally"</i>
Female, Invercargill	<i>"If I buy bananas, I prefer to buy the fair-trade organic, fair trade thing is important to me"</i>

In addition to Fairtrade, plastic often came up in discussions as a source of tension and frustration with most participants. Many had changed their daily consumption to actively avoid plastic where possible, driven by a concern for the environment. These examples are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5-3 Avoiding Plastic

Participant	Participant responses
Female, Christchurch	<i>"I don't want to use plastic because it's not good for animals, including humans and the planet. As a business owner, if I bring out something with wasteful plastic packaging, it's not good because there's always crossovers because what's good for the environment is good for animals and humans"</i>
Male, Invercargill	<i>"Single use plastic thing definitely does. I don't buy cucumbers wrapped in plastic. I try and avoid that as much as I possibly can"</i>
Female, Christchurch	<i>"I don't like plastic bags or plastic wrapping – I won't buy cucumbers wrapped in plastic"</i>

These examples demonstrate Gibson-Grahams et al. (2013, p. 45) assertion that in order to build a community economy, individuals need to shift from consuming less and self-provisioning more. This has been the case for many participants who recognise small, individual choices can contribute to more ethical and resilient futures. However, it is important to note that individual consumption is also bound within limitations. Many participants were quick to acknowledge the ways in which affordability, seasonality and the time it takes to grow your own food affects one's capacity to live cruelty and plastic free (which is considered by many as the most authentic, ethical way to live). This is important as per Dominik (2015) and Twine's (2014) assertion that vegan food choices are not always the most ethical in terms of human labour or environmental effects. These points reinforce ecofeminist arguments for contextual approaches to veganism (as discussed in the previous chapter) where context must be considered within a vegan practice (Donovan and Adams 2007).

5.3. Part 3: Other Diverse Economic Activities

In addition to discussions about vegan potlucks and ethical consumption, rich narratives relating to other diverse economic activities emerged through the interviews and discussion groups. These activities were often informed by care for others, with some participants discussing how their paid and unpaid labour was contributing to more ethical futures. Many participants worked in fields that had direct (positive) impacts on the environment, human or non-human others, while others engaged in advocacy and volunteerism in their free time to

contribute to the causes that were linked to their care for others. Participants' paid work included vegan food business owners, an electric car salesman, a children's author who subtly included vegan foods in illustrations, an engineering student working on sustainable timber as well as volunteering for vegan events and vegan society committee members. Paid work (unrelated to ethical and sustainable visions for the future) was viewed by some as a means to an end, in order to fund other projects or endeavours relating to caring for others. For example, one participant shared that her paid work funded her side business; an all vegan bed and breakfast that also hosts volunteers who tend to the rescued farm animals:

"The reality is that I have a small animal sanctuary, primarily farm animal, and about 50 animals and all of them are there as a home of last resort. I've set it up so we have a B&B to help fund the vet bills. Most of the money we make goes directly to the local vet, as the priority is to look after sick animals. Then I work with a primary goal that all spare monies go into feeding the animals and hosting volunteers, who are usually vegan. We usually have 2-4 volunteers living at the house year round. I'll never leave the animals unsupervised. The only way is to have these fulltime volunteers from WWOOFer⁶ network, work away and other exchange programs" (Female, Dunedin).

Other participants recognised the value of earning money to enable donations for animal charities:

"I am going down the path now which I hope involves getting a very well-paid job and then donating a whole of money to effective animal charities. I know I was quite good at advocacy and organizing thing, but I am not convinced activism alone is the most effective thing I can do." (Female, Christchurch)

Meanwhile, other participants were fortunate enough to work in fields that directly contributed to the change they wanted to see in the world. For example:

"In my dream world, SAFE⁷ New Zealand was hiring for my dream role... working for the vegan advocacy program... which is what I do now!" (Female, Christchurch).

These examples of engaging in paid work to fund visions for the future highlight Gibson-Graham et al.'s (2013, p. 104) assertion that encounters with others via the market can enable livelihoods to flourish, by attending to "more than our own needs in our trade transactions." Adopting an ecofeminist lens in this instance helps to draw attention to the diverse economic activities that sustain a community economy based on an ethics of multispecies care (Roelvink and Gibson-Graham's 2009, p. 149). In doing so, veganism goes far beyond animal rights and food choices. The examples from participants reveal their willingness to engage with the world

⁶ Willing Workers on Organic Farms

⁷ Save Animals From Exploitation

around them, in ways that mutually benefit all “earth-others” and our shared planet (Roelvink and Gibson-Graham 2009).

Unpaid work and volunteerism was another common theme amongst participants. Many discussed their experiences volunteering for vegan organisations or related advocacy groups working towards common goals, such as raising awareness of animal farm conditions, promoting vegan products or creating more inclusive and accessible communities. Volunteering can be understood as a form of ethical action, as the mix of paid and unpaid work can help attain more balanced wellbeing for individuals, which in turn, benefits the broader community (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). For example, some responses related to unpaid work included:

“I have 2 engineering businesses as my paid job. I spend a lot of my free time with Sea Shepherd” (Male, Invercargill)

“I work fulltime, volunteer with SAFE, I’m a painter, and I do gardening and house work” (Female, Dunedin)

“The community is getting bigger through volunteering, we had about 50 volunteers for the vegan expo. It’s a close community network, because of the earthquakes as well, a lot of people living in Christchurch have a strong community focus because at that time, the community had to come together and look after each other” (Female, Christchurch).

Another way vegan communities come together is through sharing childcare responsibilities. In discussions with parents at potlucks, many were committed to creating inclusive environments for their children (vegan or non-vegan). This instance is a way of building solidarity within the vegan community, given their existence in a landscape and culture that can be challenging to vegans (Potts and White 2008). The creation of vegan youth groups is seen as a benefit to parents (given childcare labour is shared) and to the children, who are afforded the possibility of interacting with other potentially like-minded vegan or vegetarian youth:

“Those friendships are really important for children. When they get together, this pressure comes off of them and they can be themselves, they won’t get challenged on any issue, they don’t have to ask if that’s something they can eat, they can just eat. It’s important for children to have support network” (Female, Christchurch).

One participant who grew up in vegan/vegetarian youth groups, remarked on the positive experience he shared with others and how they remain friends into adulthood:

“Growing up in Christchurch, I used to go vegetarian youth group from ages 12 to 18. The friends I made there within my age bracket, we still keep in contact to this day” (Male, Dunedin).

Parents groups were also noted as an important part of the community, particularly for new families:

“We also had a vegan parents group affiliated with DOVeS. When they had a get together they can vary 3-9, a lot of vegan parents. A lot of vegan couples who have had babies” (Male, Dunedin).

These diverse economic activities relating to social organisation and shared labour practices are informed by a broader commitment to care for others. While identifying as a vegan may be the starting point, it is by no means the defining or end point for relationships between community members. As one participant noted:

“That’s what’s so great when you become a vegan, you meet people from all different backgrounds, personalities, but when you’ve got something like being a vegan that connects you, it’s a really beautiful space to be in. I would go for the fact that you have a group of people where you all have something in common with and something nice to unite, and there is power within that. Incredible to have all those people I didn’t know, supporting me and wanting me to be ok and happy” (Female, Christchurch).

Being in-common is an integral part of building a community economy. Gibson-Graham et al. (2016, p. 79) assert that in order to create more humane economies, individuals must recognise that being in-common is negotiated with all other life forms. The examples thus far have indicated that there is more to being part of a vegan community than eating plant-based food and engaging in discussions about the plight of animals. Food practices can be an avenue through which non-violence can be realised more widely and can lead to much broader sets of practices (Curtin 2014). For example, some participants engaged in social activism advocating for better treatment for animals:

“In 2011 I began my activism. I made my debut into the movement, I sat in a cage for a month to protest factory farming” (Male, Dunedin).

“One thing I was really proud, one of my biggest achievements as far as veganism goes, we protested against elephant in the circus. The circus workers picked on me, but the elephant was eventually let free because the keeper got sick of it. We only did silent protests. The elephant ended up in a sanctuary in Auckland and oddly enough it killed its keeper a year later” (Male, Invercargill).

“I protested at the rodeo and I was hiding behind my sign... it was good to be there” (Female, Dunedin).

Dombroski (2016) notes that traditional analysis of the left links activism to more public and demand-based activism. However, in the context of vegan activism, Veron (2016, p. 763) argues “everyday practices not only support social movement mobilisation, but are an essential

dimension that drives activism”. From a community economies perspective the focus of change through activism is not necessarily always demand-based and public. The vegan societies do not see themselves as traditional activist groups, as one participant from CVS stated:

“The vegan society is not out there protesting visually, it’s not an animal rights organization” (CVS Discussion Group 1).

Although the societies may not be “protesting visually” they are still engaging in some form of everyday activism through their community events, social networks and the food on their places. The community economies framing enables researchers to see other forms of everyday activism, such as volunteering for protests, which actively shape social, economic and environmental outcomes.

5.4. Conclusion: Practicing a Multispecies Ethic of Care

The rich stories about potlucks, ethical consumption choices and paid/unpaid labour, highlight the interconnected nature of how humans can relate to one another, non-humans and environments. Through various vegan practices, a more holistic ethic of care begins to emerge. This ethic of care is concerned with the question of how to enact our interdependence with nature and one another, in a manner that respects all earth others (Roelvnik and Gibson-Graham 2009, p. 149). An ecofeminist analysis of participants responses reveals the ways in which compassion become “moral practices” (Curtin 2014). Care within veganism can relate to a multiple possibilities, not just animal rights. In turn, the practice of care reveals the diverse economic activities that comprise a community economy. In turn, these everyday activities represent a form of prefigurative politics as everyday activism contributes to collective mobilisation within the vegan movement (Veron 2016).

The findings from this chapter demonstrate the way in which the diverse economic activities of vegan communities are linked through a multispecies ethic of care for the lives of animals, other humans and environments. The responses from participants reveal the ways in which veganism takes on a more holistic practice. By highlighting these economic activities, a reimagining of Aotearoa’s cultural and economic reliance on industrial animal agriculture becomes more possible. The vegan communities in the South Island show that there is already an existing set of diverse economies outside of animal agriculture. A multispecies ethic of care is integral to the development of more caring economies that can actively respond to issues around production, consumption and how to live more sustainably.

6. Future Hopes and Possibilities

This chapter explores the hopes and possibilities participants had for vegan futures in Aotearoa. The chapter is organised into four parts. Part 1 explores the growth of vegan businesses in the South Island and provides insight into the diverse economic activities of a leading all-vegan café in Christchurch. This is followed by a discussion about the proliferation of vegan businesses within the South Island and considers the potential for further expansion. Part 2 explores how Aotearoa's leading supermarket chain, New World is embracing and supporting the vegan community and considers the positive and negative effects of "corporate veganism" (White 2018). Part 3 explores the implications of investment in emerging vegan businesses and explores the possibility of institutional changes in schools and hospitals towards offering more plant-based food options. A diverse economies framing is used in this section to consider how these contributions help build more resilient community economies. With all evidence considered, part 4 concludes with a critical discussion about the visions for the future of veganism in the South Island and considers how this contributes more caring community economies.

6.1. Part 1: Growth of Vegan Businesses

During fieldwork it became apparent there was a noticeable presence of vegan options in cafes, restaurants, supermarkets and farmers markets. Participants also remarked on the visible growth of vegan businesses and products available throughout their cities and towns. Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 provide a snapshot of the current all-vegan businesses in operation, as discussed by participants during fieldwork.⁸

Table 6-1 All-vegan businesses in Christchurch

Name of vegan business	Type of food offering	Date of opening
Higher Taste Vegetarian Club	University of Canterbury lunch offering for students	2015
The Origin	Western/Asian fusion foods	2016
Portershed Cafe	Bakery/cafe	2017
Green Dinner Table	Vegan food box delivery service	2018
Grater Goods	Deli shop with café	2018

Table 6-2 All-vegan businesses in Dunedin

Name of vegan business	Type of food offering	Date of opening
Let Them Eat Vegan	Deli style food	2017
Watsons Eatery	Café food	2017
Kind Grocer	Grocer, deli and herbal dispensary	2018

The tables show that although the number of all vegan businesses is relatively small, there has been growth in the last two years. This was noted by participants from Dunedin and Christchurch:

⁸ At the time of this research, there were no fully vegan businesses in Invercargill, despite the presence INVSOC.

“Just the number of restaurants of cafes that have vegan options or even vegan menus... Even in short 3 years, it could be my awareness but I even think restaurants and cafes I’ve known for a while have changed” (Male, Dunedin).

“I went vegan in 2010, I could probably, I knew about 5 cafes/restaurants I could get food. There are 3 completely vegan cafes, countless places now where there are vegan options available” (Male, Dunedin).

Christchurch vegans in particular spoke highly of their city’s first all vegan café. The café is nestled within the wider Canterbury region, home to some of Aotearoa’s largest sheep and dairy farms (Morton 2019). In an interview, the owner of the café described her business as a “vegan potluck everyday” (Female, Christchurch) due to the wide variety of food offerings and diversity of customers. Interestingly, the café was a recent recipient of the 2018 Meadow Fresh People’s Choice Award for Café of the Year (McLean 2018), giving the business more exposure outside of the vegan community. The owner remarked on the incongruity of winning the title as an all vegan café given that the competitions sponsor, *Meadow Fresh*, is one of the nation’s leading dairy milk producers. Winning this award opens up future possibilities for other vegan cafes and businesses to further permeate mainstream dining options. In terms of a multispecies ethic of care, the café not only serves animal-free foods, but they are also engaged in an array of diverse economic practices that factor in care for the earth and others. The café has a strong low waste approach from plastic waste to food waste. Similarly, much of the fresh produce comes from a local farmer - so local in fact that he delivers the food with his wheelbarrow from the urban farming project located just a few houses away at the Addington Farm (Figure 6.1).



Figure 6.1 L-R: Addington Farm Sign, "sausage roll" from the cafe (photos by Milena)

The owner of the café discussed the ease of getting local, seasonal produce:

“[The farmer] brings it round on his wheelbarrow, we give him back his plastic containers for the following week. There is no waste, no environmental impact, so whenever there is a possibility of doing things like that we do” (Female, Christchurch).

In working to support local businesses, the café is making better connections in their local communities. By making visible the connections with distant-others, the nature of encounters is no longer masked (Gibson-Grahams et al. 2013, p. 86). Because of this, consumers can become more informed about where their food (and other products) comes from. While not all products in the café can be sourced locally, the owner makes a conscious effort where possible, which in turn supports the proliferation and longevity of other vegan businesses.

In terms of further reducing plastic, the cafe only offers paper straws and cardboard lids on takeaway coffee cups. The owner added that:

“It can be more expensive to be environmentally conscious... But I’m not really here to make money, I’m here to survive financially as best I can but that [making money] is not my goal. My goal is to survive enough to keep going and keep it as accessible as we can... Other business owners probably think I’m mad!” (Female, Christchurch).

In terms of surviving well, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) argue that conventional metrics of what it means to survive are often attributed to material wealth and security. Yet, what can be learned from the café is that surviving well can be linked more closely to care for others (human, non-human and the environment). This care informs the basis of caring community economies. Additionally, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013, p. 33) assert that when we work hard to reduce our consumption of the earth’s bounty, we contribute in small ways to redressing the imbalance between human-nature relations. To reduce this imbalance, the café actively reduces food waste by giving away leftover food or repurposing it in creative ways. For example, savoury scones can be used as stuffing for tomorrow’s fresh sausage rolls or leftover sweets are often given to the staff to take home (as they cannot be sold the next day). The owner of the café remarked on her willingness to support the local vegan community, stating that:

“I still support the CVS group in ways that I can.... Offering leftovers for different meet ups like vegan and animal rights groups... most of them know that they can come to me any given day before an event and get a big display box of catering to go towards [their events]”. (Female, Christchurch).

This is another instance of care ethics at work – not only is the care for animals driving the café to produce animal-free baked goods, but it is also their desire to contribute to more resilient (vegan) communities by giving away food that would otherwise be considered waste. In this

way, businesses can be a space for care as well as consumption (Gibson-Graham 2013, p. 104). The owner of the café emphasised her confidence in paving the way for the future growth of vegan businesses:

“This is the direction the world’s headed and we need to show other business you can do that same” (Female, Christchurch).

6.2.Part 2: Investment in Vegan Businesses

In taking back the economy, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013, p. 187) beg the question; “What would it take for us to invest in people and the planet?” While eating vegan options in a café is one way to make this investment, some participants are fiscally investing in emerging vegan markets. These investments are critical for community economies as these endeavours “circulate new wealth that supports sustainable modes of living with the earth and each other” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, p. 164). Investing in vegan businesses is an opportunity to “take back the economy” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013) as these investments can further support ethical business models such as fair trade and low waste.

Throughout the course of interviews, *Angel Foods* was identified as an investment opportunity to make plant-based dairy products (cheeses and milks) more widely accessible. While consuming plant-based products is one way to initiate change, investing in ethical businesses with a focus on sustainable (plant-based) food production, can also have positive effects on human and non-human communities. *Angel Foods* proclaims itself as the nation’s first “locally-made vegan cheese makers and one of the first Kiwi companies to sell shares via crowdfunding” (Angel Foods 2019). The goal of *Angel Foods* is to make vegan food mainstream with dairy-free alternatives available nation-wide. The company pride themselves on “raising the profile of a vegan diet as a delicious, compassionate and healthy option that doesn’t mean forsaking old favourites like pizza and lasagne” (Angel Foods 2019). One participant was particularly hopeful about the future of *Angel Foods* and was happy to support them as an early investor:

“I am actually an investor in Angel Foods, which started off as an importer, so they were importing vegan cheeses and things from the other side of the world but now, Angel Foods decided they can be their own vegan company, own brand, with their own vegan cheeses and the like. And so, by having greatly reduced their actual food miles. Companies like Angel foods are doing more and better job for the environment” (Male, Christchurch).

Companies such as *Angel Foods* claim they are not only better for the environment but better for the animals and for consumers who want to support local business. One vegan café owner mentioned *Angel Foods* success was in tandem with other emerging vegan businesses:

“Angel Foods have done really well. They’ve made it work and they jumped in before you know big dairy brands like Meadow Fresh and will have wished they could of jumped in as well” (Female, Christchurch).

In addition to *Angel Foods*, participants acknowledged the generally positive impacts of investing in alternative businesses geared towards more sustainable plant-based food production:

“There has been an explosion of products in Christchurch – You’ve got really class A products coming in, and that’s cos people have been demanding them like Angel Foods, Sunfed vegan chicken and other cheeses” (Female, Christchurch).

“It’s exciting times for investment in cropping and horticulture for plant-based foods... It will be the early adopters and pioneers who will make a fortune. People in the money market, they should see these are the growth industries” (Male, Dunedin).

From a diverse economies’ perspective, these investments demonstrate the ability of consumers to affect the wellbeing and survival of others. Gibson-Graham et al. (2013, p. 104) assert that through these ethical investments, “the market becomes less of a space of enchantment and unbridled pleasure, and more a space of learning and collective responsibility” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, p. 104). A multispecies ethic of care informs these investments as care for others is ultimately built into the business models. From an ecofeminist perspective, these findings demonstrate a recognition of collective responsibility for caring for humans, non-human and the environment. Further investment in businesses such as *Angel Foods* could hold the potential to influence a significant shift in the relationship New Zealander’s have with dairy farming in particular as the environmental stakes for producing milk become higher.

6.3.Part 3: A Whole New World

The major supermarket chain *New World South City* in Christchurch is quite popular with members of the local vegan community. As the number of all-vegan businesses is still relatively low, new vegan options become visible within non-vegan spaces. This was observed through interviews and discussion groups as well as through positive customer feedback loops in the store. For example, customers of *New World South City* are given the opportunity to complete a written comment card, which is then reviewed by management and pinned back onto the wall for all to see their response (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2 Customer feedback board at New World South City (photo by Milena)

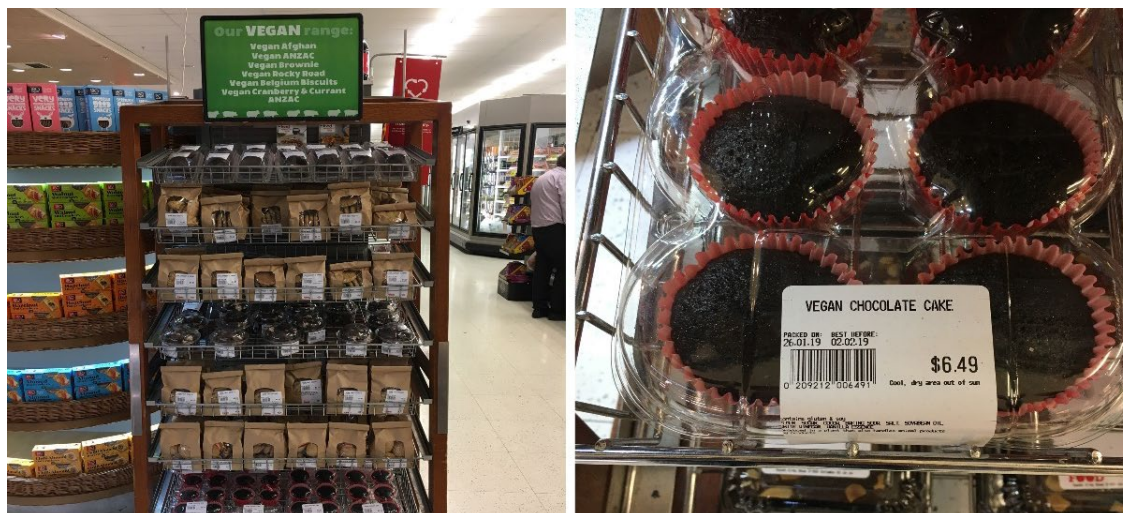
At the time of visiting the *New World South City*, there were a few comment cards relating to the store's generous offering of vegan goods, with one customer writing:

“Really good workers helped me with shopping for vegan products.”

Major supermarket chains like *New World* play a valuable role in contributing towards the sustainability of vegan communities. In providing plant-based alternatives to meat and dairy, vegan and non-vegan consumers alike have the opportunity to consider more ethical food choices without having to directly engage with the vegan societies. Something as small as choosing a plant-based milk over dairy milk could be considered a diverse economic activity aimed at developing new habits to reduce negative impacts on the earth (Gibson-Graham 2013, p. 39). One participant remarked on this very idea, stating that:

“Places like New World, they know vegans are creatures of habit, and very loyal. So they now supply vegan Anzac biscuits, vegan Christmas cakes, vegan afghans”
(Female, Christchurch).

Catering to creatures of habit has resulted in vegan versions of what is typically found on bakery shelves, such as biscuits or chocolate case, as pictured in Figure 6.3.



community economies framing in the context of vegan communities in the South Island demonstrates that there is a functioning community economy outside of industrial animal agriculture. While a corporate takeover of vegan markets may not be the idyllic cruelty-free vision vegans aspire to, it could be considered a step towards that direction, given the flow-on effects of engaging and connecting many small businesses striving towards similar outcomes (such as the leading vegan café in Christchurch buying organic produce from the Addington Farm). While this research focuses on one case study, the findings from this chapter open possibilities for further discussions about vegan futures in Aotearoa, providing a basis for further research in the field.

6.4.Part 4: Institutional Change

Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) argue that building a community economy also requires redirecting government revenue towards life-sustaining, rather than life-destroying activities. Participants in this research suggested that changes in some government-funded areas, such as public schools and hospitals, could be a possible way towards more vegan-friendly futures. Ideally, changes in the business sector from the growth of all-vegan businesses to financial investment in emerging vegan markets could have a flow on effect towards creating and sustaining institutional changes.

In particular, CVS members discussed their efforts towards changing the hospital catering system as it does not currently cater to plant-based diets. As a collective, they developed an informal group out of CVS called *Vegan Angels* to offer free, homemade, plant-based meals to hospital patients:

“The idea was to help people in need, provide services that are vegan. Christchurch hospital is notorious for giving canned spaghetti for vegans. So we drop buy and give vegan food, and if you’re lonely, we can stay and have a chat. Every now and then we will have people reach out, in our social media group, and then people are so quick to give food donations, even businesses” (Female, Christchurch).

Vegan Angels are an exemplar of multispecies care ethics in practice. Much like the vegan potlucks, within these direct encounters of preparing and sharing food, there is mutual respect and recognition for the wellbeing of others (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). A recent Ministry of Health New Zealand (2019) report on sustainability advocated for plant-based diets in hospitals. In their report, they stated “producing meat (particularly red meat) is resource intensive and has a larger carbon footprint than producing plant-based protein alternatives... The health sector can work with staff dieticians to develop alternative patient menus and encourage plant-based diets” (Ministry of Health New Zealand 2019, p. 16). Evidently, *Vegan Angels* was already at the forefront of changes in the sector, prior to any government intervention.

Another area for change identified was removing the *Milk for Schools* program offered by Fonterra⁹ (Fonterra Co-operative Group 2019) (Figure 6.4).



Figure 6.4 Fonterra's "Milk for Schools" website banner (Fonterra 2019)

Parents at the CVS potluck discussed the difficulty of having their vegan children go to school where Fonterra sponsored positive messages about the dairy industry. These messages were in conflict with the values parents were trying to instil in the home regarding the treatment of animals and the environment for food. One participant revealed she had a particularly difficult time with her daughter who started asking for dairy milk over plant-based milk in their home (based upon what her friends at school were drinking). If the current trends in plant-based meat and dairy are considered, removing the *Milk in Schools* program opens the possibility for plant-based milks to be introduced instead. This would challenge the accepted belief that dairy is a part of Aotearoa's cultural identity and present an opportunity for a change in values and create openings for new human to non-human relations to emerge.

6.5. Conclusion

These findings of vegan businesses, investment opportunities and the possibility for institutional changes ultimately contribute to the notion of more caring community economies. From an ecofeminist perspective, the focus on a multispecies ethic of care demonstrates the way in which this ethic permeates everyday transactions of everyday life. Through these diverse and future-driven economic practices, there is hope that more vegan orientated futures could emerge within the South Island and perhaps Aotearoa more broadly.

Vegan community members in the South Island have vested interest and hopes for veganism to grow further. Innovative vegan businesses, investment opportunities, institutional changes and growth in vegan markets are just some of the possibilities possessing the potential for change. The findings reveal that vegan transitions are occurring and are informed by multispecies ethic of care. In turn, the diverse economic activities inspired by these care ethics are contributing to more caring community economies which recognise the interconnectedness of humans, non-humans and the environment. Taking a multispecies ethic of care approach shows how

⁹ Aotearoa's leading dairy farm cooperative

changes in food systems can create more ethical and resilient forms of farming, investment and consumption.

7. Concluding Thoughts

Within this thesis, veganism has been identified as a possible response to the socio-ecological problems of industrial animal agriculture. This research adopted a contextual approach to veganism, where the practice is explored as a fluid possibility rather than a rigid universal ideal. Drawing on ecofeminist approaches about veganism and recognising the ways in which veganism accounts for the multispecies world around us, a multispecies ethic of care was identified. To learn how this ethic of care informed a vegan practice, the community economies lens was used to identify the diverse economic activities of vegan communities in the South Island. These two approaches informed the basis for considering more caring and humane community economies that reflect the interdependence of humans, non-humans and environments.

This final chapter discusses the contributions and limitations of this study and considers opportunities for future research. I then summarise the findings by revisiting key research questions and arguing that there are multiple interpretations of vegan ethics and practices that vary across individuals and contexts. However, my research also shows that a multispecies ethic of care was common to the practice of veganism for the participants. Through a critical consideration of the ethics and practice of veganism, I discuss what can be learned from vegan communities from the South Island of Aotearoa for more ethical and resilient futures in the Anthropocene.

7.1. Contributions, Limitations and Future Research

This research responds to recent scientific literature arguing for a transition towards more plant-based food systems (Springmann et al. 2016, Springmann et al. 2018, Willet et al. 2019). In particular, this research emphasises the need for in-depth case study work that positions vegan communities as communities to learn from. Shifting to plant-based models of food production and consumption will require further research that considers the social, economic and political implications for a changing food landscape – particularly for animal industry workers. Given the ecological challenges of the Anthropocene, it is critical to consider how our relationship to food intersects with our relationship to all earth others. As Gordon and Hunt (2019) suggest, the ecological, cultural and economic relations that sustain vegan food transitions are yet to be properly studied. Thus, this research demonstrates how learning from existing vegan communities provides a basis for further understanding such a transition.

The environmental consequences of intensive animal farming in Aotearoa, particularly dairy farming, will require research from the environmental and social sciences. Further research can help guide humans, non-humans and our shared environments towards transitioning to different forms of agriculture and multispecies relations as humanity gets to a point where industrial animal agriculture can no longer be sustained (in its current form). As land clearing

and water pollution from farms continue to threaten human and non-human livelihoods, it is important to consider more caring and humane food systems. Learning from vegan communities is one way to contribute to some of the critical anthropogenic challenges of our time. Moreover, further research of veganism in the South Island and Aotearoa opens the opportunity to critically engage with Māori worldviews. The lack of engagement with Māori communities was a limitation of this case study. As discussed in chapter three, Māori principles can provide culturally informed perspectives on issues crucial to human-animal and environmental concerns, particularly in the context of decolonial diets and how these contribute to social and environmental transformation (Dunn 2019, p. 56).

This project has attempted to contribute to further understandings of vegan ethics and practice, as a way of diversifying existing literature and creating openings for further research in the field. Taking an ecofeminist approach to the study of veganism furthers the discourse of veganism within the field of human geography. There is scope for further research to be continued within the community economies research network in terms of developing further understanding and resources about how veganism contributes to more “humane economies” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2016, p. 709). This is particularly important as innovative vegan businesses, investment opportunities, institutional changes and growth in vegan markets are already happening and are engaging and transforming local community economies.

7.2. Summary of Findings

7.2.1. What principles, ethics and concerns underpin veganism in the South Island of Aotearoa?

Through interviews and discussion groups with participants, the principles, ethics and concerns of vegans in the South Island revealed diverse motivations for veganism. While care for animals was an initial motivating factor for adopting a vegan lifestyle for many, it does not remain the a prevalent factor for most individuals. The interviews and discussion groups involved sharing personal narratives which revealed a reoccurring feeling of compassion for others. What we can learn from this is that care for others was not confined to animal rights or other rational approaches to non-humans. Instead the participants aligned with an ecofeminist ethic of care (Kheel 1985; Held 2006; Bellacasa 2017) and feelings of compassion (Curtin 2014; Kelch 2007) that involved care for diverse others; humans, non-humans and environments. These findings are significant as these diverse forms of care revealed a multispecies ethic of care, distancing veganism from more narrow conceptions of it as an animal rights movement. Further, the findings demonstrated that a multispecies ethic of care was often contextual, involving embodied feelings about place. What can be learned from these findings is that veganism is a fluid possibility, rather than a rigid set of rules and expectations. As demonstrated in chapter one, contextual approaches reveal a diversity of practices that still incorporate some form of multispecies care for others. These contextual approaches avoided the notion of vegan universalism, as criticised by Plumwood (2003). Taking a contextual

approach to understanding vegan ethics and practice accounts for the differences in individual needs, geographies, cultures and levels of access to plant-based foods (Twine and Taylor 2014).

7.2.2. How have these principles been manifested in everyday practices?

The practices of vegan communities were analysed through the community economies lens. Through this approach, the diverse economic activities of vegan communities were identified and considered in terms of how these practices contribute to more caring community economies. Drawing upon ecofeminist approaches to care and compassion (Kheel 1985; Held 2006; Kelch 2007; Curtin 2014; Bellacasa 2017) to develop a multispecies ethic of care, Gibson-Graham et al.'s (2013) community economies approach revealed how this form of care for others was an integral part of daily transactions.

What was learnt through the fieldwork was that there were multiple instances of diverse economic activities within the vegan communities that contributed to social, material and environmental wellbeing (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, p. 10). For example, each vegan societies potluck event provided a space for new and old members to meet, eat and make connections. These interactions are a form of prefigurative politics, where micro, everyday interactions contribute to the collective mobilisation of the vegan movement across spaces (Veron 2016). The food at the potlucks represented a nexus of bodily and politically motivated ethics and practice (Curtin 1991), where care for others informed the assemblage and consumption of food. Other diverse economic activities such as ethical consumption choices from reducing plastic waste, opting for fair trade and engaging in paid and unpaid work including sharing childcare responsibilities or volunteering for protests, showed how a multispecies ethic of care permeates everyday transaction. Studying and amplifying these instances of diverse economic activities contribute to Gibson-Graham's (2013) broader political objective to subvert hegemonic capitalocentric representations of the economy. At the same time, this creates openings to consider how the practice of veganism contributes to more ethical and resilient multispecies interactions within the Anthropocene.

7.2.3. How can vegan ethics and practices contribute to a hopeful reimagining of future food systems in the Anthropocene?

The case study of vegan communities in the South Island revealed a multispecies ethic of care that informed diverse economic activities. These activities supported the emergence of innovative vegan businesses, investment opportunities, institutional changes and growth in vegan markets. As presented in chapter six, vegan communities in the South Island are experimenting with food transitions that recognise the interconnectedness of humans, non-humans and environments. Although all-vegan business numbers are relatively small, participants emphasised there was a trend within the food landscape throughout the South Island towards new food options that exclude animal products. While there is still scope to consider whether this transition denotes a shift towards "corporate veganism" (White 2018), there is hope that something more optimistic is possible. Current government reports on

sustainability are already heeding the calls for change in food systems, such as the Ministry of Health New Zealand (2019) advocating for plant-based foods in hospitals. Vegan communities are at the forefront of these changes, seen for example in the work of *Vegan Angels*, demonstrating another form of prefigurative politics (Veron 2016) at work. What we can learn from these findings is that there is possibility for a creative and thriving economy beyond the South Island's reliance on intensive animal farming, as discussed in chapter two. Furthermore, these findings illuminate the possibility to consider the contribution of other vegan communities around the world who may face similar challenges in terms of being enmeshed in environments that are disconnected from animal farming. As growing scientific reports urge a transition towards more plant-based food production and consumption (Springmann et al. 2016, Springmann et al. 2018, Willet et al. 2019), the findings from this research contribute new knowledge about how to enact and sustain more ethical and resilient food systems in the future.

7.2.4. What can be learned from vegan communities in the South Island of Aotearoa in the context of Anthropocene?

The overall aim of this research was to find what can be learned from vegan communities in the South Island of Aotearoa in the context of the Anthropocene. As the findings demonstrate, veganism is much broader than animal rights or scientific debates about sustainable food production. The most significant finding of this research is the notion of a multispecies ethic of care as a core tenant of vegan practice. This ethic of care aligns with ecofeminist approaches about how to respectfully enact interdependence between environments and earth others within the Anthropocene (Roelvnik and Gibson-Graham 2009). A multispecies ethic of care is a reminder of human interconnectedness with the earth, prompting mutual respect, responsibility and care for all living things (Wright 2016). As Harper (in White 2015) notes, the study of veganism within this field produces socio-spatial epistemologies of consumption that can lead to cultural and spatial changes. The study of these changes in terms of the far-reaching social, economic, environmental and political effects have been at the forefront of this research. In particular, this research developed the idea of a multispecies ethic of care to describe how the study of veganism provides a basis to consider more caring human-nature relations and caring community economies in the Anthropocene. These ideas are significant for further research in terms of surviving well in the Anthropocene as the interconnectedness between humans, non-humans and environments is a critical component towards developing more ethical and resilient futures. Linking diverse economies literature to an ecofeminist ethic of care added a new perspective to the literature on community economies and veganism. Through interviews, discussion groups and participant observation, the importance of narratives, emotions and learning about care from participants was emphasised. These findings contribute to ideas about how to create more humane and caring community economies, particularly amidst the broader socio-ecological challenges of our current epoch (Gibson-Graham et al. 2016).

7.3. Conclusion

This case study of veganism represents an opportunity to reflect on what transitions to more ethical and resilient food systems might look like in the future. While the study and practice of veganism can offer more hopeful, ethical and resilient futures outside of industrial animal food systems, there remain significant challenges in terms of justice for animal farmers and animals. These considerations are important in a time where accelerating anthropogenic ecological crises are upon us. While this thesis addressed some of the gaps in the literature relating to veganism, the case study of vegan communities in the South Island is a starting point for similar research of other vegan communities. Understanding veganism as an expression of a multispecies ethic of care enables a more grounded understanding of veganism as a practice. This is particularly relevant for further research of veganism in the context of socio-ecological challenges in the Anthropocene and how to create better multispecies futures. Further research into the social, environmental, political and economic dimensions of veganism present possibilities to generate new knowledge about the interconnectedness of humans, non-humans and environments.

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Appendix 1 and 2 of this thesis have been removed as they may contain sensitive/confidential content

9.3.Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

Interview Questions for discussion groups

1. Do you identify as a vegan? Why/why not?
2. What does veganism mean to you?
3. Why did you choose to attend a vegan potluck?
4. Are you an active member of this vegan society? Why/Why not?
5. What are some of the challenges you have experienced as a vegan in your town/city?
6. Do you think veganism is a growing trend in your town/city? Why/why not?
7. Do you think veganism is accessible (in terms of education, cost, transport) in your town/city? Why/why not?
8. Do you think veganism has social benefits? Why/why not?
9. Do you often reflect on the environmental impacts of your food choices?
10. To what extent do you see your food choices as a challenge to industrial food systems?
11. Do you think there is scope for veganism to be taken to scale in New Zealand? Why/why not?

Interview Questions for key informants

1. What does veganism mean to you/how does it influence your lifestyle?
2. Could you tell me a bit about how this vegan society formed/how long has it been around/what motivated you to start this group?
3. Has this vegan society impacted/influenced local community relations in any way (i.e. demand for more vegan products in stores, mobilizing the public to protest against animal rights issues)?
4. What kind of people tend to sign up and what is their level of engagement with the society?
5. Do you believe veganism is a growing trend in your town/city? Why/Why not?

6. Do you think veganism is accessible (in terms of education, cost, transport) in your town/city? Why/why not?
7. Do you think veganism has social benefits? Why/why not?
8. Do you often reflect on the environmental impacts of your food choices?
9. To what extent do you see your food choices as a challenge to industrial food systems?
10. Do you think there is scope for veganism to be taken to scale in New Zealand? Why/why not?

9.4. Appendix 4 – Fieldnotes and Reflections

Potluck Participant observation

Invercargill Vegan Society

Mix of food – mostly ethic, curries

People talk about

- Health concerns, b12 and iron
- Where to get certain vegan products
- Latest news regarding animal rights

The potluck is a place where people can talk and relate to one another in a non judgemental and safe space. Although not all who attend are “puritan” vegans, they are treated with equality and respect. Everyone’s views are respected and there is a deep level of support, empathy and kindness towards one other.

People are engaged in active listening and relish the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences. At the Invercargill potluck, there was discussions about how to engage more with the community, what events the society can attend and how they can get their message across. Everyone is keen to help out and support one another. It is a warm and inviting environment. A judgment free space where intersectional politics and ethics of care and compassion come to life.

We discussed at length about where to get b12 and our own and other experiences

People described their food with passion, the process, where they source the ingredients. There was a “chicken” curry, a African bean dish, a Thai coconut curry/soup and my western potato/beetroot salad

It was a very small turn out but for my first potluck I preferred it that way. It was nice to be in a room with people I had already met, bar one, I felt comfortable and safe.

Dunedin Vegan Society

What was interesting was the similar welcome to country we have in Australia

A lot more people attended, and it was a better more established community space. There were people from all ages and stages in life, some even brought their kids with them

Diverse generations of people, almost equal mix of male and female

Variety of food – good mix of sweets and savoury, even fresh fruit

People went off into groups and just chatted – I talked at length with some people my own age about veganism and some of the challenges we face when around non vegans, people asked me about my research and I asked about there's (as there were other students there)

People are generally very friendly and open minded, willing to talk with anyone. Overheard conversation where about chicken farms how long people have been vegan for, vegetable gardens, uni related stuff.

Organised well with clear beginning, middle and end. There was also space for people to bring up any issues/ideas to the group. New people were welcomed, there were a few new people who had never attended before but fit right in. no one sitting alone, and people could join any conversation at any point

The various foods on the plate represent a nexus of social, political and environmental possibilities.

- Local plums? (seasonal?)
- Mock meats
- Mexican/Indian/western cuisines

People brought friends along who had never attended before – very interesting. When asked if they were vegan, some people responded with no but there was a sense of judgement at the table because it is an inclusive space and people are empathetic enough to understand that everyone is on a spectrum when it comes to accepting or transitioning to a vegan diet. Therefore, strangers from all walks of life are invited into this space to test the waters, meet likeminded people and experience different (and delicious) cuisines.

Christchurch Vegan Society

Older crowd – mostly elderly people and young families with young kids (under 15 years old). Very few young people, 2 of which were volunteers for the society.

Food was much healthier and more wholefoods type of dishes (a lot of salads, vegetables, greens). Only one or two junk food type food (such as vegan sausage rolls).

Everyone was already in little groups as more and more people arrived, the older people stuck within their age group and the parents with kids all knew each other from way back so also sat together as a group. There were a few people whose first time it was to a potluck and they found each other quite easily and sat together.

Some key quotes – one man was talking about his dish, barbequed zucchini. He was only new to veganism as he started being a vegan from January 1st this year. He said that as a result, he needed to “form a new relationship with his barbeque” – learning to grill vegetables instead of meat.

People often question one another if they are vegan and how long for – some of this was met with hostility while others were open to being questioned and expressing their views.

I engaged in long discussion with parents who had brought their children and they discussed the difficulties of having vegans kids go to school where Fonterra are peddling the “milk in schools” program, causing one child to beg her mum for cows milk over plant milk (to the mothers dismay).

They had a guest speaker called Rowan Taylor who spoke about the issues of animal agriculture in NZ and suggestions as to how we can move forward. Some key points from his talk included:

- We face ethical, moral, social and economic challenges at present (which I argue will only be amplified unless we act with urgency)
- A change is already underway – this is true because look at the amount of people in this room (the people at the potluck don’t have to even identify as vegan; all the society asks is that people are interested in veganism)
- We need institutional and societal change, much like what has happened in recent years with the issue of plastic
- Social + ethical grounds → dairy is losing its social licence
- People are growing disenchanted about farming in New Zealand
- Tilting the market – subsidies to be removed for animal agricultural producers

9.5. Appendix 5 – CVS Group Discussion about Veganism

Female 1 – *“Yeah but with SAFE [Save Animals From Exploitation], they seem to have this focus on “whole food” and “plant based”. They seem to have a problem with the word vegan.*

Male 1 – *“It’s not about the animals”.*

Female 1 – *“It really should be about the animals, but if we can bring people over purely on health, that achieves the same goal. Maybe people become more empathetic on their journey, as opposed to the word vegan linked to animal activism”.*

Female 2 – *“It goes back to the I.. I.. I...- I might be more healthy, I might lose pounds, I can be fit, I run marathons, you know then it becomes about yourself”.*

Female 1 – *“I agree. There is a stigma around the word vegan. Like this café for example, didn’t want to change to vegan”.*

Male 1 – *“They still have cow’s milk here [at this café]”.*

Female 1 – *“They support the cause but don’t like the word. Vegan is a powerful world. I’ve heard people say they need to own it and embrace it, sing it to the rooftops!”.*